

Pingstdagen
AD 2025-06-08
S:ta Maria domkyrka
Hansedagarna

Dear brothers and sisters!

The last couple of days, we have here in Visby, rejoiced over the visits of delegates and guests from 78 European cities. Foremost from the north of Europe but also as far away as La Rochelle in France and Laredo in Spain.

I think it fair to say, that I am not the only one, who during these couple of days has learned about cities around Europe that I earlier didn't know about. During these days we have not only learn about new cities but also about new ideas and projects. Of which some could be possible to develop back home or in relation to new partners across the sea.

Meetings and new experiences and acquaintances widen our horizons. That is a well-known experience and one of the factors that once made the Hansa league to a success story. And cooperation and trust in partnership and the future made that success even more real.

The same vision for Europe, the vision of peace, cooperation, trust, openness and legal certainty lays behind the European union. A peace project that in our time has been a great success, securing peace, free mobility and trade in a way that earlier generations only could have dreamed about.

Today we celebrate the great and important feast of Pentecost. One of the most important feasts of the year in the Church.

That could be described as the fulfillment of the Easter-mystery and also as the baptismal day of the Church.

The day when the early Church received – as Jesus himself had promised – the Holy Spirit – the helper, the comforter and teacher.

We might ask – in what way do all this relate to the European Union and the Hanseatic League. Actually – when we look into it – a great deal!

The readings of today describe that after the ascension of the Lord, the apostles returned to Jerusalem and were gathered, together with Saint Mary, in prayer. On the day of Pentecost, they were suddenly filled by the Holy Spirit. Filled by light, energy, wisdom and joy in such a way that Luke could not find any other way to describe what happened than that this light was as flames of fire upon the apostles.

The scene is very often depicted in art and on icons.

We see Mary, the Mother of God, in the center, surrounded by the apostles with the flames of fire on their heads. In absolute unity and harmony.

This unity and harmony are also the consequence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit over the early church –

And inspired – literally – inspired them to reach out to the entire world. Over the borders of the civilized world in order to follow the commandment of Jesus himself; to love not only the own family, the own tribe and the own people –

But also; the other, the stranger, the sick, the despised, the dead and even the enemy.

Inspired not only by the example of Jesus, but inspired by the Holy spirit, and in communion with the resurrected one – the apostles and many, many more disciples of various nations and ethnicities – also the most remote places of the planet was eventually given the message about the God who became human – in order to conquer evil and even death.

When we look at human history –

The consequences of what happened in a room in Jerusalem on the fiftieth day after the Easter mystery – when the apostles and the disciples were given the Holy Spirit can't be underestimated.

And can't be described in no less way than a revolution as well as a revelation.

Step by step the message of Love – that there is a God that cares for humankind and loves every human being, in such a way that he even chooses to become human himself and give himself in love and service for everyone!

And further: that he calls us – each of us – to go in his footsteps and give ourselves in love and service for humankind – and bring what we have received of Holy Spirit and vibrant life.

This message – and even more – this life and way of life, conquered, first, the Roman empire – And the entire western civilization is based on this conviction and realization of the message.

The history of Europe is marinated and shaped by the influence of the Gospel.

The vision about unity, and as something greater than family, tribe or nation.

The dignity of the human person, and the democratic rights for all to participate, freedom, legal certainty, medicine, art, education, universities, architecture and culture. All are values that have deeply formed and shaped the European mind and culture.

I am sad to say, that this has not always been done in a peaceful or respectful way for other people or nations. Not even always by the church as we can see in the pre-history of the Hansa League.

Nevertheless – eventually and step by step those spiritual values have been more and more commonly accepted and have deeply shaped our history and our western culture.

Today we see again a very clear threat towards peace, cooperation free market and unity in Europe and beyond. Which is a reminder, that we always need to find a deeper understanding of Love, of truth, of faith and hope – otherwise the opposite will take over!

These spiritual values need to be cultivated, both as a fundamental basis for our nations and continent, as well as that all these values fundamentally are not created by us, but they are given and received.

The Hanseatic League was shaped in a Northern Europe that longed for peace and legal certainty. That vision and that individuals started to trust each other laid the cornerstone for what would become the Hanseatic league. And developed to a success-story of trade, exchange and partnership 400 years.

It is often referred to the chest with four keys – something we are proud here in Visby that we actually have found. Only when all four keys and partners were present, the chest could be open. That is the normal explanation.

However, the only reason for why that functioned, is that the keys also was a symbol for mutual trust.

The four partners could easily have broken into the chest, also without the four keys present. But as we can see, even today, that never happened.

What we also can see today is the more and more urgent need for a developed communion in Europe and beyond. To find new and better solutions for peace, sustainability, science, openness and free-movements, security, trade and the dignity of the human person as a deeply spiritual and cultural being.

In that perspective the Hansa League has a continuously important function for us as member-cities and for our nations, the people and for Europe. Not in order to isolate and prosper on the price of the rest of the world, but as a servant for peace, justice and life – both in Europe and globally.

Finally: I would like say a few words from a person who lives here in Visby, albeit also travels a lot in Europe, to all of you that have been and are involved in the planning and the work for the future development of the Hansa League and in partnership with the European union.

Thank you – and may your work be blessed and bring fruits to the people it serves!

In the name of Jesus

Amen