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Editorial

After the events of the last few months, it is more than ever necessary to look for paths of *dialogue, reconciliation and peace*. While the conflict in Iraq was in preparation, Europe failed to speak with a single voice. The international organisations, from the European Union to the United Nations or NATO, were unable to prevent military action despite the disapproval of the great majority of citizens in most European countries. And the warnings of Pope John Paul himself went unheeded.

The war which began in March will have direct and indirect consequences which are difficult to forecast. The price of the fall of Saddam Hussein will have been innumerable victims among the civilian population. No, it was not flowers that rained down from the allies' bombers on Baghdad, Mossul, Kirkuk and Bassora, as the Iraqi Dominicans wrote to President Bush on 14 March 2003.

The first 'Kirchentag œcuménique' which will take place in Berlin at the end of May, and which will gather Protestant and Catholic Christians from Germany, but also from elsewhere, must be a sign of a new desire for dialogue, a sign of reconciliation and a step forward on the road to peace. Certainly, the title chosen for this Kirchentag – 'Be a blessing' – must not make us forget that there have been episodes in which the action of the Church, like the action of politics, has had tragic rather than beneficial consequences. But it is also true that Christians, like the faithful of other religions – Jews and Muslims – as well as representatives of enlightened humanism, have made a considerable contribution to the construction of a community of peoples that is both peaceful and just.

After a terrible period of war, men like Robert Schuman (1886-1963) and Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967) regarded the unification of Europe as an indispensable condition if all humanity was to know peace and liberty. The only path to reconciliation is the path of dialogue. This conviction ESPACES, the Dominicans' European institute, has made its own.

Today, Europe is searching for itself, its identity and a shared spirituality. In the context of a Europe that is 'one', soon to be enlarged by the ten candidate countries, it is for us Christians to become a blessing for all men and women of good will across walls and across frontiers, so that in the future it will not be war and violence, but dialogue and reconciliation that have the last word.

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