Options, Practices, and Challenges of Grossroots Communities in Europe

Following their meeting in Brussels in May 2011—and building upon previous gatherings in Edinburgh, Valladolid, and Vienna—representatives of Christian base communities reached an agreement to articulate a "common identity for Christian base communities."

1. The Options

- The communities draw nourishment from the Gospel, which liberates and transforms human relationships.
- They are vibrant and serve as spaces for living; for the most part, they are very small.
- They maintain contact with one another and remain in a state of ongoing exploration.
- They allow for diverse—and therefore richer—expressions of a shared faith, including ecumenical expressions.
- They place human dignity and the development of the individual at the heart of their inspiration.
- They make a deliberate choice to prioritize the poor.
- They firmly believe that another world - and another church, one that is more ecumenical, more democratic, and more participatory - is possible.

2 – Common practices of grassroots communities

- communal celebration and prayer
- a "contextual" reading of the Bible in relation to history and engagement in today's society
- democratic functioning and the sharing of responsibilities and services, without privileges
- convivial sharing and fraternal support
- a critical perspective on institutions and the exercise of power within the churches
- social, cultural, or political commitments

3 – Challenges to be addressed

- the issues raised by immigration in Europe, cultural and religious diversity, and access to citizenship
- the rise of racism, the growth of the far-right, and the threat to our democracies
- the steady expansion of neoliberalism, the financialization of all aspects of life, and the resulting social divide
- a ruthless utilitarianism that stifles the gratuitous nature of human relationships
- the lack of respect for human rights—particularly collective, political, and cultural rights
- the absence of young people in most of our communities, within the Church, and in institutions in general
- the difficulty of passing on our way of believing and living
- engaging with communities in Central and Eastern Europe to showcase the diverse ways in which the Church is envisioned and expressed.