

The Second Cardinal Văn Thuận Forum
Cologne, 20 September 2025

Greetings from Card. Michael Czerny S.J.
Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

May God bless the Second Forum dedicated to Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận, which is taking place today in Cologne at the Cellitine Center.

I cordially greet the Cardinal's sister, Mrs. Elisabeth Nguyễn, the Cellitines who cultivated for decades a friendship with François-Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận, Father Blaumeiser, Deacon Freiwald and the other promoters of this Forum, the speakers and friends of this great witness to hope.

With the title *Ways of Hope [Hoffnungswege]*, you intend to renew the message of Cardinal Văn Thuận for our time. This is opportune and providential for several reasons. It takes place in the Jubilee Year dedicated to hope. It takes place when humanity faces so many challenges. It is the 50th anniversary of the Cardinal's arrest and of his drawing up the 1001 thoughts that were later collected in his book, *The Road of Hope: A Gospel from Prison*.

In 1998, St John Paul II named him President of the then Pontifical Council for Justice and peace. Today, the Council is part of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and Card. Văn Thuận continues to inspire and motivate and intercede for our mission. He is a model pastor who made every effort to promote the integral human development of his people in the light of the Gospel. The great meeting hall in our Dicastery is named after Card. Văn Thuận.

In the Good News, he found the strength, even under extreme trials, to stand firm in the faith. He achieved the interior freedom that is rooted in God alone. The Gospel showed him how to promote reconciliation, justice and peace, first in his diocese, then in prison, and finally, around the world.

In a time of crisis and uncertainty, Card. Văn Thuận's message is so timely. For the persecuted and the displaced, his life is a sign that faith cannot be repressed. In globalising societies and secularising cultures, he reminds us that hope is born, not from external circumstances, but from within. For political and civil leaders, his presentations of the Church's Social Teaching remain current and urgent, beginning with human

dignity and solidarity. For the young, he is a model of resilience, loyalty and perseverance. After half a century, his testimony remains a compass: solid faith, contagious hope, love that forgives.

For all these reasons, the 50th anniversary is an occasion for historical gratitude and an invitation to emulate his example. May today's Forum renew our firm commitment to believe, hope and love even in these difficult, conflictual times. May our life in Christ give us the strength to face all challenges and find ways of peace.