



A Vote of thanks on behalf of the Pilgrims
at the conclusion of the Holy Mass for the XXVI Columbanus Day
by Dr. Mauro Steffenini,
President of the Friends of Saint Columbanus Association for Europe

Sunday, July 5, 2026, Lodi, Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Dear Bishop Maurizio,

THANK YOU for welcoming, into the Cathedral, with your characteristic warmth, the participants in this event of faith which returns, after 25 years, to the Lodi area. It was here in 2001—after four editions in San Colombano al Lambro—that this ecclesial gathering set out on its journey, illuminating Europe year after year.

This land of ours has been blessed since the earliest centuries of the Christian era: through the witness of the first martyrs, through the preaching of the first bishop, Bassiano, and, following in the path of his holiness, through many men and women who have helped to embody Christ's love for His Church. This portion of the People of God has had the grace of benefiting from the passing of Saint Columbanus and from the work of his monks, who have left a legacy in which we still rejoice today.

The enduring relevance of his message—preserved in the parishes that honour his memory—has gathered us here for a solemn thanksgiving to the Lord for this gift, which calls every baptised person to strive for the perfection of charity, that is, the fullness of love for God and for neighbour.

We would never have imagined that the project "With Saint Columbanus towards the Great Jubilee," later renamed "With Saint Columbanus in the Third Millennium," would arrive here today. For this we are grateful to the parish priest and bishop of that time, Don Mario Cipelli and Giuseppe Merisi, for their committed support in ensuring that this parish movement—gradually weaving a network of spiritual and cultural friendship—would be attractive and engaging.

This assembly now thanks you for your words of encouragement during this pause in a peregrinatio which continues, not without difficulty, in the daily life of our parishes in a Europe that is moving ever further away from Christ; your exhortation echoes Columbanus' demanding invitation to continue to "live in Christ, as Christ lives in us."

I believe I speak for many in expressing gratitude today to the Friends of Saint Columbanus for Europe, who have never failed to offer their experience to the various communities that have hosted this event over the years. Thanks also to the Diocese for the organisation—especially Don Franco and Don Anselmo—to the public bodies for their practical support, the Municipality and Province of Lodi, the Foundation of the Banca Popolare di Lodi, to the choir and musicians for the liturgical animation, and to all those involved in various ways.

A heartfelt thanks to all who have gathered here, braving the heat of the plains, together with their parish priests—beginning with the two communities in the Lodi area—as well as the mayors, bishops, and other civil and religious authorities who today share, in friendship and fraternity, *«the commitment to promote knowledge of Saint Columbanus and his legacy as a richness for today, both in the ecclesial and civic spheres»* (Francesco).

In these years, we see the fulfilment of Columbanus' prophecy for his sons, who call upon the Lord *« to awaken us from the sleep of mediocrity and to enkindle us with His divine charity, so that our lamp may always remain lit and never be extinguished: burning for us, shining for others»* (Istr. XII). And so it will be again next year.