

Europe needs Christianity says President of European Parliament



Christianity is one of the greatest strengths Europe has, and if it is lost, “we will be condemned to the erosion of the European spirit,” the President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek (pictured), has said.

He defended the display of Christian symbols in public spaces.

In an address at the European Prayer Breakfast, Mr Buzek, the former Prime Minister of Poland, and a Protestant, reminded his audience that “the founding fathers of the united Europe were active Christians”.

He went on: “At the same time, the question arises whether Christian heritage is still valuable, if it is not just another historical costume - respectable but useless?”

“Let me be clear – a courageous testimony of Christians, present also in politics - tolerant and open to others - is one of the greatest strengths we have.

“If we give it up, we will be condemned to the erosion of the European spirit, digested by nationalism and atomisation; and also by increased feeling of spiritual emptiness - disease of a world of excessive consumption.”

And he warned that a loss of values “could be much more dangerous to Europe than the lack of capital or the lack of political power”.

He said he was believed that the current economic crisis was “not only a crisis of public debt - a crisis, which came from the US after the failure of Lehman Brothers - it is also a fundamental crisis of values” resulting from material development not being “accompanied by a spiritual development, nor by credibility of our moral standards”.

“When we are getting rich, there is a need of responsibility; a need to take care of welfare - a need to take care of equality; finally - the idea of competitiveness requires the idea of justice. We need not only jobs, but work ethos.”

He said that Europe had built up a model over centuries in which “public authorities and religious authorities each keep their autonomy”.

But he insisted that there was “an absolute need for cooperation between public and religious authorities in many spheres - because such cooperation is important for building together a fair and just society”.

He said: “In this context, it is difficult not to notice that in Europe we have recently been witnesses of aggressive secularism. This is something I would call negative tolerance. One example can be the question of the cross in the public space.

“An aggressive, and in reality intolerant, minority would like to lock our faith in to the small box of our privacy.”

Such a move, he said “would mean to scrap the idea of religious freedom”.

Mr Buzek said: “History shows that the empty space left by the removed cross has always been conquered by totalitarian ideologies. The disappearance of the cross often resulted not in the release but the enslavement of man.

“I am convinced that we can not only save our faith, but through our attitude in a secularised world, we Christians can also be the salt of this earth and a light for everyone.”