Pope Francis on Monday warned Latvians to keep the Christian faith alive and to continue to nurture the bonds of Christian unity resisting the danger of turning the faith into “a museum piece”.

Addressing an Ecumenical Meeting in Riga on the first day of his apostolic visit to Latvia, Pope Francis expressed his appreciation for what he called one of Latvia’s special traits: a “lived ecumenism” which has succeeded in building unity while preserving the unique and rich identity of the different Christian Churches.

The Meeting took place in the city’s Lutheran Cathedral, a place – the Pope said – that has been home to the Christian life of the city: “a faithful witness to all those brothers and sisters of ours who have come here to worship and pray, to sustain their hope in moments of trial and to find the courage to face times of great injustice and suffering”.

He remarked how the cathedral is also home to one of the oldest organs in Europe describing it as the “the instrument of God and of men for lifting eyes and hearts to heaven”.

Read also

Pope to elderly in Riga: You are the roots of what blossoms today

Faith must not become a 'museum piece'

Using the metaphor of the organ throughout his speech, Francis said that like the faith, it is part of our identity and he warned Christians against the risk of turning their identity – and their faith - into “a museum piece that recalls the achievements of earlier ages, an

object of great historical value, but no longer one that is capable of moving the hearts of those who hear it".

The Gospel, he said, tells us that our faith "is not to be hidden away, but to be made known so that it can resound in the various sectors of society and all can contemplate its beauty and be illumined by its light".

The Gospel must resonate in all sectors of life

"If the music of the Gospel is no longer heard in our lives, or becomes a mere period piece, it will no longer be capable of breaking through the monotony that stifles hope and makes all our activity fruitless" he said.

"If the music of the Gospel, he continued, ceases to resonate in our very being, we will lose the joy born of compassion, the tender love born of trust, the capacity for reconciliation that has its source in our knowledge that we have been forgiven and sent forth".

"If the music of the Gospel ceases to sound in our homes, our public squares, our workplaces, our political and financial life, then – Pope Francis said - we will no longer hear the strains that challenge us to defend the dignity of every man and woman, whatever his or her origin. We will become caught up in what is 'mine', neglecting what is 'ours': our common home, which is also our common responsibility".

"If the music of the Gospel is no longer heard, we will lose the sounds that guide our lives to heaven and become locked into one of the worst ills of our day: loneliness and isolation" he said.

The mission of Christian Unity

continues to demand of us. Acknowledging that we live in times that are complex and difficult, he mentioned in particular those Christians "who are experiencing exile and

even martyrdom for their faith" saying that mission also demands that we ensure that the music of the Gospel continues to be heard in the public square and to resound in our midst never ceasing to inspire us and calling us to live life to the full.