

Ecumenical Evening Worships from Theology Conference

3 October, Tuesday

The First Evening of Our Ecumenical Meeting

Song

Thanksgiving to God

F: We have arrived from many directions of all over Europe and the world and now we give thanks to You, Lord for our loved ones at home who are thinking of us. We give thanks to You, Lord for our safe arrival. We give thanks for the adventures on our journey. We give thanks to You, Lord for this chance to be together. We give thanks for gathering us now.

M: We give thanks to You, Lord for collecting students together for you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Take the Gospel and live it!

Meditation

This prayer of Jesus is a vision. A vision for unity of those believing in Him and loving each other that the world may believe. Jesus visioned that – on the one hand – his followers would not be divided by hostility and fruitless debates. On the other hand, He imagined a unity for his disciples which is being between him and his Father. Translated into human relations, this unity means a community based on prayer, dialogue, recognition and mutual service.

According to our Lord Jesus, by this harmony the world will recognise that Christians preach the good news of God with their life and word, in Spirit and Truth – the good news of God who has a dream about human being and who preserves this creation.

"All these are the work of the one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks – slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." (1 Corinthians 12,11-13)

This "spirituality of unity" is not a fixed or military uniformity but an essential identity of Christian life styles. On the other hand, it means understanding and expressing the diverse but not opposing content of the Message of Jesus – by the same Spirit.

If we Christians do not care much about this spirituality of unity, if we do not take our time and efforts to recognise, to understand and to love each other, then our community's – the Church's – basic role and task, preaching the good news will suffer those consequences.

This ecumenical meeting and conference is an occasion to do this spirituality in practice through praying together with our different denominational roots, making dialogues on important question for Jesus. And co-operation in our daily life, living in each other presence.

Silence and Prayers

Song

4 October, Wednesday

Church and State: The Power of the Word

Song

Thanksgiving to God

F: Lord, this is a nice autumn! We give thanks to You, Lord for this venue: this kind town and for Danish meals. Lord, this is our first whole day of the conference. We give thanks for lectures and discussions, for the attentive faces and careful hands. We give thanks to You, Lord for directing our attention to your Gospel. We give again thanks to You, Lord for this chance to be together. We give thanks for gathering us again and again.

M: We give thanks to You, Lord for collecting us, students together for studying and debating about your Church's challenges regarding the place where we live in. We give thanks to You, Lord for making such a forum to understand these challenges together. We give thanks for being travellers in the great ship called Oikoumene. And we give thanks for your Spirit who inspires our minds.

All: We give thanks You, Lord for gathering us!

.

Song

Confession

F: Lord, You said, blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

M: Forgive us that we often let our serious conflicts continue without reconciliation!

All: Kyrie, eleison!

F: Lord, You said, we should love our enemies and pray for those persecute us. For You were an enemy and a neighbour as well.

M: Forgive us that we did not pay good for the wrong!

All: Christe, eleison!

F: Lord, You refused the chance of domination and glory.

M: Forgive us that we rule instead of serve, we want to be first instead of being the last.

All: Kyrie, eleison!

Song

Bible Reading: Luke 4,16–21

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where is written:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened to him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Take the Gospel and live it!

Meditation: Did Jesus Politicize?

It is a common opinion that Jesus was interested mainly in the spiritual salvation of an individual, and that He oriented, consoled and encouraged us for this purpose. This opinion often ends in a private theology, regardless of other human dimensions. However, reading the New Testament, we find stories about Jesus curing and healing people.

Even the passage of the Gospel, we heard a short while ago, is often interpreted in a simple way as a merely spiritual console for the poor, the oppressed: "carry your burden silently, you will have your prize in the next world."

On the contrary, what we have heard, is the inauguration of Jesus. This inauguration summarizes his programme. This programme or message is a spiritual, social and political one at the same time. When Jesus talks to you, He always sees your whole humanity.

If Jesus calls you to convert it means your relations? changing, too. First of all, you should perceive the weakness of your neighbour. Then He shows the direction of this change of relations: from any slavery toward freedom. From any oppression towards liberation. Those made blind by political ideologies have a clear view again.

In other words, it is a humanization of any inhuman relations. That is the core of any social and political programme which can be acceptable by a the followers of Christ.

We heard about "the year of the Lord's favour." With this, Jesus reminds us of an Old Testament rule: "at the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. (...) If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your poor brother. Rather open-handed and freely lend him whatever he needs. (...) There will always be poor people in the land. (...)" (Deuteronomy 15,1-15).

On the one hand, Jesus refused any activity of violence. On the other hand, He clearly refused the violence used by political or economical leaders, too. He said critically: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that." (Luke 22,25-26).

Teaching about loving the enemy has no less social and political character. (Matthew 5,38-48). As we heard today, this teaching was formulated in a context of oppression. And remember the strange advice: "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (Matthew 5, 41). After the first milestone there might be a human conversation. Humanization of inhuman relations.

At the very beginnings of his His public life, Jesus first proclaimed: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."

Silence and Prayers

Song

5 October, Thursday

The Power of the Church as a Contrast Community

Song

Thanksgiving to God

F: Lord, we are a bit tired now... We give thanks to You for the joy of having a party last night. And Lord, we have learnt a lot today! We give thanks to You for the lecture, for the secrets of our body and mind. We give thanks to You, Lord for discussions and workshops, too. We give again thanks to You, for this chance to study your Gospel together. We give thanks for gathering us again and again.

M: We give thanks to You, Lord for collecting us, students together for studying and debating about the hot ethical issues of our world. We give thanks to You, Lord for directing our attention to our final ethical freedom given by You. We give thanks again for being travellers in the great ship called Oikoumene. And we give thanks for your Spirit who inspires our minds.

All: We give thanks You, Lord for gathering us!

Song

Confession

All: Kyrie eleison!

F: Lord, You went beyond the customary social limits when he touched a leper. You healed him.

M: Lord, You went beyond religious limits when you called tax collectors and other sinners into your community of disciples. Forgive us our timidity!

All: Christe eleison!

F: Lord, You went beyond ethnical limits when You held Samaritans up as examples for the Jews.

M: Lord, You have noticed a possibility of human relation in an enemy when you healed the daughter of a Roman oppressor! Forgive us our hostility!

All: Kyrie, eleison!

Song

Bible Reading: Mark 10,42–45a

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Take the Gospel and live it!

Meditation: The Christian Community as a Contrast Society

We have seen in the these days that the teaching of Jesus can not be see as a private spirituality or Christianity as a private business. A worship or liturgy can not be simply an accidental meeting of isolated poeple. The text we have read makes us aware of the collective and social character of Christianity. Let the text that we read widen our horizons!

Jesus briefly characterizes a social issue, a customary form of practicing power, and at the same time, the customary intoxication with power: the leaders of the nations rule despotically and tyrannize, and in addition they call themselves Benefactors. You can see it in the newspapers.

Jesus showed another way: "But you are not to be like that." (Luke 22,25–26) Make a new model of community and social life. The "you" here is not singular but plural. It is natural since this new model of community life can not be introduced by isolated individuals but by common practice.

Jesus expects an alternative social practice from his followers. It is a contrast society or counter society (in the sense of counterexample).

Remember some Gospel passages: "You are the salt of the earth"... "you are the light of the world&ndash" (Matthew 5,13–16). That is "you" in the plural as a team, a community, a society. His teachings are actually the rules or laws of this alternative community practice. The teachings seen as private life instructions depend on this community context. What are the characteristics of this contrast society? Giving up any power and instead of rule, practicing service: the one who wants to be great, be the servant of the others. The role of a leader is essential but it does not mean despotic rule or requiring others to serve us but a service. That is helping those in need exactly in what they need. This serving mentality is clear in the foot washing (John 13,4–5).

Another characteristics of this contrast society is giving up any violence. Instead of violence, there is mildness which is not passivity but a creative resistance to evil as it was practiced by Gandhi or Martin Luther King. This is clear for Jesus: "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," then "if someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (Matthew 5,39–42). Or another example, when Jesus speaks to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world. (= a contrast society) (...) But now my kingdom is from another place." (John 18,36).

Then: giving up richness and practicing giving and gift. The story and teaching with the rich young man is well-known (Mark 10,17?27). This required giving up naturally is not selfish but it aims to eliminate misery: "Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." Jesus is not jealous of any welfare but feels sorrow for the poor.

Finally, break off the social limits and reconstruction and develop a true community. Jesus called everyone to his model community, to the Reign of God: the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, people from the countryside and the towns and cities, the healthy and the sick, and all marginalized peoples: the hungry and tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, children, women, pagans, foreigners. In His community all these are sisters and brothers, community in solidarity. Jesus, with his teaching and mentality, started to break down the social limits.

Silence and Prayers

Song

7 October, Saturday

A Prophetic Word and Action Following Christ

Song

Thanksgiving to God

F: We give thanks to You for the joy of having an excursion yesterday. We give thanks to You for the opportunity to rest. And Lord, we have learnt a lot again today! We give thanks to You for the lectures, for the ability of comprehending difficult processes. We give thanks

to You, Lord for discussions challenging our creativity. We give again thanks to You, for this chance for studying your Gospel together. We give thanks for gathering us again and again.

M: We give thanks to You, Lord for collecting us, students together for studying and debating about Europe our homelands, and our Church's future. We give thanks to You, Lord for directing our attention to an alternative possibility of living in a global world. We give thanks again for being travellers in the great ship called Oikoumene. And we give thanks for your Spirit who inspires our minds.

All: We give thanks You, Lord for gathering us!

Song

Confession

All: Kyrie eleison!

F: Lord, You taught us not to make a sacrifice until we have settled conflicts with each other.

M: Lord, You taught us not to seek to be glorified by people. Forgive us our hypocrisy!

All: Christe eleison!

F: Lord, You said, we are the salt of the earth. Forgive us our tastelessness!

M: Lord, You said, we are the light of the world. Forgive us that we put your light under the bowl!

All: Kyrie, eleison!

Song

Bible Reading: Matthew 5,14–16 and 6,1–2a

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise you Father in heaven. (...)

Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by men.

Take the Gospel and live it!

Meditation: A Prophetic Task of the Church in and for Europe

If we are looking for a prophetic Church in Europe that is being intergrated and being faced with several challenges, first of all, we should recall in our memory the original function of prophets as they appeared in Israel and in Jesus' life.

A prophet was not a fortune-teller, nor an oracle in religious affairs nor a person who attacked a person because of their sin but in accordance with his or her name (nabi) was an interpreter of God. A prophet was a passionate interpreter of God's "will," intentions and purposes – not merely in a theoretical and general sense, not even only in a religious sense but regarding the factual persons and events, even political and social.

Let us see Jesus now as a prophet! At a first sight, the Gospel passages quoted above seem to be in a strong contradiction: to be a light of the world and to be careful not to do our acts of righteousness before other people?!

What does this contradiction show? If you would make yourself as light, visible, you use institutions. If you would stay in secret, you avoid any institutions. Beyond that both have their time and place, let see the institutions as visible signs.

All institutions are powerful, it is neutral in itself but in the reality there is no power without context, that is as means of good or evil. God's saving love is a kind of power as well. This love presents itself in giving up rule, violence and richness. The followers of Christ, the Church, live this out by choosing between true and false forms of power as a daily fight. What are these forms of practicing the power?

Practicing the power in a manipulative way means you do not see in the other a face but a means. "You are weak so I will rule over you." Practicing the power in a competitive way can be motivating but often it is a way to manipulation. "Let me see, who is the stronger?"

Practicing power in a nourishing way means to keep the other regarding her or his need. You are as me, that is why I serve you! Practicing power in "weakness" (2 Corinthians 12,9), in an integrative way means to see the other as other and our service aims to promote the other's free coming to fruition because you realize Jesus' face in her or him.

A prophetic Church is against legitimizing the current state or economic power at all time. A prophetic Church is against preaching a false peace without sharing and justice. Beyond coming out from the traditional "religious" field in Europe, a prophetic Church should learn to represent God's design for today culture and society, even economics. However, for being a prophetic Church, there is a necessary condition in front of its members: you have to be ready to accept the fate of a prophet.

Prayers: Isaiah 58

- 1 "Shout it aloud, do not hold back.
Raise your voice like a trumpet.
Declare to my people their rebellion
and to the house of Jacob their sins.
- 2 For day after day they seek me out;
they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is right
and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask me for just decisions

- and seem eager for God to come near them.
- 3 'Why have we fasted,' they say,
'and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves,
and you have not noticed?'
"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please
and exploit all your workers.
- 4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,
and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today
and expect your voice to be heard on high.
- 5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for a man to humble himself?
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed
and for lying on sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD ?
- 6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
- 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter?
when you see the naked, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
- 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness [a] will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
- 9 Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.
"If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
- 10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.
- 11 The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
- 12 Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.
- 13 "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath
and from doing as you please on my holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight
and the LORD's holy day honorable,
and if you honor it by not going your own way
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,

14 then you will find your joy in the LORD,
and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land
and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob."
The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Song

8 October, Sunday

The Lord's Day for Unity

Song

Thanksgiving to God

F: We are now going to home in many directions all over Europe and we give thanks to You, Lord for the beauty of this venue, town and country. We give thanks to You, for our old and new friends here. We give thanks for the deep personal meetings and even for the adventures of getting to know each other during our conference. We give thanks to You, Lord for giving a chance to be together. We give thanks for gathering us again for studying your Gospel together. We give thanks for gathering us again and again.

M: We give thanks to You, Lord for collecting us, students together for studying and debating about Europe which is our homeland, and the challenges the Church is facing. We give thanks again to You, for collecting students for a hundred years through WSCF in order to understand reality and interpret our tasks. We give thanks again for being travellers in the great ship called Oikoumene. And we give thanks for your Spirit who blows the sails of this ship and inspires our minds.

All: We give thanks You, Lord for gathering us!

Song

Confession

All: Kyrie eleison!

F: Lord, You prayed for us that we all may be one; as You and the Father are one.

M: Lord, You prayed for that the world may know you just through our unity and harmony.

F: Forgive us our churches' divisions and breakings among us which are against your will!

All: Christe eleison!

M: Lord, You said through Your Apostle, that we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body.

F: Lord, You said, through Your Apostle that if we have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, we are nothing.

M: Forgive us our arrogance not to see each other as Your true followers. Forgive us if we were loveless to each other during this week.

All: Kyrie, eleison!

Song

Bible Reading: Ephesians 4,2-7 and 11-16

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. (...)

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.

Then we will no longer infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and build itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Take the Gospel and live it!

Meditation: Growing up together to Christ

On the first day of this conference, we said that the unity Jesus imagined for his disciples means a deep community based on prayer, dialogue, recognition and mutual service. And we said, according to our Lord, that by this harmony the world will recognise that Christians preach the good news of God with their life and word, in Spirit and Truth – the good news of God who has a dream about human being and who preserves this creation.

This simple truth was explored by students in the late 19th century. Since then this truth has its force to make thousands of students to gather globally. Keeping a newspaper in the one hand, and a Bible in the other, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox students, that is, we are gathering to understand and express our faith in a new way.

This new way is a re-expressing of our experience of God – this is the way we can contribute to preserve the human dignity of believers and non believers. Re-expressing our relation and experience of God has a broader – interfaith – horizon, too: the name of God is the source of peace with creation, reconciliation with other denominations and religions and our dignity. Since our dignity is in being images of God: we will find ourselves when we find God – otherwise, a crisis of our identity comes.

This gathering is a school where we are on our way toward maturity. It is a school where we realize our Christianity: all being baptized, all have a mission and all have the responsibility to guard the Gospel's brightful light.

It is a school where we learn to make distinctions of essential and historically and culturally accidental. It is a school where we go on the way of unity respecting our differences.

It is a school where we turn to the Spirit who inspires new church institutions which are suitable for witnessing Jesus Christ in our diverse contexts.

It is a school where we learn that the truth has an effect only through mildness into our minds. This ecumenical conference was a school to do this spirituality in practice through praying together, making dialogues and co-operation in our daily life, living in each other presence.

From Christ "the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and build itself up in love."

Silence and Prayers

Song