

## **THIRD ECUMENICAL EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY (EEA3) IN SIBIU (ROMANIA) SEPTEMBER 2007**

### **Preparation meeting in Rome January 2006**

The EEA3 ([www.eea3.org](http://www.eea3.org)) builds on two other assemblies, which took place in Basel (Switzerland) in 1989 and in Graz (Austria) in 1997. It roots in the **Charta Oecumenica** signed in Strasbourg in 2001. Please find information on: ([www.ccee.ch](http://www.ccee.ch) and [www.ccc-kek.org](http://www.ccc-kek.org)).

The chosen theme for this meeting is: **The light of Christ shines upon all – hope for renewal and unity in Europe.** This put the emphasis on Christ (John 8;12) and refer to the symbol of light so important in the eastern and western Christian tradition. The subtitle has for object to emphasize the part that Christianity could play in Europe actually.

### **Four stages are planed:**

**First stage:** meeting in Rome from January 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> 2006; 160 Church delegates, from Episcopalians Catholics Conferences, from authority or ecumenical movements and from ecclesiastic's communities were present.

**The second stage** will enclose nationals and/or regional meetings in the second half-year in 2006 and the beginning of 2007. This meeting's organization will be attended by Churches and Conferences delegates of the welcoming country or area.

**The third stage** will take place in Germany in Wittenberg-Lutherstadt, in January 2007 in the same way as it was in Rome.

**The fourth stage** will be the Sibiu's meeting from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2007 gathering 3000 Churches and Catholics Episcopalians delegates of Europe. This will be connected with the meeting between Christians in all Europeans cities able to welcome them by video and audio connexions with Sibiu.

Why Sibiu? This city will be, as Luxembourg, European capital in 2007; localised in Transylvania its 170000 inhabitants are Romanian, Hungarian, German, Jewish, and Gipsy. The majority belongs to the Romanian Orthodox Church.

### **First step: Meeting in Rome 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> January 2006**

Three days with different speeches after the introduction of Jean-Arnold de Clermont, Chairman of KEK (Conference of European Churches: most of the orthodox, protestants, Anglicans, new and old Catholics Churches) and of Monsignor Amédée Grab, Chairman of CCEE (Council of European Episcopalians Conferences gathering together the Roman Catholic Episcopalians Conferences in Europe):

**Cardinal Walter Kasper, Chairman of the Pontifical Council for United Christians the Doctor Margot Kässmann, Bishop of the evangelical Church of Germany**

**Cormac Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor, Bishop of Westminster**

pointed out the actual situation but the aim was not to resolve all our problems as Bishop Murphy-O'Connor said :

“The target of this meeting is not to discuss of dogmatic differences but to find out that, what unit us as Christians is more important than what still disunite us, that what we assert as Christians is a lot of more important than what we contest about ones an others. Ecumenism

is not to be considered by the obstacles, as important they may be, but instead in the gifts to be share. And he insists on the three enemies of ecumenism: **suspicion, inertia and impatience.**

For illustration, he told us a small history:

*A tailor in Poland put a poster on his window: I am the best tailor of the city. Another one, seeing this, posts: I am the best tailor of Poland. Comes a third one with a poster: I am the best tailor of the world. Finally a fourth one posts: I am the best tailor of this street.*

Because it would be better to have small, well achieved and short-dated objectives than to declare that we want to fix everything, without anything happening. Ecumenism is to be realized at home, in parishes, villages and cities.

We have to be open minded about Holy Spirit's gifts which speaks through different forms of piety: we have to be ready to think differently, to convert ourselves to accept difference what requests tolerance, patience, respect, goodwill and love that avoid great proclamations but rejoice in truth. Biblical spirituality consists of looking for Christ's face and the ecumenical movement asks us to start from Christ."

I wouldn't forget two great moments of prayer: from Minister Dr Susan Helen Jones and from Brother Alois de Taizé. And the presentation of the Charta Oecumenica and from this, the different stages of EEA3 – see the charta on the web – by Sarah Numico. She has done a lovely parallel between her pregnancy and the charter's birth and this meeting EEA3: in the idea of having to take care of a son or daughter in order to allowed something new to come in the path: share a gift, pray for grace so it give us its light and support us, give all our care to this "child" we helped to come into the world so that he can grow up.

Two very important moments were the Vespers celebrated by the Holy Father ending prayer's week for Christian's Unity at Saint Paul hors les Murs. And the meeting with the Bishop of Rome, the Pope Benedict XVI, a very impressive moment by the surroundings magnificence, simplicity and the gentleness of the Holy Father who read a brief speech in Italian.

For me, be present at this meeting was a gift. I have received a very beautiful illustration of Church, friendly and optimist. It was not the point to say what each Christian group was going to reject or change to come to an agreement but to say and accept our differences in full knowledge of the case to welcome together the others: Jewish, Muslim or atheist. This makes sense and is reasonable – because differences are not ready to disappear - but it was interesting to watch a Finnish priest arguing with a German Mennonite. Intellectual level and courtesy helped a lot to create a joyful atmosphere.

**What about CVX in that context?** I have pointed out our aspiration to be open-minded to others religions and gave for example Germany and England. And I gave our documents as well to the representative of the Russian Church representative.

Facing San Egidio and Focolari, questioning the CVX's position is necessary. Those two movements have social commitments that make them to be known in the common weal. In CLC, our commitments are individual and discreet, we are present everywhere – here I am talking about France – with a solid education and inner freedom – but we don't claimed all around our belonging to CVX.

After all, I am convinced that CVX has a place to stand in that kind of encounters – other movements and associations were present. “We are the Church” I explained to a Bishop, to what he fairly replied: so we are. That means all together.

Monika Sander, Euroteam member