



Sibiu-main square

"The light of Christ shines upon all!"

*The Third European Ecumenical Assembly
held in*

Sibiu, Romania 4th -9th September 2004

This assembly was a continuation of a pilgrimage which began in Basel, Switzerland in 1989 then moving on to Graz, Austria in 1997 and via Rome and Wittenburg to Sibiu in Romania for those few days in September this year. For those of us who participated in Sibiu it was an adventure filled with a variety of experiences, from cancelled flights due to closure of the local airport, to a drop in temperature of twenty degrees within days of our arrival, and torrential rain which resulted in our getting soaked on more than one occasion as we negotiated our passage from accommodation to eating venue, to assembly marquee and other venues for forums and plenary sessions. In spite of this the 2500 delegates from every corner of Europe and beyond were undaunted and were able to enjoy the hospitality of the people of Sibiu with their rich Orthodox traditions and which for many is seen as a meeting place between east and west.

Some of my lasting memories of the assembly were the real contrast between the richness and ceremony of the Orthodox vespers in the beautiful Orthodox Cathedral and the Byzantine Rite Mass in a local stadium and the simplicity of the Taize evening prayer led by Brother Alois, (the successor of Brother Roger) in the Lutheran Church just off the main square, and the simple style morning prayer each day.

Over the course of the days there we were privileged to be able to listen to some excellent presentations from leaders of many of the Christian denominations around Europe on the theme of the assembly which was "the light of Christ shines on all" We also had opportunities to share with others, including many young people, from many different walks of life. This together with personal testimonies and open forums dealing with a variety of topics from spirituality and witness to religions, migration, creation, justice and peace formed the basis of our time together and inspired us as participants to strive to work more closely with each other.

In the words of Cardinal Walter Kasper *"I think it is important that, we should not get caught up in the differences there are between us, but think of the shared basis of our faith. Ecumenism is not simply a matter of human togetherness. Ecumenism is about the shared proclamation of faith in the one God, in the one Lord Jesus Christ, in one baptism and one Church, to which we bear witness in our common Credo. The ecumenical movement is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour..., and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit". Our goal is the unity, not the uniformity of Europe. The variety of cultures is an enrichment. but what unites us is the idea of the God-given dignity of every person, the sanctity of life, a co-existence in justice and solidarity, care for creation and a new culture of mercy and love.*

We all ought to be signs, witnesses and tools for these choices from the spirit of the Gospel.....to witness to the light of Christ which shines upon all, and to bring it out into the world which needs it so urgently!"

As Christians of all denominations, yes, we need courage to face up squarely to the divisions and obstacles between us, but more importantly, we need signs of our ability and determination to be witnesses together, by celebrating wherever possible our common beliefs and by uniting together in prayer and reflection and proclaiming together the good news of salvation!



Planting a memorial tree