

Union of Utrecht NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2018

Communiqué of the 45. International Old Catholic Theologians' Conference



The 45th International Old Catholic Theologians' Conference took place at the Zinzendorfhaus conference centre in Neudietendorf, near Erfurt, Germany, from 3 to 7 September 2017. Its theme was "Challenged by the others" (*"Die Herausforderung durch die Anderen"*). Professor Charlotte Methuen (Glasgow), Dr. Stefanos Athanasiou (Bern) and Dr. Martin Bräuer (Bensheim) offered insights into how they, as Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant theologians respectively, perceive Old Catholic

theology in programme and praxis. Following the 'outside' ecumenical perspective, the participants were invited to look inwards, and then outwards again: How are we challenged by new theological and social issues to reflect in theological terms on the meaning of sacraments and sacramentality today? Dr. Mattijs Ploeger (Utrecht) presented his reflections on the blessing of same-sex partnerships in the light of Old Catholic *communio* theology. Dr. Eleonora Hof (Amsterdam) examined the theological and practical challenges raised by contact with 'others' in a diaconal and missional context, especially when such contact is supposed to be based on partnership and equality in line with methodological reflection in recent research such as the *Postcolonial Studies*. In a series of workshops, the conference participants discussed liturgical formularies for the sacraments of baptism and confirmation and for the blessing of same-sex partners; several such formularies have been produced by Old Catholic Churches in recent years. Other workshops dealt with pastoral projects such as working with homeless people in the Netherlands and the social engagement of the Philippine Independent Church, connecting solidarity with an expression of catholicity. The next International Old Catholic Theologians Conference will take place in Wislikofen, Switzerland, from 26 to 30 August 2019.

For the whole communiqué see:

http://www.utrechter-union.org/page/536/communiqu%C3%A9_of_the_45._internatio

Enthusiasm for the Utrecht and Uppsala Agreement.

Last Saturday, in a well-filled St. Gertrudis Cathedral in Utrecht, we celebrated the unity between the Church of Sweden and the Churches of the Union of Utrecht: the "Utrecht Uppsala Agreement". The service was preceded by a presentation of the document "Uppsala and Utrecht. On the way to communion". The presentation for about 130 participants took place in the conference centre 'In de



Driehoek'. The document is the result of ten years of theological dialogue and aims to describe the unity between the two Church families. Because it is as follows: The unity was not 'made', but 'discovered'. As Peter Feenstra, one of the members of the dialogue group, emphasised, there has been much longer interest in each other and the feeling that people have more in common than one would suspect at first

glance. Maria Klasson Sundin, a Swedish theologian, used the image of twins who were separated from birth and raised in different contexts. The Chairman of the World Council, Archbishop Anders Wejryd, agreed and added how important these small steps in ecumenism are. Although there are of course differences between the churches, they share a rich liturgical tradition, a Eucharistic spirituality, an uninterrupted apostolic succession, a critical openness to today's society and culture, and a great commitment to ecumenism. Both see their own way of church-being as a contribution to ecumenism and to the strive for the visible unity of Christ's Church. Their wish is therefore that their church unity should also be a small contribution to this. The photo gallery gives an impression of the great enthusiasm with which this agreement is welcomed!

For the whole article see:

http://www.utrechter-union.org/page/547/enthusiasm_for_the_utrecht_and_u

International Old Catholic Congress 2018

The next International Old Catholic Congress will take place from 20th to 23rd September 2018 in the Austrian capital, Vienna; this time meeting under the heading "Salt of the Earth: Christians in dialogue for an open society". The Congress will be looking at the following key questions: Where does our vision for a better quality of life for the world overlap, and where does it differ? In our joint responsibility to share in shaping the future, what action do we plan to take? There will also be various discussion groups and workshops, where participants can grapple with issues, such as, social justice, a fairer economy, the sustainable use of ecological resources, or overcoming our fears in a rapidly changing world. And, of course, there will be an opportunity to see something of the city of Vienna and learn about the Old Catholic Church in the Austrian capital.



The Congress fee, without accommodation and travel, is €160. For those requiring overnight accommodation, the Congress website ([Altkatholikenkongress 2018](http://www.altkatholikenkongress2018.org)) will provide a list of links to hotels where a block-booking of rooms has been reserved for the Congress.

The International Old Catholic Congress is held every four years in a different country of the Union of Utrecht. In character, the Congress is like an international version of an Old Catholic parish church convention.

http://www.utrechter-union.org/page/543/international_old_catholic_congr



"Lift your head from the water!"



This year the "Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions", to give the official English title, met from 6th to 10th November 2017 in Bogota, Colombia. It brought together the general secretaries and secretaries of the 18 largest and/or most important church denominations (church families). The representative for the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht is Bishop Dr. Harald Rein from Switzerland. He has been attending these meetings since 2009 in his capacity as secretary of

the International Old Catholic Bishops Conference.

There were three main themes this year: the peace process in Colombia; the future composition of the Conference; and, as always, mutual exchanges about developments, joys and concerns within the denominational families represented, together with bilateral ecumenical dialogues.

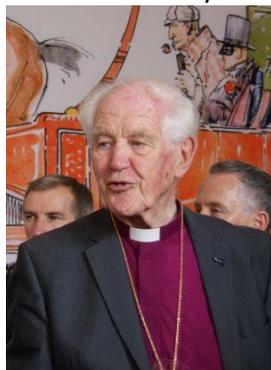
For the whole article see:

http://www.utrechter-union.org/page/544/lift_your_head_from_the_water!

In Memoriam Antonius Jan Glazemaker 1931-2018

Archbishop emeritus Antonius Jan Glazemaker died in Amersfoort on Saturday, 20th January 2018, aged 86.

Archbishop Glazemaker was not a man of high-flown theories, his feet were always firmly rooted in the ground (he spoke openly of his farming background); and he was a man of the people. In his sermons, he would often link the biblical texts to the current events of the day. His loyalty to people was borne out by his wide circle of friendships and contacts, often maintained over decades.



In 1979 he became Bishop of Deventer and three years later, at the beginning of 1982, he was elected Archbishop of Utrecht, and thus President of the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference. In this role, he always made the fostering of relations with the Roman Catholic Church and with the Orthodox Churches a matter of key importance. Together with the Secretary of the Bishops' Conference, he promoted international contacts at every level, including the WCC. He regarded the cohesion and unity of the churches of the Utrecht Union to be of vital importance

Under his presidency, the IBC dealt with a number of challenging issues that arose from the social changes of the times. Perhaps the most difficult issue was the introduction of the ordination of women to the priesthood. This process took many years. Once convinced, however, Archbishop Glazemaker, stood by the decision with all its consequences, even though he deeply regretted that this change of policy in the Utrecht Union ultimately led to the withdrawal of the Polish-National Church of America from the Union.

For the whole article see:

http://www.utrechter-union.org/page/553/in_memoriam_antonius_jan_glazema

Talks between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Old Catholic Churches of the Utrecht Union

From 14th to 18th February, a first round of talks took place in Beirut between representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Old Catholic Churches of the Utrecht Union. The Armenian Apostolic Church is one of the churches that, since the middle of the fifth century, has followed a different route to that taken by the Orthodox Churches (to the east) and the Catholic Church (to the west). It is a church which today is particularly active in the ecumenical world. For this reason, the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference decided to form a joint mixed working group on socio-cultural and ethical issues. The aim would be to get to know each other better by reflecting together on some of the challenges facing churches due to changes in society, such as, the role of women in church and society (ordination), consideration of same-sex relations (acceptance and blessings) and the end-of-life (euthanasia, etc.).



The Old Catholic Church was represented in the joint working group by Bishop Dr Harald Rein (Switzerland), co-chair, Professors Dr Andreas Krebs (Bonn) and Dr Peter-Ben Smit (Utrecht). Dr Abel Manoukian (Secretary of the Swiss Council of Religions) was present in a consultative capacity. The Armenian Apostolic Church representatives on the working group were: Bishop Shahe Panossian, Primate/Archbishop of Lebanon; the Ecumenical Officer, the Very Revd Fr Hrant Tahanian; Seminary Director, the Very Revd Fr Boghos Tinkjian; Ms Teny Pirri-Simonian, delegate of the Armenian Apostolic

Church at the WCC in Geneva, and co-chair; Ms Seta Khedeshian, chair of various social organisations of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon; and Ms Araz Kojayan, specialist in the field of gender and family issues. His Holiness, the Catholicos of Cilicia, Aram I, also participated at some of the meetings.

The two delegations met in Antelias, a suburb of Beirut in Lebanon, as the Armenian Apostolic Church is largely located outside Armenia. Of the approximately 8 million members, 4-5 million have lived in the diaspora ever since the systematic persecution of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and in the Turkish state (from the end of the 19th century). This situation gives rise to particular challenges, for example, questions that arise, say, among Armenians living in the United States, do not arise, or appear in a different form, among Armenians in the Republic of Armenia or the Middle East. At the same time, though, the Armenian Apostolic Church has played, and still plays, an important role in the preservation of Armenian culture whereby ethnic identity and religious identity are almost completely identical everywhere.

This first meeting focused on the position of women in the church and in society and on issues of same-sex relationships. This led to some good conversations in a very open atmosphere, often yielding very surprising insights, such as the immense value that the Armenian Apostolic Church places on having a diaconate that is open to both women and men on a completely equal basis. There was plenty of space for raising questions in a broader context; and for developing an awareness that in areas such as the ordination of women and the blessing of same-sex partnerships, these do not of themselves solve all the problems of discrimination, but they do give out an important signal. It is expected that the topic of gender roles in society and the church will also be discussed in a broader debate at the next meeting.

<http://www.utrechter-union.org/?b=557>