

Remembrance and Departure – Paths towards Reconciliation in Europe

22nd International Congress Renovabis, 26-27 September 2018 in Berlin

Remember, understand and reconcile

Europe is currently experiencing a series of crises that are entangled and which mutually reinforce themselves. Therefore, the theme of the 22nd International Congress Renovabis is "Remembrance and Departure - Paths to Reconciliation in Europe".

About 260 experts from 26 countries took part in the 22nd International Congress of Renovabis which was held from 26 to 27 September 2018 in the Catholic Academy in Berlin.

Representatives of UCESM: Fr. Zsolt and Sr. Marjolein.

WEDNESDAY 26 September

The General Director of Renovabis, Rev. Christian Hartl, explained at the opening: "Our conviction is: old and new conflicts can only be solved if there is a willingness to an honest dialogue and to reconciliation. All paths lead through the three steps of remembrance - understanding - reconciliation".



"Remembrance alone is not enough", Rev. Hartl pointed out.

"A mutual understanding of what happened is needed: only then, it might be time to beg forgiveness and - if possible - to grant it".

Here, the Church could give some assistance and provide a valuable service in the accompaniment thanks to its long experience in the reconciliation work.



Any support given by Renovabis serve a good cooperation among the peoples and cultures, help solidarity among people, he said. "In this way, we also promote the reconciliation work together with our partners in Eastern Europe". He was quite aware that there is no guarantee for a reconciled coexistence. "One can merely eliminate any existing obstacles and give time to heal the wounds. But ultimately a reconciled together is always a gift from God", said Rev. Hartl.



Dialogue and exchanges during the 22nd International Congress of Renovabis



Paths of Reconciliation – The topic of the Congress was also addressed through dance acts by which the audience was invited to look into themselves.

After the words of welcome and the opening of the congress, a moderated talk took place: 1918 as a Starting Point for Europe's contemporary Shape.

Participants: - Prof. Dr. Włodzimierz Borodziej, Warsaw (introduction) - Prof. Dr. Étienne François, Berlin - Markus Meckel, Berlin - Dr. Irina Scherbakowa, Moscow; followed by a (as far as I am concerned) very lively exchange within groups on the topic: Remembrance - Understanding – Reconciliation.

In the evening we had an evening prayer (with dance) in the St. Adalbert Church of Berlin.

THURSDAY 27 September

After the Eucharist in the Church of the Academy, St. Thomas Aquinas, and a large buffet breakfast we heard short lectures about the topics: Theology and Politics as defined by Reconciliation, and Psychological Requirements and Consequences of Reconciliation Processes, followed by a discussion.

After the coffee break we dealt with the Judicial Aspects of Reconciliation after War and Violence, followed by a discussion.

In the afternoon we split into working groups. I attended the workshop: "Europe on the Edge - Europe emerging". It was quite interesting, but according to me the participants hardly had the chance to talk. Rather, it was a forum where members reported about their projects (e.g. Frans Hoppenbrouwers about Communicantes).

In the final round, the moderators of the working groups told about their experiences. Rev. Hartl spoke the closing words and that was the end of the Congress.

In the evening, there was a farewell celebration to Dr. Gerhard Albert, Executive Director of Renovabis, which I unfortunately had to waive (too tired).



This year, Renovabis celebrates its 25th anniversary. To show this, there is a gallery of all 25 action posters at this year's Congress

FRIDAY 28 SEPTEMBER

The Jubilee Festivity "25 years Renovabis" took place on 28 September. Since I had a long car ride ahead of me, I left early. Zsolt had already gone the evening before.

For Zsolt and me, the meetings we had there were probably the most important things over these days. We could even submit the request for financial support of our study days in Rome at two places.

I had the pleasure to meet many of the "former" acquaintances (I participated every year as a representative of Bethany in Riga/LV). I was also approached by one of the organizers of the meeting of the DOK in Erfurt ("Missionary Activity in Structural Change") in November, who asked for clarifications on religious life (he is a banker and a "lay" person).

Conclusion: our participation was worth it!

Haelen, 6 October 2018
Sr. Marjolein