

Internationale Altkatholische Bischofskonferenz der Utrechter Union
International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Union of Utrecht
Präsident: Der Erzbischof von Utrecht
President: The Archbishop of Utrecht

Communiqué of the IBC-Meeting in Mödling / A, 23rd - 29th Juni 2002

The Old Catholic bishops, united in the Union of Utrecht, gathered for their annual meeting in Mödling / A from 23rd to 29th June. The business was conducted in a serene and harmonious atmosphere.

During the conference the bishops discussed, among other things, the main topic "Leading and Guidance – being a bishop in an Old Catholic church". The important thing thereby was each bishop's reflection of his own experiences and the mutual exchange with brother bishops. The initial papers were read by Bishop Vobbe and Prime Bishop Swantek. Although the two papers described the different situations in the USA and Europe, some common experiences did appear. The bishop stands on the one hand as the first person to communicate the Good News, and on the other hand as the leader of an "organisation" in an area of great conflict. While the one side is oriented to a spiritual community, the role of leadership requires acceptance of responsibility for decisions, and this must sometimes be carried alone.

Another topic was the contact with other churches, especially with the Anglican Church. In this connection the possible consequences of the Porvoo Agreement between the Church of England and the Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia and the Baltic States were discussed. The participation of Old Catholic Bishops in the consecration of Anglican bishops, in which representatives of the Porvoo churches would also take part, was an important subject of discussion. The subject will need further studies.

Further, talks took place about the form for the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the "Bonn Agreement".

The state of preparations concerning the beginning of dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, on an international level, was reported. A preparatory commission of theologians of both churches will meet in autumn to work out a list of subjects to be discussed.

As always, the bishops also received reports from all the member churches and from other countries in which Old Catholic groups exist, and which are under the care of the IBC. The report on the missionary activities of the PNCC and the statements about the building of communities in Germany received thereby special attention. The bishops accepted further the reports of those theologians and commissions whom the IBC had entrusted with particular responsibilities.

As part of the elections to the committee of the IBC had been postponed the previous year, these were now held. The new bishop of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland, Fritz-René Müller, was elected secretary. In addition, Bishop Robert

Nemkovich from Chicago was elected deputy committee member. He shares the seat on the committee with Bishop Wysoczanski from Warsaw.

Various other duties were then reallocated. Bishop Bert Wirix from the Netherlands was newly entrusted with contacts with the Anglican Church. Bishop Bernhard Heitz from Austria was confirmed as IBC delegate to the churches in the Slovak Republic and in Croatia, and Bishop Fritz-René Müller (CH) will be responsible in future for the Old Catholics in France.

The next meeting of the IBC will take place from 16th - 22nd November 2003 in Prague.

Bern and Utrecht, 12 July 2002

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