

SIESC - TODAY

English Edition

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EDITORIAL

Anniversaries

The year 2014 gives the media the chance to evoke great anniversaries which touch upon the First or Second World War. And we ourselves celebrate other anniversaries, too. Thanks to them, we feel rooted in a history which forges our ecclesiastic or national community. That can be the memory of a personality, such as Theresa of Avila or John Paul II, a personality of our people who has left a mark on our Church or whole mankind. That can also be a recent event such as the first partly free parliamentary election in Poland, or again ancient events: the Edict of Milano or the beginning of the mission of Cyril and Method, whose beneficial consequences are still topical. Thus we manifest our gratitude to the originators of these fundamental acts.

These whom we commemorate can as well serve as examples for us and can inspire us to go ahead, we, too. We will, therefore, have to have the power to resist to the restraints imposed on us which, according to our judgment, lack justice, are discriminatory, disadvantage the least favoured ones, or even go against our moral convictions. We will search how to get out of that situation not only with the help of a moral

attitude, but also by realistic measures, analysing the complexity of the situation. We will perhaps have to know how to innovate just like those great originators of our history: Cyril and Method created a new alphabet in order to evangelize, Theresa of Avila created new convents and, together with John de la Cruz, a new monastic order.

Absolute confidence in the Holy Spirit makes us go beyond what seemed within our range, it makes us abandon the reassuring comfort of habits and falling back on ourselves. Instead of human wisdom it substitutes the only "legitimate prudence for Christians ... practising inner conversion, mutual listening, and openness to others, starting with the most remote ones." Just as Pope Francis proposes, let's stop thinking we can protect ourselves by staying among ourselves, let's go to the margins to meet those who do not belong to the institution "Church". Isn't that what he did on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, practising an open dialogue in mutual respect, thus acting in the service of peace ?

Agnès ROSE

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SIESC–European Federation of Christian Teachers

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Anniversaires

L'année 2014 donne lieu à l'évocation par les médias de grands anniversaires qui touchent à la première ou à la seconde guerre mondiale. Et nous-mêmes célébrons aussi d'autres anniversaires. Grâce à eux, nous nous sentons enracinés dans une histoire qui forge notre communauté ecclésiale ou nationale. Il peut s'agir d'une personnalité, tel Thérèse d'Avila ou Jean-Paul II, une personnalité de notre peuple qui a marqué notre Eglise et toute l'humanité. Ce peut être aussi un événement récent comme la première élection législative partielle libre en Pologne dont nous avons pu observer les suites, ou encore des événements anciens : l'édit de Milan ou le début de la mission de Cyrille et Méthode dont les conséquences heureuses sont toujours actuelles. Nous manifestons ainsi notre gratitude envers les auteurs de ces actes fondateurs.

Ceux que nous commémorons peuvent également nous servir d'exemples et nous inciter à aller de l'avant, nous aussi. Il faudra alors avoir la force de résister à des contraintes imposées que nous jugeons manquer d'équité, être discriminatoires, désavantager les moins favorisés ou même aller à l'encontre de nos convictions morales. Nous chercherons comment sortir de cette situation non seulement par une attitude morale, mais aussi avec réalisme en analysant la complexité de la situation. Il faudra peut-être comme ces grands acteurs de notre histoire savoir innover : Cyrille et Méthode conçurent un nouvel alphabet pour évangéliser, Thérèse d'Avila créa d'autres couvents et, avec Jean de la Croix, un nouvel ordre monastique.

Une absolue confiance en l'Esprit fait aller au-delà de ce qui semblait à notre portée, elle nous fait abandonner le confort rassurant des habitudes et du repli sur soi. A la sagesse humaine, elle substitue la seule «prudence légitime pour des chrétiens, celle de la conversion intérieure, de l'écoute mutuelle et de l'accueil de l'autre, en commençant par le plus éloigné.» Ainsi que nous le propose le pape François, cessons de croire nous protéger en restant entre nous, allons aux marges rencontrer ceux qui n'appartiennent pas à l'institution Eglise. N'est-ce pas ce qu'il a fait lors de son pèlerinage à Jérusalem en pratiquant un dialogue franc dans le respect réciproque, agissant ainsi au service de la paix ?

Agnès ROSE

Jahrestage

Das Jahr 2014 gibt den Medien Anlass, bedeutende Jahrestage in Erinnerung zu rufen, die den Ersten oder den Zweiten Weltkrieg betreffen. Und wir selbst feiern auch andere Jahrestage. Dank ihnen fühlen wir uns in einer Geschichte verwurzelt, die unsere kirchliche oder nationale Gemeinschaft schmiedet. Es kann sich um eine Persönlichkeit handeln, wie Teresa von Avila oder Johannes Paul II., eine Persönlichkeit unseres Volkes, die für unsere Kirche und die ganze Menschheit prägend gewirkt hat. Das kann auch ein jüngst vergangenes Ereignis sein, wie die ersten teilweise freien Parlamentswahlen in Polen, deren Folgen wir beobachten konnten, oder auch antike Ereignisse: das Edikt von Mailand oder der Beginn der Mission von Kyrill und Method, deren glückliche Konsequenzen noch immer aktuell sind. Wir machen so

unsere Dankbarkeit gegenüber den Urhebern dieser grundlegenden Taten kund.

Diejenigen, an die wir erinnern, können uns ebenso als Beispiele dienen und uns aneignen, vorwärts zu gehen, auch wir. Wir werden also die Stärke haben müssen, uns auferlegten Zwängen zu widerstehen, die unserem Urteil nach Gerechtigkeit vermissen lassen, diskriminierend sind, die am wenigsten Begünstigten benachteiligen oder sogar zu unseren moralischen Überzeugungen im Gegensatz stehen. Wir werden suchen, wie wir aus dieser Situation nicht nur durch eine moralische Haltung, sondern auch mit realistischen Maßnahmen heraus kommen, indem wir die Komplexität der Situation analysieren. Wir werden vielleicht wie diese großen Handelnden unserer Geschichte Neuerungen erdenken müssen: Kyrill und Method erdachten ein neues Alphabet für die Evangelisierung, Teresa von Avila gründete andere Klöster und, zusammen mit Johannes vom Kreuz, einen neuen geistlichen Orden.

Absolutes Vertrauen in den hl. Geist lässt uns über das hinausgehen, was in Reichweite schien, es lässt uns den beruhigenden Komfort der Gewohnheiten und des Rückzugs auf sich selbst verlassen. An die Stelle der menschlichen Weisheit setzt es die einzige „für die Christen ... legitime Klugheit ... die der inneren Bekehrung, des gegenseitigen Zuhörens, der Aufnahme des anderen, zuerst des am weitesten Entfernten.“ So wie es uns Papst Franziskus vorschlägt: Hören wir auf zu glauben, dass wir uns schützen, indem wir unter uns bleiben, gehen wir an die Ränder, um denen zu begegnen, die nicht zur Institution Kirche gehören! Ist es nicht das, was er bei seiner Pilgerreise nach Jerusalem getan hat, indem er einen offenen Dialog in gegenseitiger Achtung geführt hat und so im Dienste des Friedens gehandelt hat ?

Agnès ROSE

SIESC'S LIFE

Tasks and objectives of SIESC

After 12 years in the presidency of SIESC I will hand over this function to a younger successor in the course of the year to come. I am, however, ready to continue my collaboration in the Executive Bureau, particularly as a translator.

I am convinced that in those years we have continued the important tradition of SIESC of choosing and dealing with not only interesting contents, but also pedagogical, religious and political topics in turn. That is always done in accordance with the member association which invites SIESC to its country and does the main part of the work of preparing and running the annual meeting. Since we have been documenting all lectures on our website www.siesc.eu for about 10 years, a valuable and, as I think, demanding collection of lectures in the three languages of SIESC has been created. Thus ideas and materials for their work are also offered to colleagues who cannot come to the annual meetings.

Since I have been participating regularly in the summer meetings of SIESC, I have become more and more aware that

SIESC is built primarily on personal contacts between colleagues from diverse European countries. Those contacts are established and strengthened at the annual meetings, but sometimes lead on to personal encounters during the school year, too, and at best to cooperation in events for groups of pupils.

From my predecessors in the presidency I have taken over the wish and the task of winning associations of Christian teachers in other European countries as members and of including colleagues who do not (cannot) belong to a Christian teachers' association in our work and our community. I am glad that now colleagues from Belarus, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Sweden, and Ukraine participate in our annual meetings.

It was always one principle of our work to facilitate, as far as our modest financial means allow it and with the help of the participants of the annual meetings, the participation of colleagues who would not be able to collaborate otherwise.

After long discussions we stated that we have to and want to restrict our work to Europe, while we originally had "international" in our name. On the other hand we now try to appeal to colleagues of all categories of teachers, from elementary pedagogues to university teachers. Thus we take into account that our members do not only teach in diverse school systems, but also care for children of rather different age groups.

It is a pleasure, too, to see that year by year the number of individual members is increasing, either from countries where no Christian teachers' association exists which they can or want to join or colleagues who particularly appreciate our friendly community.

I like my work for SIESC and am very grateful for all the friendships and acquaintances I could make because of it. Yet I think that 12 years in the leading position are enough, and I would like to withdraw to the second line.

Wolfgang RANK

INTERNATIONAL LIFE

Pax Romana report May 2014

Dagmar PAROHOVA has drawn on publications by Pax Romana :

Tomáš Bata: How to overcome a crisis?

Tomáš Bata was a manufacturer from Zlín, Moravia, who built up a world shoe trade. He was also well-known for his caring attitude to his workers. There are still the so called Bata houses, which he built for his employees and their families at Zlín.

A speech, pronounced in 1932, at the time of the world crisis, is still really very valid. People were waiting for a turning point in the economic crisis, for economics to recover then. Bata said he didn't believe in any promise. He supposed that the crisis had come because of people's moral misery. This was the cause of the crisis and the economic decline was an unavoidable effect of it.

He said that the turning point in the crisis might only appear if the crisis really was just a monetary problem, when a company had fallen to the bottom, into disgraceful debts and did not have a penny.

As well as in the thirties of the twentieth century, in our contemporary situation the society is still too rich to reach the turning point. We need moral attitudes: towards people, towards work and public property. It is better not to give support to bankrupts, not to sink into debts, not to waste money and not to exploit working people.

What to do then? It is necessary to work hard, to save money, and that can only be realized if we make working and saving more profitable, more desirable and more honest than lazing about or wasting things. Overcoming the crisis of trust is a necessary requirement, which might only be achieved through adopting moral attitudes and setting an example, not by technical, financial or credit interventions.

Nevertheless, we still do have time to change our minds.

Editor's note : This position has roused various reactions, particularly by Philippe LEDOUBLE, Secretary General of Pax Romana : The model «Bata» was not a model to be imitated, because a moral attitude is not enough, if it doesn't take into account the situation and the economic needs.

The church in Africa : From the Second Vatican Council to the third millenium

A two-day event hosted by the pan-African bishops' conference (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) celebrated the canonization of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II. It was dedicated as an homage to the role of the two popes on the African continent and a look-ahead to the future Africa's role.

The lecturers observed that the two popes were praised by Europeans as two great models of faith, but the European Catholics generally seem to show a certain fatigue that they suffer from.

They praised the popes' work that includes Africans more prominently in the global church and in larger society. The popes were said to have pulled down the wall of racism, even at a time when the Africans were being marginalized.

John XXIII was the first pope to make an African prelate a cardinal, which meant he admitted that an African was capable of being the pope.

John Paul II spoke out against the apartheid regime in South Africa already in the 1980s (which was not an easy task), and was also responsible for the first worldwide meeting of Catholic bishops at the Vatican on the subject of Africa, held in 1994. He helped the «idea of inculturalization», too, which means an integration of African Catholics into the Roman- Catholic church.

On the following days of the conference, many other talks were given, for instance :

1. Reflection on the joint dynamics of the two bishops' synods in Africa, in 1994 and 2009, by Cardinal P. Turkson, the head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
2. A talk on the non-profit organization Pax Africana

3. The role of African women in the church and society, a talk on ecclesial questions in Africa today
4. Testimonies by members of male and female African religious communities, including those founded on the continent, and others.

Dagmar PAROHOVÁ

Pope Francis in Jerusalem

It was a pilgrimage of peace in the middle of the conflicts of the Middle East, in the heart of the country which is in spite of it called the "holy land".

Violent or suppressed conflicts, fights for political power and frequent blasphemies with the name of God, God in whose name they kill.

Divisions of the disciples of Jesus in the very place where Jesus was crucified and resuscitated. An insult to the unity of the Christians!

Pope Francis came in his simple white clothes.

An unexpected event of political dimension got all the international attention, the invitation addressed to Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas to come "to him" to pray together for peace. But the great religious event was the encounter of the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople in the Church of the Holy Tomb because of the 50th anniversary of the historic encounter of Paul VI and Athenagoras. The Pope had before met the responsible representatives of the other Christian churches and communities. He had also met the responsible religious Muslim representatives and, of course, the responsible religious Jewish representatives.



First of all speaking to one another in realistic words, one facing the other and before God. Speaking to one another and recognizing one another as heirs of Abraham in order to work for peace, shalom, salam, strong in the hope of faith, whatever the alarming pieces of information might be that arrive day by day.

A pilgrimage of the peace in three directions, which can't be mixed, but are bound by solidarity.

There is the peace between those who are in an armed or political conflict and apply the Law of the Jungle using contradictory arguments; it is first of all the end of the often bloody violent acts in a search for justice. That is the international dialogue.

There is the peace between the religions, not in order to make purely individual and finally unimportant choices concerning them, still less a confused mixture, but in order to create between the believers an attitude of mutual respect so that religion is no more a pretext for violent acts. That is the objective of the interreligious dialogue, with a very particular position for the Jewish-Christian dialogue.

There is the peace between the different Christian denominations in order to reconstruct the unity of their testimony realizing Jesus' prayer "that they be one ... so that the world believes". That is the oecumenical dialogue.

"Blessed are those who make peace, they will be called sons of God."

Yves CALAIS

Europeinfos

Internet users can, if interested, refer to Europeinfos "the monthly newsletter of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE) and the Jesuit European Office", published in three languages (English, French, German), whose electronic distribution is free of charge.

There they will find, in not too long articles, objective information and serious analyses on various topics open to the diversity and complexity of our European countries.

Agnès ROSE

For all inquiries please turn to Europeinfos

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NEWS FROM MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

Germany - VkdL

VkdL demands genuine emancipation without restriction

On the occasion of this year's World Women's Day on March 8th the Verein katholischer deutscher Lehrerinnen reminded of the merits of women and mothers, which are too often taken for granted as a matter of course. The genuine contribution which women make for society and for which they are not rewarded appropriately is invaluable. In its press release the VkdL demands the recognition of decisions of women for family work or gainful employment outside the family as being of equal value.

VkdL on World Women's Day on March 8th, 2014

As a rule it is stressed on World Women's Day that there are still too few women in chief executive offices and decision-making bodies, that women are paid less for the same work, and that there are too few chances for careers in economy for women. Such demands are orientated by male measures.

"Women are, however, no bad copies of men, but must be acknowledged and appreciated for what they are: women. And if they get children and educate them as responsible personalities, that is no less an achievement than a professional activity in an enterprise", said Roswitha Fischer. Being a teacher the president of the VkdL knows how important the first years are for the development of children. The education by parents forms the foundation for the offspring's whole life. Passing on cultural values and creating a home in family and society are invaluable – are, however, till today not acknowledged and rewarded, but registered as a matter of course contribution of women.

It's about time women liberated themselves from the pressure of having to function according to the rules of men. Society must acknowledge that the psychological, social and pedagogical performance of mothers is as valuable as any other profession. As long as mothers must justify themselves for being mothers instead of following an activity outside the house, they are not emancipated !

Verein katholischer deutscher Lehrerinnen
(VkdL)

Austria - VCL

In an editorial of the VCL-NEWS the president of the VCL summarizes the criticism on the "Zentralmatura" (centralized leaving exam at secondary schools), which will soon be started :

And thus we are again in the midst of a discussion on the Zentralmatura, which has been causing heated debates for a long time.

"Matura light" – just and fair?

For critical remarks by Eckehard Quin had been presented in an intentionally (?) wrong way in some media: Suddenly he, who, of course, always speaks up for a high quality of the Matura, appeared as a supporter of the abolition of the Matura, propagated by the former social-democrat speaker on formation Laura Rudas. In fact the highest representative of the grammar school teachers called the completely centralized Matura, which examines minimum standards and thus for reasons of fairness must be orientated towards the level of the least competitive classes of Austria, a "Matura light" and "worse than no Matura". By that he, of course, did not express the wish to abolish the Matura, but to

reconsider the concept, which will be realized throughout the country next year. That Matura on a low level will, on the paper, testify the school leavers a general entitlement to university studies, it will, however, be less and less accepted by universities and universities of applied science as a certification of the ability of studying. That will result in entrance examinations as a precondition for starting more and more studies.

The intention of bringing more justice to the system will also end up in more injustice, which is also realized by more and more pupils and parents. Is it just that grammar school students of a branch with a focus on and more weekly lessons of languages get the same centralized exam tasks as school leavers of branches with a focus on sciences and more weekly lessons of mathematics? Is it just if they beforehand have better chances of a good mark in their reports and thus perhaps enjoy advantages in entrance examinations? Or is it just that pupils of an Oberstufenrealgymnasium (*sc. grammar schools with upper school classes only*), who mostly come from secondary modern or new middle schools, most of whom have – as results of the standard tests have shown lately – a lot to catch up on when starting the upper school, are measured by the same measures after four years? Is it just that they are refused additional support from the beginning? Questions like that could be continued as you like.

If the ministry and the BIFIE (*sc. Federal Institute for Research and Innovation in Education*) had listened to the objections of the school partners from the beginning onwards, we would now have a partly centralized Matura: consisting of a centralized examination of minimum standards AND of elements prepared by the teachers, as up to now, which reflect the type of school, the priorities set by the school and the special situation of the class. Only mastering both parts you would pass this Matura. And this Matura would by the way be by far less expensive and could more easily be administered. But who listens to experts with practical experience ?

Isabella ZINS

France - CdEP

Prudence:

A way of living according to the Gospel or an oversight of its demands?

Several recent examples have shown how much reluctance the French bishops do show to promote dialogue between catholic people.

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves". (Mt 10, 16)

Over the centuries, many saints have successfully combi-

ned both of these qualities, very often putting first candour, another name for trusting the Holy Spirit, and sometimes throwing prudence to the wind. For which they indeed earned the right to be recommended as examples to the Christian people.

As for the Church as an institution, it has regularly shown prudence, by emphasising the transmission of the official Christian doctrine and limiting discussion as much as possible. Would it be that the Gospel suggests a clear division of roles? Candour for the saints, prudence for the institution? It is of course an untenable position, as the institution has no other legitimacy than gathering the Christian people in praise to allow them to testify to humanity of the candour of God who gives freely and grants pardon without measure. How could the Church do otherwise unless through living this candour in a complete trust in the Spirit?

This is the rut which our Church of France must step out of. In these times of collapse of religious practice and shortage of priestly vocations, the temptation is to withdraw to what seems the safest. The "Vatican II generations" are progressively disappearing, or losing the strength to be the driving force in the Church. So one looks to those who have been flourishing for some time, very often in full ignorance of the guidelines of Vatican II, and who regard themselves as the hope of the Church, especially these "new communities" and these young priests who update and "redecorate" former devotions. One makes of the Church a secure cocoon where you can retrieve "everlasting religion" (from the 19th century!), even if, under the guise of proclaiming the Gospel, one occasionally gets out of it to give a piece of one's mind to a society considered as hostile or not catholic-friendly. Does all of this have anything to do with the Gospel?

The Holy Spirit has given us a pope who offers to draw again from the Gospel's source the candour of doves, to turn away from petty quarrelling about rites and legal quibbles, to stop thinking we should protect ourselves or our institution, and on the opposite feel free to go to the margins, to invite to the Banquet the crippled and the lame of life, the publicans and the prostitutes. But we go on playing it safe, backtracking at the first sign of disagreement, and considering dialogue between believers as a dangerous undertaking.

What people of little faith we are! What distrust in the Spirit promised by Jesus are we able to show! And how can we hope to proclaim the message of the Gospel to the people of our time, if the only wisdom we dare put into practice is the human wisdom! There is no other legitimate prudence for Christians than practising inner conversion, mutual listening, and openness to others, starting with the most remote ones. But certainly not giving up fraternal dialogue. under the guise of proclaiming the Gospel.

After Gérard Fischer's editorial; April 2014.

Website: www.cdep-asso.org . <<http://www.cdep-asso.org>>

A spectre is wandering in schools : INVALSI Tests !

The time of the administration of the INVALSI tests (National Institute for the Evaluation of the educational system of teaching and formation) in schools is approaching and in schools the same air of storm is circulating! By all of us, teachers and learners, this activity is experienced like a "top-down imposition" with a discriminatory purpose, in order to select the best ones and expose the worst ones to the public!

INVALSI Tests, i.e. national standardized tests for evaluating the achievements of learning, are administered in May in the second and fifth years of primary school, the first and third years of lower secondary school and now also all second years of upper secondary school.

Against the tests, their meaning and their purpose, every year a heavy controversy is started by teachers and parents, following different motivations but united in their rejection of an abusive external control. Parents, in fact, fear that this test «evaluates» their children in some way and that this assessment will leave traces at state level. Teachers, on the contrary, fear that the assessment of students is a first step towards differentiating wages on the basis of the results of the classes or schools or even could be used to introduce differences in granting resources between schools, between provinces or between the regions of Italy.

The institute INVALSI, for its part, asserts that these fears are groundless and that «*the administration of the tests arises from the need to provide the country with an assessment of the results achieved by the School in line with the most advanced experiences on international level*». (...)

How to get out of this deadlock?

It would be necessary to involve the teaching staff and not only push through the tests by force.

Moreover, how can you ask teachers to be reduced to mere transcribers of numbers of tests designed and structured by other persons without any consultative involvement on their side? That's why a lot of teachers now have the feeling that the school at work, the persons who are in the classroom every day are considered only literate workers, compared with educated researchers of INVALSI divorced from reality. (...)

Teachers, therefore, do not see in these tests any utility for their own work and, in our opinion, that's exactly the point! There is up till now a lack of relationship between school and INVALSI, there is a lack of a real project of informing/training teachers which could make them aware of the purposes of the tests and the importance of using feedback of the results to improve their own professional qualities.

We have to hope for a *new deal* of the INVALSI system, which, in a relationship with school, by informing and educating teachers, asks for their collaboration; that procedure would concern the evaluation of the school system and could provide useful data for calibrating the school plans of formation (POF) and the involved activities in a more and more effective and active way.

Elena FAZI
General Secretary of UCIIM

The wind blows wherever it pleases

John Paul II was recently proclaimed Saint together with John XXIII. In our church there was a great celebration. Many people came, even those who normally do not attend masses. What made them come? Gratitude? Respect for the popes who by their example showed the way?

John Paul II visited Slovenia twice. He confirmed us in the faith and beatified A. M. Slomšek, who became the patron of teachers, educators, parents, and students. He affirmed that small nations could be great, too.

Ten years have passed since Slovenia became a member of the European Union of nations. The Fathers of Europe wanted us to be united in the spirit of liberty and equality. Are we really? We would like to believe that.

We are proud that DKPS hosts you, dear colleagues by profession and thinking, at the meeting of SIESC with the title: Art, Spirituality, Education. As our greatest poet France Prešeren elevated Slovenian poetry to the European level, we would like this meeting to contribute to our common well-being, to open up and expand our view on teaching and our perception of various arts that are necessarily intertwined with spirituality, as it is the spirit that emerges from the supernatural and forms the basis of every real art. Indirectly, it also depends on the teacher, on how he/she accepts and understands spirituality and shares it as a guide with the young.

In the Slovenian Code of Ethics it is stated that our students should become happy persons. How can a teacher show the way without being happy him/herself? Where does happiness come from? In a world governed by materialism, where technology precedes the heart, it is difficult. Nevertheless, the teacher who believes that you are not alone and believes in the better world can show the way of happiness to a young person by his/her radiance that comes from the contact with oneself and the transcendent. During history many oppressed teachers guarded their inner strength because they leaned on the transcendent and believed that there is a source of good in each person.

Catholic teachers would like to equip young persons with truth, love of art and beauty, which can also be found in books. We believe that this is possible. The Russian writer Maxim Gorki wrote somewhere: "Love the book! It will make life easier. It will help you in a friendly way by colourful and exciting thoughts, feelings, and events. It will teach you to value man and yourself, give wings to the mind and the heart and a feeling of love to the world and man."

If you have eyes open for beauty and the transcendent, you can survive most serious conditions. That is also the aim to be shown to the young person, as it is the teacher's task to know him/herself in order to teach the others.

Jana OZIMEK, Magdalena JARC

Poland - KIK

Canonizations

On April 27th the Church in Poland, together with the universal Church, experienced a great day - the day when Pope Francis canonized two of his predecessors: John XXIII and John Paul II. John XXIII was pope for less than five years, but he has been written down in history as the initiator of the Vatican Council II. He will also be remembered as the pope of goodness. Pope John Paul II during the nearly 27 years of his pontificate made 104 pilgrimages to 132 foreign countries of the world. He was a true missionary pope.

For Poles, John Paul II was not only a great pope, but also the man to whom they largely owe independence, after years of communism. All of them remember the sermon delivered in Warsaw in June 1979, when, in a distinct voice, he said: «Let your Spirit descend and renew the face of the earth, THIS earth.» It gave great strength to stand up against the communist authorities and resulted in the creation of a multi-million «Solidarity» movement in 1980. Although it was not yet the end of the fight, because we had to survive the difficult times of martial law, John Paul II constantly had an impact on the attitude of the Poles and their desire for freedom.

In recent days, on June 4th, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the first partially free parliamentary elections, which are widely considered to be the beginning of democratic changes in whole Central Europe. Attendance at the anniversary celebrations of about 50 heads of European states, as well as U.S. President Barack Obama, is a testimony to the importance of this anniversary. Although John Paul II is dead, the impact that he had on the Poles is not questioned.

Małgorzata WOJCECHOWSKA

NEWS FROM GUESTS

Spain

500th anniversary of the birthday of saint Teresa of Avila

On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the birthday of St. Teresa of Avila, 2015 will be a jubilee year in Spain due to a decision by Pope Francis. The inauguration will take place on October 15th, 2014, with particular promises of grace to the faithful that will participate in this event.

During this jubilee year numerous expositions and congresses will celebrate aspects of the life and the work of the saint, first of all in Avila but also in other places of Spain and various countries.

St. Teresa, Spanish mystique and writer, was born on March 28th, 1515 and died on October 4th, 1582. After 25 years of religious life in the Carmel Order, which had lost its fervour, she became the founder of the Unshoed Carmelites. She reformed or created 17 convents. She was beatified by Paul V in 1614, canonised by Gregory XV in 1622 and named Teacher of the Universal Church by Paul VI in 1970.

In the office of her feast day the Church qualifies the teaching of St. Teresa as "heavenly". Her mystical works highlight the most secret aspects of the human soul. Her writings first of all underline the spirit of prayer, the way of exercising it and the fruits it produces.

During her ecstasies God's grandeur and goodness, the excess of his love and the sweetness of his service manifested themselves in a sensitive way. The desire for heaven that the visions provided in her soul were unspeakable. "*Vivo sin vivir en mi, y tant alta vida espero, que muero porque non muero.*" (*I live without living in myself and hope for such a high life that I die for not dying.*)

Among her works first of all "The way to perfection" for directing her religious sisters, "The foundations" for edifying and encouraging them, and "The interior castle" for teaching all Christians are well-known.

One of her best known poems is:

<i>Nada te turbe</i>	<i>Nothing should trouble you,</i>
<i>Nada te espante</i>	<i>nothing should frighten you,</i>
<i>Todo se pasa</i>	<i>everything passes.</i>
<i>Dios no se muda ;</i>	<i>God doesn't change;</i>
<i>La paciencia</i>	<i>by patience</i>
<i>Todo lo alcanza ;</i>	<i>you obtain everything;</i>
<i>Quien a Dios tiene</i>	<i>To him who has God</i>
<i>Nada le falta :</i>	<i>nothing is missing:</i>
<i>Sólo Dios basta.</i>	<i>God alone is enough.</i>

Together with St. John of the Cross she also founded two convents of reformed Carmelites. In our days the Unshoed Carmelite nuns are about 14 000 in 835 convents all over the world. The Unshoed monks are 3800 in 490 convents.

Antonia QUEVEDO

Luxembourg

Fast changings in Luxembourg

The Grand-Duchy has celebrated its 175th anniversary and the 10th anniversary of its University. The country is undergoing quick changings. Economically it seems to be slightly recovering after five years of crisis, even though it's not yet known what the consequences of the end of bank secrecy will be. The strong demographic growth brings forth new challenges : almost half of the population are foreigners, not counting the 160 000 daily commuters ; traffic is a major issue ; the local school system has problems to cope with the multicultural and plurilingual population of children...

Luxembourg is associated not so much with its beautiful landscapes, but rather with its banks, European institutions, RTL or Jean-Claude Juncker. Last year's anticipated elections brought about a coalition of socialists, liberals and greens, thus breaking the predominance of the Christian Social Party. Despite the fact that clericalism is out since long, the new government wants to push religion into the strictly private area. The free choice between religion and ethics at school is going to disappear ; abortion will be totally legalized ; homosexual marriage including full child adoption and artificial procreation voted in 2014. A new constitution leaving the Grand Duke a mere symbolic role and allowing foreign residents to vote for the Parliament are planned, though after a referendum. Various citizens' petitions are supposed to improve the quality of democracy. Street demonstrations took place recently : students protesting against the substantial reduction of scholarships ; and parents against the abolition of teaching religion. The church meets major challenges : lack of vocations, decay of traditional catholic organizations, the impending separation of state and churches, restructuring of the parishes, pastoral care for children and young people, social and ethical issues, oecumenic dialogue... The archbishop is quite dynamic, but the future of the church lies in a far more active role of lay believers. Anyway, the church has become a privileged place of intercultural community life.

André GROSBUSCH

Serbia

On Two Important Anniversaries

During the past year we have celebrated two very important anniversaries. One is the 1700 years from the Edict of Milan declaration made by the roman emperor Saint Constantine. Since he was born in Naissus (today's Serbian city of Niš) the central manifestations was held in Serbia. The holy liturgy was served by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew together with many orthodox bishops. Many Christians from all over the world contributed to this holy service. We all remember the Edict of Milan and the greatness of Saint Constantine who brought Christians a freedom and right to confess their own religion without being persecuted.

Another anniversary is the 1150 years of the beginning of the mission work of Saint Cyril and Methodius in the Slavic regions. Coming from the Thessaloniki, Byzantine Empire, they were introducing Orthodox Christianity to the Slavic peoples. For that purpose, they and their pupils created the Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabets, the oldest known Slavic alphabets, to translate the Bible and other Christian texts into the Slavic languages. The holy brothers, St. Cyril and Methodius are celebrated in many Slavic nations and they are titled as "equal-to-apostles".

The Land of the Living

*I would see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Psalm 27,13*

"The Land of the Living" is a non-profit organization, which deals with psycho-social rehabilitation and re-socialization of young drug addicts. The entire project is driven by Serbian Orthodox Church, Diocese of Bačka, Novi Sad.

The project is implemented in three stages: Presentation of the program to the young people with drug problems; Entry and free stay of young people with addiction problems in the camps and their education; Taking responsibility for the new program participants. All jobs in the community are carried out by the recipients, depending on their maturity and the time spent. Stay in the community involves psychosocial and spiritual rehabilitation. Recipients are engaged in the commune on jobs which allow them to build healthy personality. Each new award is in gradually given more responsible tasks. The structure of recipients is diverse regardless of religion, ethnicity, economic status and place of residence. Since 2005, 350 young people have passed through the peer education program in one of seven communities. 82% of them successfully completed the program becoming the active and productive members of society.

Bojan MILJEVIC
Orthodox Association of Teachers

Sweden

Swedish school reforms disadvantageous for students with special needs

Lärarnas Riksförbund, one of the major teacher associations in Sweden, observes in a report that the achievement gap in Swedish schools is steadily increasing. Teachers are not given the time and the opportunity necessary for helping the group of students that is in most need of support from the school in order to thrive and be equipped for further studies. (...).

The educational background of the parents is also an important factor, Children of parents with low education tend to drop out from – or never even embark on – secondary education more than children of well-educated parents. We wish for more emphasis on the importance of a good attitude towards teachers and their task – an attitude of trust and respect. Education must once again become a priority.

The Swedish school system has changed dramatically during the last 20 years. The most critical reform is the transfer from central to local school government in 1991. The schools are now run by the municipalities. Instead of being invested in the development of the schools, money is spent on various – often not very useful – local projects. Many teachers are critical towards this reform. For the quality of education between different parts of the country therefore varies to an alarming extent.

The workload of teachers has increased dramatically, mostly due to the constantly growing administrative duties that are laid upon them. (...) All this taken together results in less time for the teacher to connect with each student on her/his level. The comparably low payment of teachers has strongly contributed to making the profession less attractive. Last, but not least, the quality of teacher education has declined.

School issues have been intensively debated the last four years and many reforms have been made. The Swedish National Agency for Education has, by order of the Government, introduced career programmes for teachers. All teachers can now apply for a position as senior teacher, the main focus of which will be to develop means for improving methods and results in the schools.

Since 2014 is an election year the school debate has intensified. (...) However, all parties agree on the point that support must be offered at a much earlier stage for students with special needs.

UllaCarin DAHL-ROLFÖ
Annette WESTÖÖ



A note from the editor

SIESC-TODAY publishes articles of two types :

1 /It provides information concerning the life of SIESC and international affairs : for this SIESC governing body takes on full responsibility.

2/ On their authors' own responsibility, it publishes information coming from member and partner associations as well as from guests to allow them to put into dialogue their own positions and to lead readers to think about these positions which can not be shared by everybody.

OUR BEST THANKS TO OUR TRANSLATORS