

# SIESC - TODAY

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## EDITORIAL

### Tasks, a heritage

What is Europe doing ? That is a question often put. We do, indeed, expect of it to fulfil together with each member state tasks which seem urgent to us in front of economic difficulties, floods of refugees, terrorist attacks. The EU and the governments have to take decisions based on serious reflection, so have the citizens. As teachers we have the task to educate to democratic citizenship, as Christians the task to be open to the interreligious dialogue.

How to fulfil those tasks ? First of all we must get to know history in order to understand the present better and to overcome clichés and prejudices, sources of hostility. We have received a heritage from our ancestors. The teacher knows that he/she has to pass on a patrimony of knowledge and values; forming the critical mind of the young people he/she will allow them a free appropriation of it. If we Christians are clearly conscious of our mission as baptized persons, we will take to the heart transmitting our Christian faith, its values and its life. Thus we will be able to construe a new culture in an

environment of peace, freedom, democracy, and plurality.

We must therefore commit ourselves. That can happen in the political or trade unionist world, but also in the world of associations, in the world of the Church, without neglecting our professional and everyday lives. The options can be various; whatever they are, we will act in a sense of serving and in dialogue. At school the human relationships will be benevolent towards all. School and parents must be able to work together for the moral education of the children. In our multicultural societies the intercultural and the interreligious dialogue can allow those who live together to reinforce their common life. But not all are open to it, therefore we must commit ourselves to a long lasting work of preparing them for it. It is one who sows, it is another one who reaps. Let's be "witnesses of life and hope".

Agnès ROSE

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## Des tâches, un héritage

Que fait l'Europe ? C'est là une question souvent posée. En effet nous attendons d'elle qu'elle remplisse avec chacun des Etats membres des tâches qui nous semblent urgentes face aux difficultés économiques, au flux de réfugiés, aux attentats terroristes. UE et gouvernements ont à prendre des décisions appuyées sur une réflexion sérieuse, les citoyens aussi. En tant qu'enseignants nous avons la tâche d'éduquer à la citoyenneté démocratique, en tant que chrétiens celle d'être ouverts au dialogue interreligieux.

Comment remplir ces tâches ? D'abord il nous faut connaître l'histoire afin de mieux comprendre le présent et de surmonter les clichés et préjugés, sources d'hostilité. Nous avons reçu un héritage de nos aînés. L'enseignant sait qu'il a à transmettre un patrimoine de connaissances et de valeurs ; en formant le sens critique du jeune, il lui en permettra la libre appropriation. Chrétiens, si nous avons une conscience claire de notre mission de baptisés, nous aurons à cœur de transmettre notre foi chrétienne, ses valeurs et sa vie. Nous pourrons alors avec les jeunes construire une nouvelle civilisation dans une ambiance de paix, de liberté, de démocratie et de pluralisme.

Il faut donc nous engager. Ce peut être dans la vie politique ou syndicale mais aussi dans la vie associative, dans la vie de l'Eglise sans négliger la vie professionnelle et la vie quotidienne. Les options peuvent être diverses ; quelles qu'elles soient, nous agissons avec le sens du service et dans le dialogue. A l'école les relations humaines seront bienveillantes pour tous. Ecole et parents doivent pouvoir collaborer à l'éducation morale des enfants. Dans nos sociétés multiculturelles, le dialogue interculturel et interreligieux peut permettre à ceux qui sont en cohabitation de renforcer leur vivre ensemble. Mais tous n'y sont pas ouverts, un long travail est donc à engager pour les y préparer. Autre est celui qui sème, autre est celui qui récolte. Soyons «témoins de vie et d'espérance».

Agnès ROSE

## Aufgaben, ein Erbe

Was tut Europa ? Das ist eine häufig gestellte Frage. Wir erwarten tatsächlich von ihm, dass es zusammen mit jedem einzelnen Mitgliedstaat Aufgaben erfüllt, die uns gegenüber den wirtschaftlichen Schwierigkeiten, dem Strom von Flüchtlingen, den terroristischen Attentaten dringend erscheinen. Die EU und die Regierungen müssen Entscheidungen treffen, die sich auf ernste Überlegung stützen, die Bürger/innen auch. Als Lehrer/innen haben wir die Aufgabe, zu einem demokratischen Bürgerbewusstsein zu erziehen, als Christ/inn/en die, für den interreligiösen Dialog offen zu sein.

Wie können wir diese Aufgaben erfüllen ? Zuerst müssen wir die Geschichte kennen lernen, um die Gegenwart besser zu verstehen und die Clichés und Vorurteile zu überwinden, Quellen der Feindschaft. Wir haben ein Erbe von unseren Vorfahren erhalten. Der/Die Lehrende weiß, dass er/sie ein Erbe an Wissen und Werten weiterzugeben hat; wenn er/sie den kritischen Sinn der Jugendlichen bildet, wird er/sie ihnen eine freie Aneignung dessen ermöglichen. Wenn wir als Christ/inn/en ein klares Bewusstsein unsere Sendung als Getaufte haben, wird es uns ein Herzensanliegen sein, unse-

ren christlichen Glauben, seine Werte und sein Leben weiterzugeben. Wir werden dann zusammen mit den Jugendlichen eine neue Kultur in einer Umgebung des Friedens, der Freiheit, der Demokratie und der Pluralität aufbauen.

Wir müssen uns also engagieren. Das kann vielleicht im politischen oder gewerkschaftlichen Leben sein, aber auch im Leben der Vereinigungen, im Leben der Kirche, ohne das berufliche und das tägliche Leben zu vernachlässigen. Die Wahlmöglichkeiten können unterschiedlich sein; wie immer sie sind, wir werden im Geist des Dienens und im Dialog handeln. In der Schule werden die menschlichen Beziehungen wohlwollend gegenüber allen sein. Schule und Eltern müssen für die moralische Erziehung der Kinder zusammenarbeiten können. In unseren multikulturellen Gesellschaften können der interkulturelle und der interreligiöse Dialog denen, die zusammen leben, ermöglichen, ihr gemeinsames Leben zu stärken. Aber nicht alle sind dafür offen, man muss sich also für eine langdauernde Arbeit engagieren, sie dafür vorzubereiten. Es ist ein anderer, der sät, ein anderer, der erntet. Seien wir „Zeugen des Lebens und der Hoffnung“.

Agnès ROSE

## LA VIE DU SIESC

### In memory to Malgorzata Wojciechowska

We knew that her health was threatened by cancer, which developed quickly. She died on Sunday, March 22nd, surrounded by her relatives.



We appreciated her a lot in SIESC since her first coming to the meeting in Dublin in 1997 and after that for her participation in the Council. The share that she took upon herself for the preparation and the running of the meeting in Warsaw 2011 greatly contributed to its success. We asked her to be one of our vice-presidents.

In Poland she was lecturer in history at Warsaw University, doctor of human sciences. She was one of the most active members of KIK, the Club of Catholic Intellectuals, and she participated in political life in the party of Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

Her smiling simplicity, her readiness to serve, and her persistence were her power.

“Thank you, Malgorzata, for having been the woman you were. May you live in the peace and the unlimited joy of the Lord whom you have loved.”

Her 5 children, her mother and her family know that we are associated with them in their grief and their prayer.

Yves CALAIS

### Europe's greatest challenges and tasks

For Europeans nowadays three tasks seem especially urgent to me: improving the economic situation (especially in order to reduce youth unemployment), a common policy of getting to grips with the floods of refugees, and preventing radicalization and terrorist attacks by religious fundamentalists.

We are right to expect for all those tasks purposeful decisions by the EU and its member states, we are right to expect contributions by the religions and churches, but we must also think about what we as teachers and Christians can do to improve the situation.

In that context parts of a resolution by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (in which 47 European states cooperate) seem important to me:

– “Intercultural and interreligious dialogue must be intensified.

– The Council of Europe should develop papers helping in the education to democratic citizens, in intercultural education, and in teaching history at schools. Till the end of 2015 a list of abilities, skills, attitudes, and knowledge which pupils are to acquire as future citizens should be presented. Following that a conference of the ministers of education is to discuss their realization.”

That second item sounds a bit technocratic and unrealistic and the Council of Europe has certainly taken on too much here. Following the idea of subsidiarity, such plans must probably first be started on the national level, which might be difficult enough. On the other hand it is obvious and must be supported that in this respect, too, cooperation on a European level must be aimed at.

In any case it is obvious from those thoughts as well that the contribution of teachers and Christians must strive for the following objectives:

- Intensifying the intercultural and interreligious dialogue
- Education to democratic citizens in knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes
- Knowledge of history in order to be able to understand the present and overcome prejudices and concepts of enemies
- Commitment for philosophical and religious thoughts that can offer help in this difficult situation.

If you study the survey of topics of the annual meetings of SIESC on our website, read the lectures stored there in some previous years (and if you think of the encounters, conversations and discussions at our annual meetings), you can state that SIESC has been trying to take up those concerns for a lot of years and has been calling upon its members to collaborate in those tasks which are especially decisive for Europe, too.

Wolfgang RANK, President of SIESC

### The difficult interreligious dialogue

Since Vatican II and the positioning of the Œcumenical Council of Churches the interreligious dialogue has found entrance in our identity as Christians. We know how to practise it around ourselves between believers who really want it; but the circumstances worldwide and the situations of confrontation, as long as there is not violent war, make it difficult and as it were impossible in the Middle East, in Africa, and in Asia.

There are the obvious political confrontations and fights for power, but with us there is first of all a difference in understanding the very object of the interreligious dialogue. Catholics, Lutheran and Reformed Protestants, Anglicans are open to the dialogue and active in working for the peace inscribed in the project of the Creation, a great number of Jews, too. A better knowledge of one another does away with clichés and prejudices as sources of hostility, a sound and holy spiritual competition and forms of collaboration in society are often attached to it. You must remember that the interreligious dialogue has not got as its object the unification of the religions nor the conversion to one's own religion, and that every interreligious dialogue has its special features, and that the dialogue of conversion has its proper aims and means. From their point of view Evangelical Protestants, many Orthodox Christians and the Muslims are interested in the dialogue first of all in order to make their religion known, the first stage of a dialogue intending conversion. There you have two attitudes which are not immediately reconcilable.

There is another determining difference on a different level. In the history of life the religious environment of the ones or the others has not developed in a comparable way and the religions haven't taken in the successive steps of modernisation in the same way. The results are lack of understanding or negative judgements which do not favour the dialogue.

Those two differences make us understand a part of the difficulties of the interreligious dialogue. It is already possible and wanted between those who are in the situation of cohabitation, exactly in order to reinforce their living together; we must deepen it. It ought to be prepared with those who are not open to it, a lengthy task to be taken up from now on, but which will bear fruit only after generations following us.

Yves CALAIS

### Austria - VCL

#### The main task of school

*In an editorial the president of VCL reports about thoughts of Univ. Prof. Stefan Hopmann.*

The main task of school (is) not qualification – over-emphasized at the moment -, i.e. transmitting what is simply useful, but cultivation meaning character formation, education to the community, which helps the children and youths to begin things together with others, realize them and complete them.

Brush up your Aristotle: Knowledge and ability alone are not enough!

It's not school structures that are decisive, but transitions and entitlements! Moreover it is extremely dangerous to change school structures at the very time when not only money for reforms is lacking, but debts in excess are there so that massive cuts are threatening. Or is that exactly what is intended: Cutting expenses by reforming? You can't help suspecting bad intentions!

Professor Hopmann, too, judges the situation in a similar way: Austria can push back private educational suppliers only with difficulty. Real estate agents are ready to go from their starting blocks: If the public school system turned uncertain, parents would search for alternatives.

The idealistic objectives, i.e. equalization of the social differences by creating a "just and equal school system", are in fact turned into the opposite. For science knows: Only 5 to 15 % of the variance of test results (to be concrete: the results of testing educational standards) could be put down to the individual school. The basic assumptions underlying our present educational policies cannot be proved empirically.

What is true, is:

- Schools cannot compensate for differences of the parental home: Therefore, genuine help is only possible, if you start with the concrete circumstances of the families and if the state supports creating a stable family life.
- Equalizing teaching and individualization do not lead up to better performance of all pupils.
- Schools with strong cultivation and good form and school climate show better performance in the medium term! And they teach the children what is of the same value later on according to superiors: punctuality, being able to finalise something, reliability etc.
- Schools can only meet the expectations,
  - if they cultivate cognitive, social and cultural diversity,
  - if they accept heterogeneous ways of qualification and forms of results,
  - if they convince by high achievements of cultivation (school identity) and success in following institutions.

If schools take that task of development upon them, any school reform becomes unnecessary. That is a demand on pedagogues and parents. It is up to them to strengthen the basis for successful learning. To return to Prof. Hopmann once again: What is needed, is a school emphasizing qualification AND cultivation, a school practising a culture of failures and a culture of tolerance and, of course, demanding achievement, a school involving parents still more than up till now, so that they participate in school life and identify themselves with "their" school. The Austrian Gymnasium has a future, according to the educational scientist, if it remembers the priority of cultivation and focusses on formation instead of measuring competences and if it acquires acceptance beyond the circle of its own clients!

Isabella ZINS

### France - CdEP

#### Teaching ethics/morals and citizenship in today's school

Since the beginning of 2015 the news in FRANCE have been full of social and political events.

Our school system has been under attack and has been mobilized to find a meaning and to draw lessons after what happened not only on our territory but in the whole world.

The attempts on 'CHARLIE HEBDO' and the Koshers supermarket have aroused the individual consciousness of our citizens...holding in mind the reformation of our state school system with programmes dealing with morality and republican values.

The law on making inquiries about people, even if not being a real concern for our people, comes from these events and lets us wonder about the freedom of everyone to 'live together'. This principle is dear to a republican school and can't be ignored.

In a way these programmes can be linked. Our school system and education as a whole are under scrutiny in these programmes. And that's what makes it difficult.

The moral and civic teaching aiming at a free and enlightened adaptation of principles which found our republic and our democracy aim at transmitting a base of moral values: men's equality, enjoying natural and undefeasable rights represented by equality, freedom, safety, ownership and the right to be taught.

These values can be found in three great proclamations about men's rights:

- In 1793, the proclamation of men's and citizens'

rights; -in 1948 the 'universal proclamation of men's rights; - in 1950 the 'European convention on men's rights.

They are called: sensitivity, following norms (meaning cultivating rules and law), judgment and commitment.

Teachers must remain obviously neutral. Teaching is also based on a kindly and exacting school system favouring self-esteem and the spreading out of moral sense and critical spirit.

In French society undenominationalism ensures this coherence, which enables a teacher to accomplish his mission in a pressure free environment.

Anyway, moral education is not the only responsibility of our school system. It should start inside families. Now, if values and norms for this teaching are clearly defined for schools, it is not the same with families.

What links teaching with state, communities and parents is our School Educational Project anchored in the dimension of undenominationalism. It must be carried out by the institution and be meant for all students as a way bill of our state education. This principle has often been beaten or misled and our school system must keep it alive.

Our school system is right in the middle of a turmoil. In many schools we feel how hard it is to take upon ourselves the responsibility to 'set the child up in our society' and to make him or her 'become a citizen'.

Sylvie PAQUET

## Italy - UCIIM

### UCIIM is 70 years old

On March 12th to 14th UCIIM remembered its 70 years of life by means of a conference entitled "UCIIM: 70 years of activity at the service of the person, of the school".

It was on June 18th, 1944, when, while in much of Italy war was still fought, in a Rome just liberated Gesualdo Nosengo founded UCIIM on the assumption that school and democracy were the pillars of the rebirth of the country.

The conference was developed comprising past and future.

The first day dealt with the topic "Appreciation of our history for building a positive future". After the greetings of the National President of UCIIM, Rosalba Candela, and of the guests - including two former Ministers of Education - the emeritus presidents and other executives summarized the most important moments in the history of our association and the opening perspectives for its commitment in a profoundly changed reality after 70 years.

The second day was devoted to "*Ideas and proposals for a real school*". Coordinated by the National Secretary Elena Fazi, four experts of UCIIM showed the various open questions in the moving reality of the Italian school and the possible areas of

action for professional associations such as UCIIM.

But the most significant and exciting moment occurred on March 14th with the special audience with Pope Francis, which was attended by about 2,000 people, members and their families.

Pope Francis greeted the audience with a «dear colleagues» that immediately won and conquered the audience; he recalled his experience as a teacher and «the days spent in the classroom with students» and stressed that «teaching is a beautiful work, unfortunately poorly paid» in relation to the commitments and the responsibilities that it entails. He indicated the «right idea of school: a school surely made of valid and qualified education, but also of human relationships, acceptance, benevolence, to be offered to all without any distinction». To the members of UCIIM the Pope, in particular, recalled that the age of 70 "is a good age at which everyone can even begin to take stock of a lifetime", but also that we must open ourselves to the future because «there are always new generations to whom we have to transmit the heritage of knowledge and of values» and he encouraged to be "witnesses of life and hope".

And this encouragement strengthens a UCIIM which starts again for the next 70 years.

Maria Vittoria CAVALLARI

## Slovénia - DKPS

### Law on Marriage and Family Relations

The amendment to the Law on Marriage and Family Relations, adopted by the Slovenian Parliament, provides a new definition of marriage as a community of two persons and equalizes the rights of same-sex couples to the rights of husband and wife in current marriage.

By supporters of the new law any objection to this was seen as intolerance against people of different sexual orientation and as a violation of their rights to shape their lives according to their beliefs. Christian love of neighbour compels us to accept the decision of individuals without judging them.

Mutual relations of homosexual persons are already governed by the law on the registration of same-sex couples. According to our understanding marriage is a fruitful relationship of husband and wife in order to create a family. This is not possible for same-sex couples by their nature, so it makes sense that it is not subject to the same law.

Catholic educators expect that the secular authorities recognize and continue to accept the specific nature of marriage, which is limited to husband and wife and is recognized by Christians as a community of two who have before God and the Church decided to live together and accept children.

School educates children and youth and prepares them to family life, represented by father, mother, and children. The role of each parent in the family is presented to them. Now it will be necessary to redefine the family, since it can be composed of two women or two men. This will introduce even

more confusion among young people, and will lead them away from the basic objective of society: providing young people to have a healthy psychosocial and intellectual development and thus creating responsible personalities of adult people, oriented towards the prosperity of Slovenian society.

There is no right to a child, including in vitro fertilization and adoption (...).

The Association of Catholic Educators anxiously monitors all these developments, because we fear that it will also create the legal basis for the amendment of curricula that will promote lifestyles that are contrary to our Christian values.

Unfortunately, the open opposition by the Slovenian church to the new law has mobilized its opponents to become supporters of the amended (...).

The law has been the subject of heated debate even before adoption. Opponents of the new law have succeeded in a very short period of time to gather enough support for a referendum, and taking the law as a case to the Constitutional Court has only intensified this polarization. Now we are left first with the decision by the Constitutional Court on if the constitutional rights are violated by the new law or by the referendum on it, and then, if given the opportunity to additional reflection by every voter in the referendum: Is the new law the right way of life for me and for my descendants?

Jasna KORBAR

### **That meeting will be a way of:**

Uniting young people of other movements, cultures and countries.

Living the experience of being Catholic Church as mystery and communion starting from the experience of Saint Teresa.

Having a clear consciousness of our mission as baptized, which is giving testimony of the faith in Christ.

Getting to know the topicality of the Christian message taught by Teresa de Jesús, a message which continues to be topical for all.

### **Not to forget all kinds of events:**

An enormous festival of music

Visits and expositions in the places connected with Teresa

Fruitful moments for prayer and confession

Spiritual, cultural and playful activities

All necessary information on the programme, the registration and all details of that event can be found on the website [www.eej2015.com](http://www.eej2015.com).

At the end of that meeting an international Teresan meeting will take place from August 10th to 14th.

Antonia QUEVEDO

## **NEWS FROM GUESTS**

### **SPAIN**

#### **Meeting of young Europeans, at Avila 2015**

A European meeting of young people will take place at Avila from August 5th to 9th of this year 2015. That meeting will bring the young people nearer to the personality of Saint Teresa, who remains a shining example even today.

Saint Teresa, "an adventurous spirit", who made a way out of her life and who, at the moment of her death, said: "It is time to go"; today she unites young people for her 500th birthday. Some 10.000 coming from all over Europe are expected to come.

Avila will be the centre of that meeting as well as other localities connected with Teresa, such as Alba de Tormes, where she died, or Fontiberos, where Saint John of the Cross was born, and other places where the first foundations of Carmels were located. These young people of 14 to 35 years of age are invited to build up a new culture in an environment of peace, freedom, democracy and pluralism. The young people invited by Saint Teresa de Avila will unite around Christ in order to deepen and give testimony of their faith and their love to the Church.

## **LUXEMBOURG**

### **News from Luxembourg**

As economic growth is back, the crisis seems to be over. Nonetheless the ruling coalition (socialists, liberals, green party) has announced severe savings in order to fight the impending State deficit. The abolition of the bank secrecy doesn't seem to jeopardize Luxembourg's position as a major banking place. However the revelations about unfair tax rulings (« Luxleaks ») have been quite harmful to the international image of Luxembourg. Although unemployment reaches 7 %, immigration keeps increasing : yearly we register about 12 000 more inhabitants, the population counting 565 000 people, out of which 47 % are foreigners. Every day about 160 000 commuters from the neighboring countries work in Luxembourg ; they benefit from the same social rights as the residents. The latter suffer from the outrageous lodging prices.

In 2017 the government led by the liberal Xavier Bettel will organize a referendum about the new Constitution. This year another referendum is about the foreigners' right to vote for the Parliament. The Christian Social opposition party wants to reach further integration by promoting the double nationality. – In January, an agreement was reached between the state and the religious communities, who will be much less supported by public finance. Religion will be

banned from schools, and replaced by the teaching of « values » (« Life and Society »). The massive protest of many parents has been ignored. The new family policy encourages women to work, as nurseries are being created all over the country. – In the multicultural society the teaching of languages is being reformed, although the traditional trilinguism should not be abandoned. In secondary schools a teachers' strike could be avoided.

André GROSBUSCH

## SERBIA

### Byzantine church singing in Carnegie Hall

On the 7th of March 2015, in the crowded *Carnegie Hall*, New York, the choir of St. Archangels' monastery from Kovilj (Diocese of Bačka, Serbian Orthodox Church) together with the world known quartet *Kronos* performed the premiere of the work of the Serbian composer Aleksandra Vrebalov "*Beyond zero: 1914–1918*", dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of the Great War. Within the frame of this first of all musical but also cinematographic work (with the projection of an impressive movie by Bill Morrison), the choir of Kovilj monks, led by protopsalt archdeacon Jerotej (Petrović) sang parts of the Byzantine church hymn "The just will be in eternal memory". On this evening, one of the most distinguished concert halls, the Carnegie Hall, was filled with orthodox spirituality; after the very last tone played in the concert an absolute silence prevailed and lasted for almost a minute – at the end a huge stormy applause from the audience began. The music critic of the New York Times, James R. Oestreich, described the performing of this piece as "fascinating experience".

The choir of St. Archangels' monastery from Kovilj has for more than 20 years cultivated Byzantine church singing – a musical art that follows ancient church tradition having been passed down from generation to generation. It's vocal and monophonic music originated in the Byzantine Empire. The music is organized in a system of eight voices (*modi*) and it is sung accompanied by an "*ison*" (*isokratima*) – choral humming is the basis of the single voice (*modus*). This kind of music has got its own special system of notation, so-called Neumatic notation.

Apart from singing in the daily church services in the monastery, the choir took part in a number of important church and secular events, among the most prominent were: all-night-long vigil in the Hilandar monastery (Mt. Athos, Greece) in the celebration of 800 years of the founding (1999), all-night-long vigil in the Vatoped monastery (Mt. Athos, Greece) on the day of St. Evdokim (200), all-orthodoxy liturgical assembly in Niš, Serbia due to 1700 years of the Edict of Milan, etc.

Apart from in highly renowned music festivals in Serbia, the choir also performed abroad several times: in Finland 2000; Moscow, Russia 2001; *Festival de l'Imaginaire* in Paris 2003, and in Bulgaria 2006.

Until now, the choir of St. Archangels' monastery

from Kovilj has released several sound albums: the anthology of hymns "In the middle of the assembly I will glorify You by my song" *Usred sabora pesmom ću te veličati* (CD and cassette), a selection from the 13-hour-long panigiria under the name "The harmony of the Hilandar glorification" *Sazvučja hilendarskog slavoslovlja* (5 CDs and cassettes), the audio recording of the concert performed at BEMUS festival 2001 "Today the Church is illuminated" *Danas se Crkva ozaruje* (CD), and "Psalms" *Psalmi* (a book with CD).

Bojan MILJEVIC  
Orthodox Association of Teachers

## SWEDEN

(Association of christian Teachers, Lutheran)

### A heritage for us to pass on

For some years in Sweden we have had a Christian network called \*Eunike to emphasize the great importance of parents, and give them the support they need to be able to give their children a good foundation for the whole life.

(...) I realized how much my parents have meant to me concerning what kind of person I am today. This heritage has had an impact on my way of thinking, my sense of humour, my sensitiveness and my care and attention. It has also had a great importance for my view of the whole Bible as God's Word for all mankind, and my trust and confidence in Jesus Christ as the sole Saviour for me and the whole world. (...) It is a heritage I have got to manage (...); and I somehow have to choose myself how much I will let it blossom out or fade away. It is like a flower-bulb which lies in the ground year after year. (...)

Having realized this I wrote a book about my experiences of being a parent, and of my vocation for preaching. The book got the title "At the Request of God", for as a parent you have a twofold vocation. One is to care for your child and give it all it needs to lead a good life. The other part for Christian parents is to pass on our Christian faith, its values and life. (...). In 2009 I presented a proposal to the association to organize a network to be able to support parents in their Christian vocation.

Today our network \*Eunike first of all gets in touch with people by internet, e-mail and Facebook. We have written a lot of articles about parentage and we have produced a number of videos with the book as a basis. We offer prayers for persons in need, and also talks with a psychologist or a lay welfare worker. In 2014 we founded "The Parents' Day". On 19 March we celebrate the holy man Joseph, who was the foster-father of Jesus. (...) "The Parents' Prize" of the year is awarded to a person, a congregation or an organisation which has made an important contribution to make

parents able to give their children a good Christian basis.  
(...) All this corresponds to the rights of the child. (...)

However, the religious situation in Sweden is barren. We are in the top layer of the most secularized countries in the world. (...) The most important thing is that we guard our vision: That all children – through their parents- will have a share in the ground of the Christian belief, its values and life. Whatever happens, our vision must be passed on. Our activities may change their form, our financial position may be bad, but if we lose our vision, we have lost everything. If this vision is not carried into the future, Christianity has no future either. (...)

The network of \*Eunike has now been built up in Sweden. Is this moment the right one to plant our vision in other countries? (...) Not by copying but (...) being inspired by what has been built up. (...). It is all about the future for the Christian faith in Europe.

¶Eunike serves as a model for us in the Bible. She received the faith from her mother Lois and passed it on to her son Timotheus. Eunice is Greek and means “good victory.

Carl-Henrik KARLSSON, B.D., M.A.,  
founder and leader of activities 2009-2014



#### **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**