

COMMUNIQUÉ

Jubilee Velehrad Congress, *Towards Deeper Solidarity Among Christians in Europe*

At the initiative of His Beatitude Lubomyr Husar, the Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych, the head of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, and His Excellency Archbishop Jan Graubner of Olomouc, from 28 June to 1 July there took place the Jubilee Velehrad Congress, *Towards Deeper Solidarity Among Christians in Europe*. Thus we see the renewal of the tradition of the Velehrad Congresses, initiated a century ago, mainly due to the efforts of Metropolitan Andriy Sheptytsky and Archbishop Antonin Cyril Stojan. These congresses, which became one of the first steps towards universal ecumenism, from the very beginning bore the authentic fraternal integrating spirit of the preaching of the holy apostles Cyril and Methodius.

The participants of the Velehrad Congresses were primarily East European, but they were soon joined by theologians and experts on the Christian East from different continents over the world. From the very beginning these congresses, in addition to Roman- and Greek-Catholics, also were attended by Orthodox theologians, primarily Russians. Before World War II seven such Congresses had taken place, and after 1945 two more, in which mainly Czechs and Slovaks participated. In the 1930s the Velehrad Congresses became the biggest ecumenical forum (in the modern sense of this word) in Central-Eastern Europe. In the spirit of Velehrad, similar congresses took place later in Pinsk and in Lviv.

The aim of the Velehrad Congresses was the search for new ways of bringing together the Eastern and Western Churches on the basis of their shared tradition of Cyril and Methodius. The Orthodox, Roman-Catholic, Greek-Catholic and Protestant participants realized that the ultimate fulfillment of Christ's command "that all might be one" (Jn. 17:11) will not come about without our desire for it, since every baptized person is responsible for the unity of the Church of Christ.

The Velehrad Congresses not only bear an ecumenical character, but also have special importance for the renewal of the Christian roots of Europe. This is why the topic of this Jubilee Velehrad Congress was *Towards Deeper Solidarity Among Christians in Europe* under the motto *In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas (Unity in Necessary Things, Freedom in Doubtful Things, Love in Everything)*.

Realizing the fact that the holy Slavic apostles Cyril and Methodius together with

Saint Benedict are the co-patrons of Europe, the participants of the Congress drew attention to this continent, not only to its global responsibility for peace and service to humanity, but also to the fact that its citizens need to return to their spiritual values, based upon the Gospel of Christ. Consequently, the Congress focused on topics like Christian identity and the new evangelization of Europe, healing wounds, purification of memory and the need for reconciliation, the importance and urgency of solidarity and friendship.

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Realizing the living urgency of the ecumenical testimony of the holy apostles of the Slavs Cyril and Methodius, we, the participants of the Jubilee Velehrad Congress, feel responsible for recalling to Christians of different traditions our shared spiritual heritage. Representing the Christian Churches of both Eastern and Western traditions, we wish to give joint testimony of the Gospel to Europe and to the whole world. We address the Christians of the European continent with an appeal to nourish friendship and solidarity among themselves, which proceeds from the love of the Father, fully revealed in the Only-Begotten Son, and granted to the Church by the action of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that fraternity and solidarity among Christians will become for the European nations the best sign and example of healing wounds and reconciliation, mutual forgiveness, and returning to authentic values. Only in their cooperation will Christians be able to remind Europe of its Christian roots and to stress its mission of spreading justice, peace and fraternity in service to the world.

We stress the great value of ecumenical dialogue among Christians, which begins with solidarity and prayer and leads to uniting love in Christ.

In the spirit of the founders of the Velehrad movement, recognizing the essential unity of the Eastern and Western Churches as fundamentally inseparable parts of the Body of Christ, we call the Christians of Europe of different traditions:

- 1) to provide testimony of mutual respect and solidarity, and not allow utterances or publications that would be offensive for the Christians of other traditions but, contrarily, to defend other Christians from such offences;
- 2) to seek, nourish and spread cooperation, solidarity and friendship among themselves in different spheres of life: social, cultural, artistic, pastoral and academic, thereby awakening a longing for the unity of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities;
- 3) to foster and spread the spirit of the tradition of Cyril and Methodius which is

common to Catholics and Orthodox;

- 4) to accept and realize the proposals of John Paul II (2000) and the World Council of Churches (2004) to formulate and implement an “Ecumenical Metrology” and even an “Ecumenical Calendar of Saints” which will be a concrete expression of the recognition and the celebration of the martyrs and saints of different Christian Churches;
- 5) to organize together and actively participate in social and charitable projects which touch upon the problems of the least socially protected, immigrants, the sick, and others;
- 6) to pay proper attention to the need for pastoral care for the mixed marriages, and promote their full participation in church life;
- 7) to show deep respect for the dignity of the person and the value of human life at all stages of its development, from conception to natural death;
- 8) in view of the new evangelization of Europe, to pay attention to the organization of joint measures, especially involving the participation of youth, in activities like pilgrimages, seminars, spiritual retreats, prayerful meetings, and so on;
- 9) in order to avoid any kind of mutual proselytism, to adopt the experience of joint commissions which will examine the passage of faithful from one Church to another, guided by the principles of respect for freedom of conscience, transparency, respect and acknowledgment of the other tradition and which would deal with each case with pastoral consideration and prudence;
- 10) to organize working groups for the joint publication of books on the history of Christianity, in which the representatives of various Christian denominations and unprejudiced historians would take part and which would present controversial events in their multiform aspects;
- 11) to express ecumenical solidarity with the Christians of Belarus and support them spiritually in their efforts toward a common witness to the Gospel, remembering that Belarus theologians from the very beginning were interested in the Velehrad Congresses (their participation began in 1927 at the 5th Congress), that the ideas of the Velehrad Congresses found their theological and pastoral expression also at the Pinsk conferences in the 1930s, and that the living tradition of saints Cyril and Methodius continues to be present in the conferences organized every year in Minsk

with the support of the Belarus Orthodox Church.

Expressing our profound solidarity with His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople and all Christians in Turkey in spreading the Word of God in not very favorable conditions, we wish to address to the government of Turkey a letter supporting the Patriarchate of Constantinople in its right to enjoy its civil liberties and in particular its right to renew its seminary in Halki.

We, Christians, are glad that the doors of the European Union have been opened for the countries of Eastern Europe and we would like to see the further development of our common European home by increasing the number of social and spiritual projects and through new forms of cooperation with European countries which are not yet members of the EU.

Following the holy Thessalonian brothers Cyril and Methodius in their ministry of the Word, we give ourselves in one mind and one heart to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is the Source and Giver of authentic unity.