



## LITTERAE COMMUNIONIS 2016-2017





**T**he pastoral year just ended (September 2016 – July 2017) was, for CCEE, marked by the arrival of the new Presidency, elected during the October 2016 Plenary Assembly (6-9 October, Principality of Monaco) and by the first meeting it had with the Holy Father in the course of which he “encouraged CCEE to be a presence of faith, of evangelisation and of human promotion.”

After the meeting with the Holy Father, on 18 May last, the Presidency addressed a letter to the European bishops through their respective Episcopal Conferences, in which it reaffirmed that CCEE was motivated by “passion for the European continent, which has a history of faith, culture, peoples and nations. We feel the need of a continent which is a “home for peoples” in a global world, conscious that Europe, like every other continent, has a specific gift to offer to the journey of the whole of humanity.”

As can be deduced from this relationship, “CCEE is called to be, in its specific way, leaven in the European history, so that the continent might rediscover its own Christian roots which are the foundation and guarantee of the dignity of the human person, centre of culture and of civilisation.”

So, to be evangelically “critical conscience” – wrote the Presidency in the aforementioned letter – means the dual service of “awakening” and “proposal”: awakening of the individual and collective conscience about the radical questions to do with meaning, and the proposal of Jesus Christ, centre of the cosmos and Saviour of the world. We also want to help the European person to re-discover him or herself, to re-discover his or her face, image of God, relation-in-being: “Without a creator there can be no creature” (GS 36).”

The Presidency then recalled that CCEE is a “body of communion between the Episcopal Conferences of Europe, which has as its goal, in a world which tends towards fuller unity, the promotion and conservation of the good of the Church” (Statutes, art. 1).

So, looking at the pages of this report, the reader will be able to discover something about the work of CCEE, where meetings have an important part to play. Above all, the CCEE Plenary



Assembly, which took place in the Principality of Monaco from 6-9 October 2016, which called on CCEE to be “attentive to the process of secularisation which is marking Europe, to that living as if God did not exist, which is the premise of the new practical materialism”. On the same occasion, the Presidents of the Bishops’ Conferences asked the European church body to pay “special attention to the world of young people and to the social issues which the Church in Europe is experiencing.” Besides the work of the Plenary Assembly, the report, through brief summaries, tries to account for numerous other events organised in the course of the year. The meetings about the works of mercy, social communications, migration and others testify again to the efforts of so many protagonists in church life at always being a sign of God’s love for humanity in the concrete circumstances of life. We call to mind once again the Symposium on accompanying young people which CCEE organised at Barcelona in March 2017, and which brought together more than 300 people from all over the continent, responsible for the various areas of pastoral work linked to young people. The European event testified to CCEE’s commitment to be, in harmony with the Holy Father, attentive to young people and was, at the same time, a time of preparation for the next Synod of Bishops in 2018.

# ALBANIA


 PRESIDENT  
HIS GRACE MGR. ANGELO MASSAFRA  
ARCHBISHOP OF SHKODËR-PULT

 SECRETARY GENERAL  
HIS GRACE MGR. GEORGE FRENDU  
ARCHBISHOP OF TIRANA-DURAZZO


## CANONISATION OF MOTHER TERESA, 4 SEPTEMBER 2016

Thirteen years after the beatification of Mother Teresa, Pope Francis signed the decree for her canonisation. The ceremony took place on 4 September 2016, in St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, marking a significant event in the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. The canonisation of this Albanian 'Mother' and lady filled with joy the hearts of believers throughout the world, but especially the Albanian faithful. As a sign of recognition and gratitude to God and to the Catholic Church, many Albanian faithful, organised in different groups, went on pilgrimage to Rome, to share the joy of such an event with the Holy Father. The canonisation ceremony was also honoured with the presence of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Albania. This major event marked a new page in the history of the Albanian Church. The liturgical calendar of the Church in Albania will celebrate the "feast" of Saint Teresa of Calcutta on 5 September. After the celebrations in the Vatican, on 10 September 2016 the Catholic Church in Albania commemorated the event with a *Mass of Thanksgiving*, celebrated in the Cathedral of the diocese of Sapë, the first cathedral in the world to be dedicated to the new saint. Sharing the gratitude of this gift were thousands of pilgrims who made their way on pilgrimage to the Cathedral of St Teresa of Calcutta at Vau-Dejës, where Mass was presided over by the President of the Albanian Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Angelo Massafra. As well as the Albanian bishops, the President of the Republic of

Albania, Mr Bujar Nishani, and various local authorities and representatives of other religions present in Albania, were present at the Mass.

## BEATIFICATION OF THE 38 ALBANIAN MARTYRS

Another important event for the life of the Church in Albania was the Beatification of the 38 Albanian Martyrs. Pope Francis signed the decree of beatification, designating 5 November 2016 as the day for their beatification. Under the auspices of the Albanian Bishops' Conference, the ceremony took place at the Cathedral of Saint Stephen in Shkrodrë, with the participation of senior officials from the Vatican, the hierarchy of the Church in Albania, state authorities and representatives of the country's religious communities. Worthy of note was the participation of more than 10,000 pilgrims, not just from the whole of Albania, but from other countries, too. Presiding at Mass was the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, His Eminence Cardinal Angelo Amato, along with five other Cardinals, many bishops and about 100 priests. In an atmosphere of prayer and recollection, the 38 witnesses to the faith and to the nation (34 priests, three lay people and 1 female catechist) were raised to the glory of the altars for the testimony of their living faith unto martyrdom in the name of Christ.

## NEW ARCHBISHOP OF TIRANË-DURRËS

On 17 November 2016, His Holiness Pope Francis appointed as Archbishop of Tiranë-





Durrës Mgr George Frendo OP, hitherto Auxiliary Bishop and appointed Apostolic Administrator following the death of Archbishop Rrok Mirdita. *"The Shepherd listens to the voice of his flock"* is the motto by which Archbishop Frendo will guide the new mission entrusted to him. He officially took possession on 3 December 2016. In his address, he addressed the following words to his faithful: "First of all, I always recall the example of Pope Francis, the great apostle of evangelical simplicity, of protection of the weakest, of the mercy of God. Secondly, we must continue to build on what we have inherited from Mgr Mirdita, the first Archbishop of the new Archdiocese, because it was he who laid the foundations of this Archdiocese".

#### APPOINTMENT OF CARDINAL ERNEST SIMON TROSHANI

On 19 November 2016, in the presence of the College of Cardinals, Pope Francis appointed 13 new Cardinals from the five continents, including the Albanian priest from the diocese of Shkodër-Pult, Fr Ernest Simoni (Troshani), becoming, at the age of 88, the second Albanian Cardinal, after Cardinal Mikel Koliqi, appointed by Pope John Paul II.

#### JOINT DECLARATION OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Looking at the political situation which has arisen in recent months, the religious Communities in Albania (the Muslim Community, the

Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Community of the Bektashi, and the Evangelical Fraternity), conscious of their spiritual and moral responsibilities towards their faithful, but also to Albanian society in general, published, for the good of the country, a statement aimed at the political classes and those with institutional responsibilities. In it, they called on all political representatives of all the parties in Albania, both those from the Government and those in opposition, to build bridges and not walls; to tone down the violent and disparaging rhetoric against political opponents; to guarantee a transparent electoral process; to create proper conditions in order that law and justice may rule the social life of Albania and Albanians. Convinced that through this statement they are making a contribution to the country's well-being, the religious communities will continue to pray for the future and the well-being of our country.

#### APPOINTMENT OF THREE NEW BISHOPS IN ALBANIA

On 15 June 2017, the appointment of three new bishops in Albania was announced: for the diocese of Sapë, Fr Simon Kulli; for the diocese of Rrëshen, Fr Gjergj Meta; and for the Apostolic Administration of the South, Fr Giovanni Peragine.





## AID FOR ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES AND THEIR INTEGRATION

Again in the year 2016 aid given to those who state they are fleeing from war or personal persecution was an important issue in the life of the Church. Through its own parishes, religious communities and the organisations of Caritas, the Church, after the State, is the main institution in the country which helps asylum-seekers. As well as the need for concrete help, the Bishops underline the importance of integration ([see document](#)).

As a concrete contribution to integration, the Bishops' Conference has published a booklet entitled "[Grüß Gott in Österreich](#)" in German, English, Arabic and Farsi, aimed at all asylum-seekers in Austria. It is "an introduction to a country with Christian roots", with more than 40,000 copies distributed to date.

In the debate about banning the veil, the Bishops took different stances: as regards the full veil, like the burqa, though not well-accepted by society it should not be forbidden by law. Rather than introducing a general ban, the Bishops proposed regulating and justifying in detail when it is necessary to show one's face, for example in school or in law courts. Furthermore, it must be ensured that "no one, for any reason, is ever forced to wear the veil", especially when "this obligation applies solely to women" – the [news release](#) called for "successful integration".

## 500<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE REFORMATION

To mark 500 years since the Reformation, for the first time, at the invitation of the Bishops' Conference, there was a joint meeting with the leaders of the Evangelical Church and the Reformed Church in Austria (8-9 November). The liturgical climax of the event was an ecumenical celebration. In the framework of this important ecumenical meeting there was also the approval of a [joint statement](#) entitled "500 years from the Reformation – from opposition to collaboration".

There were numerous ecumenical events organised throughout Austria to commemorate this anniversary. For the first time, for example, the Bishops' Conference along with the Lutheran, Reformed and Methodist Churches, decided to award an "[ecumenical prize](#)".

## 2017 ELECTIONS OF THE PARISH COUNCILS

On 19 March, about 3,000 Austrian parishes elected new members of their parish councils. About 900,000 Catholics, so 20% of those having rights, voted. About 28,000 people, men and women, will exercise their mandate on a voluntary basis for a five-year term of office.

## "DOCAT"

To achieve a translation of the Church's social teaching usable by young people, and to re-launch social commitment: these are the objectives of "[DOCAT](#)", the new social catechism for young people which, just like "[YOUCAT](#)", has been published by the Austrian Conference in a variety of languages. "[DOCAT](#)" was launched in advance of World Youth Day in Krakow, and distributed by Pope Francis as a gift to young people. The book is accompanied by a smartphone *app*.

## EVENTS, APPOINTMENTS AND DOCUMENTS

At the Plenary Assembly last November, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn was re-elected as President of the Bishops' Conference. The Assembly also chose to re-elect the General Secretary, Peter Schipka. Both posts have a six-year mandate.

Pope Francis has appointed Hansjörg Hofer, hitherto Vicar General in Salzburg, new Auxiliary Bishop of the city. The ordination took place on 8 July.

The Bishops' Conference arranged for the review of the guidelines drawn up in 2010 on abuse and cases of violence within the Church. Once approved by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the [directives](#) were published.



# BELARUS



PRESIDENT  
HIS GRACE MGR. TADEUSZ KONDRUSIEWICZ  
ARCHBISHOP OF MINSK-MOHILEV



SECRETARY GENERAL  
HIS LORDSHIP MGR. JÓZEF STANIEWSKI  
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF GRODNO



## WYD IN KRAKOW

A group of about 2,000 young people from Belarus took part in World Youth Day in Krakow (25-31 July 2016). Before the event, prayer vigils were organised in many Belarus parishes so that the meeting of young people might be spiritually fruitful.

## NEW NUNCIO

On 18 August 2016, the new Apostolic Nuncio to Belarus, His Grace Mgr Gábor Pintér, arrived in Minsk. The Nuncio was born in Hungary, is 52 years old, and has been in the Holy See's diplomatic service since 1 July 1996. Prior to his current appointment, Mgr Pintér has served in various diplomatic roles in Haiti, Bolivia, Sweden, France, the Philippines and Austria.

## CENTENARY OF THE MARIAN APPARITIONS IN FATIMA

In the context of the Jubilee for the Centenary of the Apparitions of Our Blessed Lady at Fatima, starting on 13 October 2016 the statue of Our Lady of Fatima was brought to various places in the country. The statue, blessed by His Grace Mgr Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Metropolitan Archbishop of Minsk-Mohilev, during the national pilgrimage to Fatima, is visiting all the parishes in Belarus.

## CONCLUSION OF THE YEAR OF MERCY

On 13 November 2016 in all the cathedrals, shrines and churches where Doors of Mercy had been erected, in the presence of many faithful, a solemn conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy was celebrated.

## RADIO MARIA

On 6 May 2017, to mark the official inauguration of Belarus Radio Maria His Grace Mgr Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Metropolitan Archbishop of Minsk-Mohilev, celebrated Mass and blessed the studios.

## EXHIBITION FOR THE 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTENARY OF THE FIRST BIBLE PRINTED IN PALEO-BELARUSIAN

To mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Bible printed in the Paleo-Belarusian language, on 23 June 2017 in the Exhibition Hall of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vitebsk, an exhibition entitled "The city of Francysk Skaryna through

the eyes of the artist" was opened. The event was part of an international conference entitled "Francysk Skaryna and his spiritual legacy yesterday and today".

## NATIONAL CONGRESS OF FAMILIES

From 23-25 June 2017 a National Congress of Families was held in Baranowicze. The event was devoted to the theme of family relations. More than 100 people participated in the Congress, including advisers on family life, family assistants, participants in formation courses on family life and others interested in the theme of the family.





## THE CHURCH AND BELGIAN COLONISATION IN AFRICA

A hearing on the question of the mixed race people born as result of the Belgian colonisation in Africa was held in the Senate within the framework of a resolution project which will be presented to the Chamber and the Senate. During colonisation, children with a Belgian father and an African mother were often separated from their families and entrusted to orphanages. In the course of the hearing, the Belgian Catholic Church offered its own apology for the role undertaken in that period. It wants to contribute to the search which some of these people (and their descendants) have begun to clarify their origins or identify their family. In the same way, the Church wants to help those parents wishing to find their own children or the descendants of the latter.

## SLAUGHTER OF ANIMALS AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION

In June, the Walloon Parliament approved unanimously a proposed decree aiming at banning the slaughter of animals without prior stunning. The law would come into effect for ritual slaughter on 1 September 2019. Given the extent of social debate about the issue, the Christian Churches, even if not directly involved, made their voice heard on the issue. The bishops warned not to criticise the slaughter of animals in the absence of stunning by using it as a cover for a contemptuous discussion about our Jewish and Muslim co-citizens. The freedom of religion constitutes an essential element of the democratic system. The bishops called on politicians to draw up procedures which harmonise as far as is possible hygiene, public health and the well-being of animals with the fundamental right of religious freedom.

## RELATIONS WITH THE FEDERAL AUTHORITY

The federal Authority (represented by the Prime Minister and the Justice Minister) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the representatives of the recognised religions and the laity with a view to the creation of a body of permanent dialogue between them.

## NEWS FROM THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSIONS

The Bishops' Conference has **three episcopal**

**commissions:** a theological commission, a commission for evangelisation and a commission for the diaconate. As analytical and reflective entities in the pastoral areas entrusted to them, they define the main guidelines for the work to be undertaken and issues to be discussed. Comprising various bishops and chaired by one of them, they turn to permanent collaborators and experts with regard to the issues under discussion.

## PASTORAL RELATIONS WITH MINORS: A RESOURCE

The bishops have established a Supervisory Council for Monitoring and Directing of perpetrators of sexual abuse or transgressional behaviour *in pastoral relations with minors within the Catholic Church in Belgium*. The Supervisory Council contributes to an optimal realisation of the guidelines which the Bishops and the Major Superiors have committed to implementing.

## INTER-DIOCESAN COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS PATRIMONY

Those in charge of the patrimony (or the Church's temporal goods) of the French-speaking episcopate have established an ***Inter-diocesan Commission for religious patrimony***. It suggests to the bishops a strategy and joint directives in matters of conservation, inventory, protection and valuation of religious patrimony. Since 1997, the Flemish dioceses and the Flemish Major Superiors have had a body with responsibility for protecting religious patrimony, the *Center for Sacred Art and Culture* (CRKC).

## EPISCOPAL MEETINGS

The bishops devoted their working session to a reflection on the pastoral care of the family, starting from *Amoris laetitia* and from developments in local pastoral work. The main issues discussed in the meetings of the Bishops' Conference: implementation of *Amoris laetitia*, drafting of a new dossier on marriage, the correct management of church property, rejection of euthanasia.

## DOCUMENTS PUBLISHED

The bishops published a *Pastoral Letter Amoris laetitia* with the aim of making the ideas and



stimuli of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* fruitful for the Church in Belgium. The pastoral letter contains three focal points: marriage preparation, accompanying families, the attitude towards people who suffer from the breakdown of their relationship as a couple (*Amoris Laetitia Lettre pastorale des évêques de Belgique*, Editions Licap-Halewijn ISBN 978-94-6196-241-6).

To mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Encyclical *Populorum progressio*, the bishops published a letter entitled *Communion of the peoples*. Devoted to the social commitment of Christians, it is a reaction to the current situation of increasing social exclusion.

The bishops have suggested four priority tasks: social justice, solidarity, communion of the

peoples and ecological commitment for a world in transition (*Populorum Communio la communion des peuples*, Editions Licap-Halewijn ISBN 978-94-6196-228-7).

The bishops have also published a *Letter on the good management of Church property* in which they propose a series of directives for good management to all those who have some responsibility in the sphere of material and financial management in the Church. They call on all those with responsibility in the field of Church management to conform scrupulously with these principles (*Charte de bonne gestion des biens d'Eglise en Belgique*, Editions Licap-Halewijn ISBN 978-94-6196-239-3).

These three documents can be found on the website: <http://www.cathobel.be/>

# BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA



PRESIDENT  
HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL VINKO PULJIĆ  
ARCHBISHOP OF SARAJEVO



SECRETARY GENERAL  
MGR. IVO TOMASEVIĆ



## PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS

On the day when the Church celebrated Saints Peter and Paul, 29 June 2016, Cardinal Puljić ordained eight deacons to the priesthood in Sarajevo Cathedral: five diocesan and three from the Franciscan province of Bosnia Herzegovina.

## THE POPE'S FEAST

On 3 July 2016, the Church in Bosnia Herzegovina celebrated the Pope's feast in Sarajevo Cathedral with a solemn Mass presided over by the Apostolic Nuncio to Bosnia Herzegovina and concelebrated by all the country's bishops.

## CCEE MEETING

From 15-18 September 2016, on the occasion of the Holy Year of Mercy, Sarajevo hosted a European meeting promoted by CCEE's *Caritas in veritate* Commission, chaired by Archbishop Giampaolo Crepaldi. The meeting was held in collaboration with the following bodies: Caritas Europa, COMECE, Justice and Peace Europe, FEAMC, ICMC, ICCPPC, FEBA, EZA and UNIAPAC.

## JUSTITIA ET PAX

The members of the *Justitia et pax* Commission of the Bosnia Herzegovina Bishops' Conference met on 6 May 2017 in Banja Luka to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Commission's foundation. They were joined also by members of the

same commissions of the Bishops' Conferences of Croatia and Slovenia. Also participating was an important guest: Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, for a long time President of the Pontifical Council *Justitia et pax*, and now President of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, a new body of the Holy See.

## DAY FOR RELIGIOUS

On 10 September 2016, in the Salesian's Catholic Education Centre in Žepče, a Day for religious was held on the theme "God's mercy in the sacrament of confession". About 320 male and female religious participated in this initiative of the Conference of Superiors and Major Superiors in Bosnia Herzegovina.

## NEW THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

On 22 February 2017, the Congregation for Catholic Education published the Decree for the Canonical Erection of the Theological-Catechetical Institute in Mostar.

## PLENARY ASSEMBLIES

All the other ordinary activities were carried out according to the scheduled objectives. The following were organised: **three plenary sessions** of the Bishops' Conference, a plenary session along with the Croatian Bishops' Conference, the meeting of the bishops of the







Bishops' Conference with members of the Conference of Superiors and Major Superiors in Bosnia Herzegovina, and the meeting of the bishops of the Bishops' Conference with the Franciscan Provincial Superiors and with the deans in Bosnia Herzegovina.

## COMMEMORATIONS

To mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Bosnian-Croatian Province of the Franciscan Sisters of Christ the King, on 29 April 2017, in a newly-built complex in Bjelave, Sarajevo, Cardinal Puljic blessed the chapel, the altar and the new provincial headquarters of the Franciscan Sisters.

On 21 June 2017, the Council for Catechesis

and the National Office for Catechesis of the Bishops' Conference celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the re-introduction of Religious Education in state schools, with a solemn celebration of Mass in the church of the Queen of the Holy Rosary and a festive programme at St Joseph's Catholic Education Centre in Sarajevo.

At the start of Mass on 16 June 2017 in Sarajevo, in the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Cardinal Puljic blessed the restored organ in the cathedral. It had been partially damaged during the war (1992-1995). The restoration was carried out by the German maestro, Mr Hans-Peter Klein, and was financed by some benefactors from the diocese of Aachen.



## COMMEMORATION

26 June 2016 saw the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the act of consecration of the Bulgarian people to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, done in 1996 in Fatima, by three bishops from the Bishops' Conference. The anniversary was celebrated in the parish of St Joseph in Bardarski Geran by three priests from the three Catholic dioceses in the country.

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION

On 26 July 2016, the Bulgarian Bi-ritual Bishops' Conference published an official **Statement** against the attempts by some political groups to promote new restrictive legislative norms with regard to the freedom of religious communities in receiving foreign financing and the exercise of worship. There was no shortage of statements from other religious denominations. Consequently, such initiatives have been temporarily suspended.

## WYD AND THE CHURCH IN BULGARIA

For the first time in the history of the World Youth Days, the Catholic Church in Bulgaria was able to take part with about one hundred young people present. The catechetical meetings in Poland, with numerous priests, male and female and religious, were led by His Grace Mgr Christo Proykov, Apostolic Exarch and President of the Bishops' Conference.

## AWARD

On 21 December 2016, in the Coat of Arms Hall in the Presidential Palace, the President of the Republic, Rosen Plevneliev, bestowed an award on the Passionist priest Fr Paolo Cortesi, parish priest of the church of the Virgin Mary in Belene, for his pastoral and well-deserving work undertaken for the construction of a better civil society.

## ECUMENISM

On 25 March 2017, the Patriarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Neophyte, received in official audience the Apostolic Nuncio to Bulgaria, His Grace Mgr Anselmo Guido Pecorari. The meeting was announced on the official website of the Patriarchate and the excellent relations between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria were praised. (photo)

## 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF *POPULORUM PROGRESSIO*

On 25 May, the diocese of Nicopoli organised a conference in Veliko Tarnovo under the patronage of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Bulgarian Academy of the Sciences on the theme "Development and the new name of Peace" to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope Paul VI's Encyclical *Populorum progressio*.





## CCEE MEETING

The Eparchy of Sofia and the Bishops' Conference hosted the annual meeting of the Media Officers and Spokespeople of the Bishops' Conferences in Europe (6-10 July 2017). There were important meetings with the director of the Bulgarian National News Agency (BTA), **Maxim Minchev**, and with **His Majesty Simeon II of Bulgaria**, former Prime Minister (2001-2005).

## OFFICIAL VISIT

From 30 June – 1 July 2017, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, **Cardinal Leonardo Sandri**, visited Bulgaria at the invitation of His Lordship Mgr Petko Christov, Bishop of Nicopoli. The Cardinal presided at Mass in the parish dedicated to *Our Lady of Fatima* in Pleven, and, along with the three bishops, re-consecrated Bulgaria and the Catholic Church in Bulgaria to the intercession of the Mother of God in Fatima. During his visit, the Prefect met the Patriarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the

Vice-Premier and the Minister of Defence, Krassimir Karakachanov.

Cardinal Sandri then went to the other two Catholic dioceses in Bulgaria, respectively the Apostolic Exarchate of Sofia and the diocese of Sofia and Plovdiv.

## PUBLICATIONS

Worthy of note among the new publications: 26 June saw the launch of the book by Dr Kiril Kartaloff devoted to 25 years of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and the Holy See. The book contains documents, photos and official statements.

In September 2016, the publisher CIELA translated and published the Holy Father's book "The name of God is mercy".

In October 2016, the autobiographical book of Saint Ignatius Loyola, *The Pilgrim*, was published in Bulgarian.

In March 2017, a new book in Bulgarian was published on the Mother of God at Fatima, to mark the centenary of the apparitions.



## THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENT MEET THE PRESIDENT OF THE CROATIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

On 9 January 2017, a meeting of the Permanent Council of CBC (Croatian Bishops' Conference) with the Prime Minister of Croatia and the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament was held in Zagreb. Commenting on the meeting with Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia and his associates, Archbishop Puljić said that he was particularly pleased that the government decided to face the past and announced the formation of a commission that would attempt to bring an end to confrontations. He welcomed the announced education reform, hoping that it will be for the long term and free of ideological connotations. On the same day, in a meeting with Božo Petrov, Speaker of the Croatian Parliament, it was noted that the Croatian Parliament legislative activity must reflect the fundamental values of the Croatian society.

## 57TH THEOLOGICAL-PASTORAL WEEK: "NECESSITY OF DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION IN THE CROATIAN SOCIETY"

From 24-26 January 2017, the 57th Theological-Pastoral Week on the topic "Necessity of Dialogue and Reconciliation in the Croatian Society" was held at the Diocesan Seminary in Zagreb, Šalata. This week is organized by the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb, and it covers contemporary theological-pastoral themes. The Great Chancellor of the Catholic Faculty of Theology at the University of Zagreb, Archbishop of Zagreb, Cardinal Josip Bozanić, addressing the theme of the conference, emphasized that «thanks to the event of the Second Vatican Council, dialogue and reconciliation shined in a special light in our Catholic Church and are set as a path of our action, an action in the pastoral». Addressing the priests, he encouraged them to always be dialogically open to all and to open more and more spaces for people seeking God and communion with God.

## NEW SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF CROATIA

On 25 February 2017, according to the decision from CBC Session of 25 January 2017, don Petar Palić took over the service of the General Secretary of the Croatian Bishops' Conference after Mgr. Enco Rodinis, who had been in the service since 25 January 2010. Don Petar Palić was born on July 3rd 1972. He studied theology at the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb. He was ordained a priest of Dubrovnik Diocese on June 1st 1996. In the Diocese, he has carried out several responsible services. Since 2011, he has served as a General Vicar of the Dubrovnik Diocese. He was also a member of the CBC Council for Catechization and New Evangelization. In October 2005, he enrolled in postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Theology at the Karl-Franzens University in Graz, Austria, and at the same University he obtained a PhD in theology in 2009.

## 6TH PASTORAL-CATECHETICAL COLLOQUIUM FOR PRIESTS: "TO BE A FAMILY IN THE CHURCH FAMILY"

In the organization of the Council for Life and Family, the Council for the Catechization and New Evangelization and the Council for the Clergy of CBC, on March 7 and 8 2017, the 6th Pastoral-Catechetical Colloquium for Priests was held in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute in Zagreb, entitled "To be a family in the Church family. 'One generation praises your deeds to the next' Ps 145." It was the third colloquium that dealt with the thoughts of pastoral and catechistic possibilities of action in the area of pastoral care for marriage and family.

## 10TH ENCOUNTER OF THE CROATIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH

In the eastern part of Croatia, the jubilee 10th Encounter of the Croatian Catholic Youth was held on 30 April 2017 in Vukovar, a town that was severely affected by the Homeland War 1991-1997. Approximately 30,000 young people gathered from all over Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vojvodina and the Croatian diaspora. The theme of the meeting was:





“Christ, Our Hope!” The Eucharistic Celebration was led by the Archbishop and Metropolitan of Đakovo-Osijek Đuro Hranić in communion with Croatian bishops and priests. The next meeting of Croatian Catholic youth will be held in Zagreb in 2020.

#### THE CROATIAN CATHOLIC RADIO CELEBRATES ITS 20 YEARS

On 17 May 2017, the Croatian Catholic Radio marked the 20th anniversary of its activity. Croatian Catholic Radio was founded by the Croatian Bishops' Conference, and began broadcasting on 17 May, 1997.

Conclusion of the mixed Commission's work on the figure of Cardinal Stepinac

The Joint Commission of the Croatian Bishops' Conference and the Serbian Orthodox Church held its last meeting from 11th until 13th July, 2017 at the Vatican. The task of the commission, which was established by will of Pope Francis, was to jointly consider the character of Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac before, during and after World War II.



## SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

The Catholic Church in Cyprus closed the "Door of Mercy" where consecrated and lay people were gathered asking the Lord to keep the doors of hearts open to act mercifully with each other especially with the most vulnerable. The *Catholic Consecrated Family*, in a spirit of one family, continued their annual Christmas and Easter gatherings to share their experiences and the banquet of love and fraternity. During this Biblical year, in each parish of the Eparchy was held on a weekly basis the "Banquet of the Word" based on the partaking of the word of God where family members gather to share their spiritual experience. Archbishop Soueif continued to support the Focolare group which meets monthly around the Word of Life.

## PASTORAL ACTIVITIES

The celebration and Solemn Mass in memory of St Maroun, Patron of the Maronite Church, was celebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto, and attended by the President of the Republic H.E. Mr Nikos Anastasiades, members of the diplomatic corps, foreign diplomatic missions in Cyprus, members of the government, delegations from Lebanon and the faithful of the community; an official lunch with the whole community followed.

Archbishop Soueif visited the Eparchy's parishes celebrating the Mass on the feasts of their respective patrons, followed by a pastoral meeting. He celebrated Mass for the intentions

of the deceased and those members of the Maronite Community who disappeared during the events of 1974. He also celebrated First Communion Mass, greeting the children and insisting on their weekly presence with their families in the Liturgy.

Archbishop Soueif welcomed this year five families of the "Missio Ad Gentes" sent by Pope Francis to live a spiritual experience in Cyprus with the Catholic community and deepen the practice of the Word of God through the sharing of the spiritual experience that enriches everyone's life. He also participated in several spiritual gatherings of the Neocatechumenal Way. Gatherings for children, young people and families are being organised to strengthen the bonds of solidarity among the community, to live out spiritual commitment and share mutual experiences.

## ECUMENISM AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

In the context of the *Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process* under the auspices of the Swedish Embassy, the leaders of the Greek Orthodox, Turkish, Maronite, Armenian and Latin communities of Cyprus are continuing their monthly fraternal meetings, at which they discuss various issues related to the situation in Cyprus, underlining the importance of free access to all places of worship on the basis of the freedom of religion. The Church, through the religious leaders, in this area is actually helping the culture of peace and reconciliation.





The religious leaders in their first meeting this year welcomed the new Armenian Archbishop. They also issued a signed joint statement condemning the violence against women and girls.

In the context of ecumenical dialogue, the National meeting of the Co-ordinators of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW) was held in Cyprus under the theme "How can justice, cultural diversity and sensitivity go hand in hand?"

As is now an annual ecumenical tradition, Archbishop Soueif participated with the Orthodox Community in Morphou, in the northern part of Cyprus, in the feast of St. Mama with the priests and faithful from the Maronite community, with a message of peace, love and solidarity.

The Mufti of Cyprus participated in the celebration of the feast of St Joseph, presided over by Archbishop Youssef, demonstrating a sign of conviviality, love and respect.

### CELEBRATIONS AND VISITS

In the context of his official visit to Cyprus, H.E. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See, celebrated Mass in the Maronite Cathedral and

met with the community at a dinner where they conveyed to him their worry and concerns for their future and their request to have a place under the Greek Cypriot constitution in case of the reunification of the island.

Several visits were paid to the Archbishop by various officials from the Greek and Turkish Cypriot community to discuss the conservation of the historical patrimony which belongs to the Maronite Church.

### COMMITMENTS IN THE SOCIAL SPHERE

H.E. Archbishop Soueif encourages and takes part in all the social initiatives and gatherings organised by the *Faith and Light Community* in Cyprus, and he participates as well in the different celebrations organised by *Clubs* and community organisations as expressions of gratitude.

*Caritas Cyprus Koinonia* (CCK), which has a justice, peace and ecumenical-religious dimension, continues its mission through the different parishes and sectors. CCK has called a General Assembly to clarify its own stance on different issues and share its living and transforming experience.

Conferences, Publications, Documents  
Archbishop Soueif participated in the annual spiritual retreat and Synod of the Maronite Bishops, as well as the Synod of the Catholic



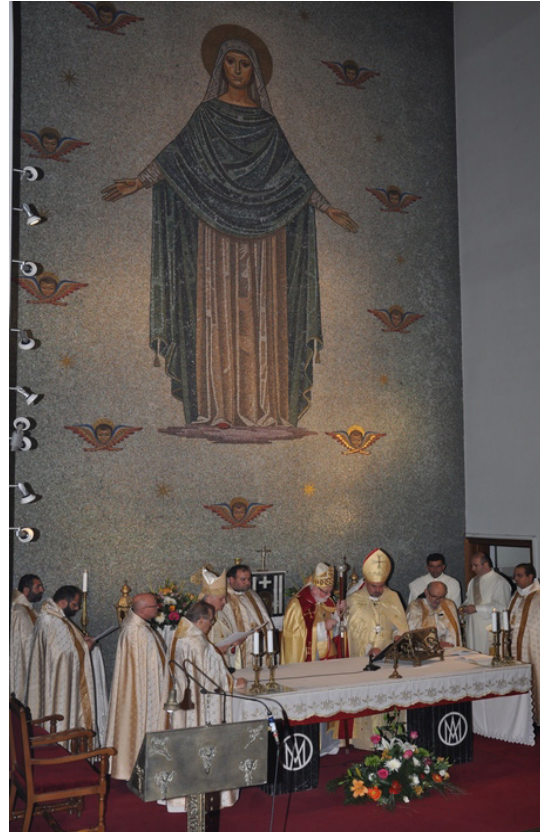


Church in the Holy Land. He led a spiritual retreat for the clergy of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia (January 2017) on the Maronite Liturgy and its spirituality and how to put it in practice from the pastoral point of view. He gave several spiritual conferences to clergy and consecrated of many eparchies, in addition to spiritual visits and guidance to the staff of the ecumenical Christian TV station SAT7, and he also participated in its 2017 annual network meeting, giving an intervention on ecumenical experience and the richness that stems from it.

#### RESTORATION: PASTORAL CENTRES AND CHURCHES

The Maronite Archeparchy of Cyprus launched the *Bet Moroun Centre* project which will contribute, together with all the other institutions of the island, to the human, social and cultural common good.

The *Holy Cross Church* in Karpasha village and *St Marina Church* in Agia Marina village in the north were repaired and restored through the contribution of the European Union and the United Nations development programmes and



the support of the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage. They were re-consecrated by the Archbishop in the presence of the priests and community of faithful. These churches are a sign of hope for the Maronites and their presence in their villages. Approval has been given to start the renovation of the Maronite *Church of St Anna* in Famagusta.

# INTERNATIONAL BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS



PRESIDENT  
HIS LORDSHIP MGR. LADISLAV NEMET  
BISHOP OF ZRENJANIN



SECRETARY GENERAL  
REV. MIRKO STEFKOVIC



## AD LIMINA VISIT

During the above-mentioned period, the most significant event for our local Churches was the bishops' "ad Limina" visit, which took place from 30 January – 3 February 2017. The Bishops' Conference prepared for this visit with an Extraordinary Plenary Session, held from 25-27 October 2016 in Belgrade. Due to the bonds which the different dioceses have with Saint John Paul II, it was decided to begin the visit with Mass at the tomb of the Pope Saint. Then, for the first meeting, the Bishops met the Holy Father. Everyone was struck by the spontaneity and attention with which the Pope chaired the meeting. The Bishops noted his preparation, his up-dated knowledge about the geographical situation of the various countries which make up the Bishops' Conference and references to different details in each individual country. Since it had not been possible in advance to arrange the celebration of Mass with the Holy Father, he was asked about it during the meeting, and he immediately welcomed the request and altered his usual time. So, on the morning of Wednesday 1 March, Pope Francis celebrated Mass with members of the Bishops' Conference. Both for the Bishops and for our local Churches it was a tangible sign of communion and a moment of blessing and a stimulus for a renewed pastoral enthusiasm. The visits to the various Roman Dicasteries, too, were opportunities for fruitful exchange, encouraged by an atmosphere of listening and understanding with regard to the different issues tackled. Overall, the visit was a great moment for the whole of the Bishops' Conference and everyone returned home truly confirmed in the faith.

## CANONISATION OF MOTHER TERESA

A moment of great importance for the local Churches of the Bishops' Conference was the canonisation of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, native of these lands since the saint was born in Skopje of Albanian origin from Kosovo. So, along with the Apostolic Administration of Prizren in the Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls, on 3 September 2016 there was a classical music concert entitled "Hymn to Mother Teresa", and on 12 September in Skopje a Mass of Thanksgiving for her canonisation was celebrated.

## YEAR OF MERCY

In all the dioceses of the Bishops' Conference the programmes prepared for the Jubilee Year of Mercy were followed up to its conclusion.

## PLENARY ASSEMBLY

During the Extraordinary Plenary Session of the Bishops' Conference, held with a view to the *ad Limina* visit, there was discussion about themes relevant to the life of the local Churches to be presented to the Holy Father, as well as to the different Dicasteries of the Holy See. First of all, the question was raised about the composition of the Bishops' Conference itself, which makes its functioning very difficult. On this issue, the Holy Father himself, taking note of what the Bishops said to him, ordered that at the next Plenary Assembly of the Bishops' Conference all four Apostolic Nuncios responsible for the countries which the Conference includes should take part.

In addition, given that the plan to locate the headquarters of the Bishops' Conference in the city of Pančevo – in a palace which the Diocese of Zrenjanin received back from the State – was not successful, the Bishops decided that the presbytery in a now abandoned parish in the city of Novi Sad – made available for this purpose by the Diocese of Subotica – should be modified to host the offices of the Bishops' Conference.

Finally, the Bishops discussed the "Little flock" project, through which they wish to find lasting solutions to guarantee the functioning of the diocesan structures in the different countries. In the wake of what has happened in Serbia, the Bishops have begun the drafting of new manuals for catechesis in state schools and have decided to establish a Metropolitan Ecclesiastical Tribunal, thus responding to the new norms on the subject.





## NEW GENERAL SECRETARY

The new General Secretary of the Bishops' Conference, **Father Stanislav Přibyl**, took up his role on 30 September 2016.

## DEATH OF CARDINAL VLK

On 18 March 2017, Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, Archbishop Emeritus of Prague, died. The requiem and funeral rites were held at the Cathedral of Sts. Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert on March 25.

## ORDINATION OF TWO NEW AUXILIARY BISHOPS FOR OSTRAVA-OPAVA AND FOR BRNO

The new Auxiliary Bishop of Ostrava-Opava, **Mgr Martin David**, was ordained in the Cathedral of the Holy Saviour in Ostrava on 28 May 2017. The new Auxiliary Bishop of Brno, **Mgr Pavel Konzbul**, was ordained in the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul on 29 June 2016, on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, the patron saints of the diocese.

## MGR KAREL HERBST AND MGR JOSEF HRDLIČKA BECOME EMERITI

Auxiliary Bishops Josef Hrdlička of Olomouc and Karel Herbst of Prague became Emeriti as Pope Francis accepted their respective resignations.

## BEATIFICATION

### OF FATHER ENGELMAR UNZEITIG

On 24 September 2016, Father Engelmar Unzeitig was beatified in Würzburg, Bavaria. A native of Hradec nad Svitavou, today part of the Czech Republic, he died on 2 March 1945 in the Nazi concentration camp, Dachau.

## POPE FRANCIS RECEIVED A STATUE OF SAINT AGNES OF BOHEMIA

On 10 September 2016, Pope Francis received a statue of Saint Agnes of Bohemia. The piece of art, handed over by a Czech delegation led by the Minister of Culture, Daniel Herman, has been placed in the chapel of the Patrons of Europe in St Peter's Basilica and is the first Czech sculpture situated there.

## POPE FRANCIS BLESSED A PAINTING OF OUR LADY OF LIDICE

On 31 May 2017, Pope Francis blessed a painting of Our Lady of Lidice, the work of the artist Zdirad Čech. At the same time, the Pope met Veronika Rýmonová, a survivor of the Lidice massacre. The meeting was part of the programme marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragedy.

## NIGHT OF THE CHURCHES

On 10 June 2016 and 9 June 2017, the Czech Republic joined the international initiative



# CZECH (REPUBLIC)



“Night of the Churches”. Some 1500 shrines of various Churches were open to the public, offering an attractive programme.

## WORLD YOUTH DAY 2016

The programme in Kraków was attended by some 6,000 young people from the Czech Republic.

## MGR VIGANÒ PRESENTED THE REFORM OF THE VATICAN MEDIA

In January 2017, the Prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for Communications, Mgr Dario Viganò, visited Prague, Brno, Velehrad, Olomouc and Ostrava to get acquainted with the

Czech Catholic media and to present the reform of the Vatican communication structures.

## CZECH AND SLOVAK BISHOPS DISCUSSED RELIGION AND MIGRATION

On 21 February 2017, a conference was held in Bratislava, Slovakia, on religion and migration. The event was organized by the Czech Bishops' Conference, the Conference of Slovakian Bishops and the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Faculty of Theology of the Comenius University in Bratislava; among the speakers were the Presidents of both Bishops' Conferences, Cardinal Dominik Duka OP and His Grace Mgr Stanislav Zvolenský.

## PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS

Translation of the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (Congregation for Clergy, 2016); translation of *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation – Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (Congregation for Clergy, 2016); Directives of the Czech Bishops' Conference for Courses for Youth Leaders (2017); Ideas about University Pastoral Care; *The Ways of the Faith of the Deaf* (Department for Catechesis of the Czech Bishops' Conference, 2017); *A Christian in the Turmoil of the World* – themes for youth communities; *Selection of Music for the Liturgy* – directives of the Czech Bishops' Conference for the use of liturgical music especially with young people; *Blessed are the merciful, they will find mercy* – World Youth Day 2016; and finally, *The Catholic Church in the Czech Republic* (information on the Church, 2017).





# ENGLAND AND WALES



PRESIDENT  
HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL VINCENT NICHOLS  
ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER



SECRETARY GENERAL  
REV. CHRISTOPHER PAUL THOMAS



## BISHOPS' CONFERENCE PLENARY ASSEMBLIES

The Bishops' meeting last autumn took place in November 2016 in Leeds. The Spring 2017 meeting was combined with a retreat for bishops, led by the Bishop of Aberdeen, Scotland.

November saw the release of a new document, *The Right Road*, which describes a Catholic approach to prison reform. The document draws on expertise from Catholic charities, chaplains and experts working in this field. Recognising the central role of employment in helping people leaving prison to become reintegrated into society, the Bishops' Conference also agreed to 'Ban the Box' in their diocesan recruitment practices, and encouraged all employers to do the same. This box often appears on forms asking job applicants if they have a criminal record. Ticking this box often means they may never be called for interview. A text [can be downloaded](#) from the website.

## NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS & PILGRIMAGE, "ADOREMUS"

The Bishops' Conference is holding a National Eucharistic Congress & Pilgrimage in Liverpool from 7-9 September 2018. This weekend will bring together people, clergy and religious from all the Dioceses of England & Wales in a celebration of the centrality of the Holy

Eucharist in the Church. There will be an academic day with workshops and seminars, a Congress Day bringing together around 10,000 people at which Bishop Robert Barron will give a keynote speech, and Sunday Mass and Eucharistic Procession at the Metropolitan Catholic Cathedral of Liverpool.

## VISIT BY FOUR UK MUSLIM LEADERS TO THE HOLY FATHER

On 5 April Pope Francis welcomed four UK Muslim leaders who went with Cardinal Nichols for a private meeting with him to promote dialogue and close collaboration on social action in the United Kingdom. The delegation was led by Cardinal Nichols and included Moulana Muhammad Shahid Raza, Moulana Ali Raza Rizvi, Moulana Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi and Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra. Cardinal Nichols has engaged in dialogue with a number of Muslim leaders over the past few years and brought the delegation to Rome for the Papal Audience and a meeting with Cardinal Tauran at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

## FLAME 2017

Flame 2017, held at The SSE Arena, Wembley, on Saturday 11 March, saw 10,000 young people come together to interact and celebrate their faith. Flame Congress is a joint production of the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation, and







the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The theme of the 2017 congress was 10,000 Reasons, encouraging the young people to be a part of 10,000 reasons to believe, hope, and pray. Fr Dermott Donnelly, chair of CYMFed, encouraged all present to 'experience the vibrancy and hope that a new experience of Jesus brings'.

Cardinal Nichols delivered a message from Pope Francis and Cardinal Bo of Myanmar was the keynote speaker. Solidarity with and welcoming refugees was a key theme in many elements of the event. All present were encouraged to use Twitter, Instagram and all social media to express their thoughts, emotions and images of the event.

#### THE ART OF DYING WELL (ARS MORIENDI)

In November 2016, the Bishops of England and Wales launched the *Art of Dying Well* project. It has its own website ([www.artofdyingwell.org](http://www.artofdyingwell.org)) which offers practical and spiritual support to those who are facing death personally, or losing a loved one. It contains a wide range of both practical and spiritual resources.

#### THE CATHOLIC PARLIAMENTARY & PUBLIC AFFAIRS INTERNSHIP SCHEME

This began in 2003, and provides up to eight recently graduated Catholics with intensive experience of political and social action in a spiritual context. Four interns are placed with Christian MPs at Westminster, one in a parliamentary support role within the Secretariat, two in public policy and social action with Catholic agencies, and one in a media internship with the Catholic Communications Network. In addition to educational work experience, all of the internships also involve individually guided retreats and spiritual guidance throughout the year. Each intern takes part in a course in Political Theology and Catholic Social Teaching. Visits are made to COMECE in Brussels, and to Rome to meet with senior members of the Roman Congregations and Dicasteries. More information can be found on [www.faithinpolitics.org.uk](http://www.faithinpolitics.org.uk)



## WORLD YOUTH DAY 2016

World Youth Day (WYD) 2016 in Krakow was an important and significant international event for the young people of the local Church in Estonia. Shortly before WYD, the groups of young people who meet weekly met in different parishes in Estonia to prepare for this extraordinary event of July 2016. After WYD in Krakow, the activities of the groups of young Catholics in Estonia began, with a view to getting to know about, deepening and / or returning to the Catholic faith. Since there are few Catholics in Estonia, our young people were divided into three small groups, bringing a total of about 70 people, along with three priests, to Poland for WYD 2016.

## CANONISATION OF MOTHER TERESA

Mother Teresa, a Catholic nun who gave her life to the service of the poor, was declared a Saint at a Canonisation Mass presided over by Pope Francis in the Vatican in September 2016. The Catholic Church in Estonia demonstrated its gratitude for this event by celebrating a Mass of Thanksgiving on 6 September, inaugurating an exhibition dedicated to the life of Saint Mother Teresa, with thanks to the Sisters the Missionaries of Charity who have already been working in Tallinn for 25 years.

## THE YEAR OF MERCY

The Doors of Mercy in the parishes of SS Peter and Paul in Tallinn and of the Immaculate Conception in Tartu were closed on 20 November, but Pope Francis said that the "real door of mercy, which is the heart of Christ, always remains open for us", and Estonia, following the Pope's words, after the end of the Church's Jubilee Year is continuing various activities devoted to God's mercy.

During the Year of Mercy in 2016, Catholics undertook different pilgrimages in Estonia and to Rome; they listened to conferences; and participated in group and prayer meetings and other significant events which took place in the local Catholic parishes in Estonia.

## ECUMENISM.

### 500 YEARS SINCE THE REFORMATION

On 9 October an ecumenical prayer service in the church of St Olav opened the ceremonies

marking the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in Estonia. During this anniversary year, a major event took place in April: the **Ecumenical Via Crucis** in Estonia. On 27 September 2017, the Catholic Church and the Estonian Lutheran Evangelical Church organised a joint conference, entitled: "From conflict to communion". The Via Crucis, an ecumenical devotion of the passion of Our Lord, took place last Good Friday in the Old City of Tallinn. The first three Stations with a meditation took place in the Lutheran Church of St John, then the Via Crucis moved on to the Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul on Vene Street and subsequently to the Baptist Church of St Olav, and to the last Station at Toompea, in the Lutheran Dome Church. This commemoration of Jesus' last days saw the participation of a few hundred people, especially families, individual adults, but also students, who joined in this beautiful prayer initiative in Tallinn.

### MEETING AT LUND. FROM CONFLICT TO COMMUNION - TOGETHER IN HOPE

A joint commemoration organised by the Lutheran World Federation and by the Catholic Church took place in Lund and in Malmö, in Sweden, on 31 October 2016, with the theme: "From conflict to communion – Together in hope". An Estonian delegation, the Catholic Bishop Philippe Jourdan and the Archbishop of the Estonian Lutheran Evangelical Church, Urmas Viilma, participated in this historic event in Sweden. Since the central focus of the anniversary of the Reformation is the truth of the Gospel and of the Triune God, we can hope that the Churches and Christians may be led to draw closer to each other, be inspired to participate in joint witness and service, and that the Gospel may always be more listened to and experienced among the Estonian people.

### CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY OF THE MARIAN APPARITIONS AT FATIMA

The day of the anniversary, Saturday 13 May, the medieval historic centre of Tallinn came to life with a procession carrying the statue of Our Lady of Fatima. Estonia is a secularised society, and public manifestations of traditional Catholic devotion are not often seen. In Tallinn, there is a small procession for the feast of

Corpus Christi, near the Catholic Cathedral, in the historic centre, but the one organised for the Fatima anniversary was one of the largest processions of recent Catholic history in Tallinn. Many Catholics in Estonia have a strong devotion to Our Lady of Fatima.

## ARCHBISHOP EDUARD PROFITTLICH SJ, SERVANT OF GOD

The cause for the beatification as a martyr of Archbishop Eduard Profitlich SJ (1890-1942) has been opened and the diocesan process is on-going. This is the first time that Estonian Catholics are working to obtain the first blessed martyr in their history. Estonian Catholics need their intercessor in heaven, the Servant of God Eduard Profitlich SJ (*Archiepiscopi Titulari Hadrianopolitani in Haemimonto, Administratoris Apostolici Estoniensis, ex Societate Iesu*), who served the Church in Estonia from 1930-1941, and have asked Rome's Congregation for the Causes of Saints that he be beatified as a martyr of Estonia.





## PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

With the approach of the 2017 presidential elections, the bishops wanted to provide some reflections on the major issues on which our society is founded (Statement "2017 year of elections, some points for reflection", 20 June 2016). This statement was addressed to the Christian communities and to all those involved in French political life, from electors to the elected. Subsequently, on 13 October there appeared in bookshops a *Letter to the inhabitants of France* from the Permanent Council of the Bishops' Conference, entitled: "In a changing world, re-discovering the meaning of politics", published by Bayard / Cerf / Mame.

The forum for dialogue between the Catholic Church and the government met at the Hotel Matignon on Tuesday 11 October under the presidency of the Prime Minister, Manuel Valls. It was the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of this dialogue forum since its creation in 2002. In addition to the institutional, administrative and legal issues which can be of concern to the Church, current issues were also discussed.

The Council of State and Christmas cribs: following the decision of the Council of State concerning the "lawfulness of the temporary installation of cribs by public figures", on 9 November the French Bishops' Conference acknowledged the decision after being made aware of the conclusions of the public speaker.

## ABORTION: CRIME OF DIGITAL OBSTRUCTION TO VOLUNTARY ABORTION

The President of the French Bishops' Conference wrote to the President of the Republic to express his "grave anxiety" at the concern of the legislative majority [...] to approve a procedure which would put at risk, more than they are already, the correct rules of dialogue for building a society based on mutual respect".

## ATTACKS

**14 July in Nice:** this terrorist attack by a cargo truck was carried out in Nice on the evening of 14 July 2016 on the *Promenade des Anglais*. The driver of the truck aimed at a crowd of civilians at the end of a firework display organised for the national feast. The attack resulted in 86 deaths and 458 wounded. **26 July: assassination of Fr Jacques Hamel.** There were three victims of a hostage situation in Saint-Etienne

du Rouvray: a priest, Fr Jacques Hamel, 84 years old, and the assassins. Three other people were wounded, one seriously. Many Masses and prayers were said throughout the dioceses of France after Fr Hamel's death. **13 November:** first anniversary of the Bataclan attack, linked to the attack against the Charlie Hebdo newsroom and the Hypercacher supermarket in January 2015. Along with Cardinal Vingt-Trois, Archbishop of Paris, the French Bishops' Conference asked for prayers for those who were killed, for those who were wounded, for those who suffered the attacks and are working to overcome the trauma, and for the relations of the victims.

## MIGRANTS: CALAIS AND LAMPEDUSA – SIMILAR CHALLENGES

The bishops met migrants from 21-23 September on the island of Lampedusa. Present were: Mgr Jaeger, Bishop of Arras (the French diocese in which Calais is located); Cardinal Montenegro, Archbishop of Agrigento (the Italian diocese in which Lampedusa is located); and Mgr Guerino Di Tora (President of the "Migrants' Foundation of the Italian Bishops' Conference). Tuesday 14 March 2017 saw the signing at the Élysée Palace in Paris of a Memorandum of Understanding for the realisation of a project entitled "Supportive welcome operation for refugees coming from the Lebanon (Humanitarian Corridors)" between the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Sant'Egidio Community, the Protestant Federation of France, the Protestant Federation of Mutual Assistance, the French Bishops' Conference and Secours Catholique – French Caritas.

## PAEDOPHILIA

On 21 July 2016 the French Bishops' Conference launched the website *luttercontrelapedophilie.catholique.fr*. This site constitutes one of the measures taken by the Permanent Council on 12 April 2016 to improve the fight against paedophilia within the French Church. A new edition of the guide "Fighting against paedophilia" is the third up-dated edition (published on 24 January 2017). It was drawn up by all the members of the Permanent Working Group for the Fight against Paedophilia. Parallel to this up-dating of the guide, the French Bishops' Conference has decided to repeat the inquiry undertaken with the bishops in 2010. It is a



quantitative inquiry.

### ORDINATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD AND TO THE DIACONATE

There were c. 100 ordinations to the priesthood in 2016. Even though the overall figure continues to decline, the number of ordinations to the diocesan priesthood is increasing (71 in 2015 and 79 in 2016).

### THE CHURCH ON THE MARGINS

27 June saw the publication of *"The Church on the margins"*, the first report of the French Bishops' Conference. Produced on the basis of a poll conducted by the Opinion Way research company and a survey in this area, the Bishops' Conference has published a first report about this initiative. The report aims to demonstrate on the one hand the expectations with regard to the Church, and on the other the diversity of the types of public reached by the Church. It also underlines the need for a globalised

approach by the individual and a greater opening on the part of the main protagonists.

### EVENTS

On 2 July 2016 for the seventh consecutive year the **Night of the Churches** took place, a national event launched by the French Bishops' Conference. At the **WYD 2016 in Krakow**, the French delegation comprised 190 youth groups, 350 people accompanying them and 86 bishops; in total almost 35,000 French people, the second largest delegation after the Italians. In Poland, the assassination of Fr Hamel had repercussions on WYD for the French, especially for the group from Rouen. On 28 September, in offices of the French Bishops' Conference, the **Fratello Association** organised a news conference to present the pilgrimage with people in precarious situations on the occasion of the Jubilee of Mercy, which took place from 11-13 November in Rome. The news conference was followed by the showing of the film *"François"*. Numerous pilgrims from the Fratello Association were present and provided testimonies. 14-15 October saw the canonisation of two French religious: Elizabeth of the Trinity, a Carmelite sister, and Brother Salomon Le Clercq, Brother of the Christian Schools of La Salle. Wednesday 1 March there was a meeting with the title: **Civic education and education in citizenship by the church platform of civil service**, at which 210 volunteers involved in church movements and associations reflected on the welcome given to migrants. On 2 March the publisher La Nuée Bleue published a book written by Mgr Joseph Doré, Archbishop Emeritus of Strasbourg, and Fr Bernard Xibaut, chancellor for the Archdiocese of Strasbourg: **"Emeritus Bishops: in today's Church what is the role for those retired from the episcopate?"**, in which twenty-nine emeritus bishops offer their testimonies, speaking about their lives after retirement and new commitments. The **19th edition of the European Television Festival for Religious Programmes** was held in Paris from Wednesday 14 (starting at 1400) to Saturday 17 June 2017.

### PLENARY ASSEMBLY IN LOURDES

The **Autumn session** took place from 4-9 November 2016 in the absence of Mgr Pontier. On Monday 7 November the French bishops decided to have a time of prayer and penance

for the victims of sexual abuse. The work of the bishops was focussed around different major themes: vocations to the diocesan priesthood; the political and religious situation in France, with input from the sociologist Philippe Portier, who spoke on the theme: "Society and religion in contemporary France"; the intervention, behind closed doors, from Cardinal Tauran, who came to speak to the bishops about dialogue with Muslims. Other issues were discussed, including the pastoral implications of *Amoris laetitia*, pastoral work in the world of work and in the community and in rural areas, and an analysis prepared by the CPLP (Permanent Working Group for the Fight against Paedophilia) on the measures adopted by the dioceses in the last six months to combat this plague of paedophilia. The Plenary Assembly concluded with the showing of a film with testimonies from elderly priests.

**The Spring session** took place from 28-31 March 2017. This year, the bishops devoted an entire day to the theme of Church unity and diversity among Catholics. Other issues on the agenda included time devoted to the current situation of the French Mission, followed by a reflection on voluntary work to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Catholic Delegation for Co-operation. Time was also devoted to the emeritus bishops and also to the annual contribution to clergy sustenance. The bishops then examined the question of the reform of the structures of the French Bishops' Conference. The *Studies and Projects* Committee presented an up-to-date progress report on the activities of the working groups ("Unity of the presbyterate" and "Civil rituality"). This Assembly was also the time for the internal elections and different mandates, including those of the 11 presidents of Councils or Commissions which had expired.

## DOCUMENTS FROM THE EPISCOPATE

The journal *Documents Episcopat* (documents of the episcopate) publishes texts and documents written by people who hold posts of responsibility in the Church, by teachers and experts, on issues of a theological, ethical and pastoral nature. A useful tool for analysing and focussing the major issues which impact on our society, it is published by the General Secretariat of the French Bishops' Conference.

### 2016

- N.5: Synods and Council in France – analysis and perspectives
- N.6: Mercy, the fruit of the womb - Fr Lataste, figure of mercy
- N.7: Laudato si' - Journeying towards ecological conversion
- N.8: Comece – Dialogue between the Churches and Europe
- N. 9-10: Mercy – Doctrinal session of the French bishops
- N.11: Universal Brother, witness and saint – The centenary of the death of Charles de Foucauld
- N.12: The challenges of ecumenism today - 50 years after Vatican II

### 2017

- N. 1-2: Priests coming from other countries – Types and challenges
- N.3: With a handicap, living with passion – A foundational event for pastoral inclusivity
- N.4: Young professionals – What pedagogy? What accompaniment?
- N.5: The Church in the networks: what communion in the digital era?
- N. 6 -7: The Churches, a challenge for everyone
- N.8: After 500 years, an up-dated Catholic vision of Martin Luther
- N.9: Celibacy, celibates: what outlook in the Church?
- N. 10: 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the DCC





## VOCATION – LIFE – MIGRATION

In the area of the pastoral work for vocations, from June 2016-May 2017, the German Bishops' Conference (DBK) promoted the project **"Valerie und der Priester"** (Valeria and the priest). The initiative saw a non-believing journalist recount the life of a young priest. As regards initiatives for the defence of life, the participation of the DBK on 5 September 2016 in the **"March for Life"** in Berlin is of note. In the area of the pastoral care of migrants and refugees, of note was the visit to Lebanon, 14-18 July 2016, by the President of the German Bishops' Conference Commission for Migration, Archbishop Stefan Heße, and the **Second Catholic Meeting on Refugees**, on 30 September 2016.

## PRESENTATION – PUBLICATION OF DOCUMENTS

On 23 June 2016 there was a presentation of the study by German Caritas, by the German Conference of Major Superiors and by the German Bishops' Conference on **old orphanages**; on 10 August 2016, a document **"Together We are Church"**, the fruit of a process of national dialogue which has gone on for many years, was published; on 16 September 2016, the joint document of the German Bishops' Conference and the Evangelical Church in Germany, **"Healing the memory"**, was published; on 5 October 2016 there was a presentation of the document **"The threatened land"**

by the German Bishops' Conference Commission for Social Issues; on 30 November 2016 there was a presentation of the document **"Persecuted and discriminated Christians: the Arab peninsula"**; on 16 December 2016 the German Bishops' Conference document **"The future of denominational Religious Education. Recommendations for co-operation in Religious Education between Catholics and Evangelicals"** was published; finally, on 2 February 2017, the German Bishops' Conference commentary on the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation **Amoris laetitia** was published.

## PLENARY ASSEMBLIES

The Plenary Assembly (Autumn session) of the German Bishops' Conference took place in Fulda from 18-20 September 2016. During the meeting the new unified translation of the Bible was presented and there was a study day on social poverty in Germany. From 6-9 March 2017 in Bensberg (Cologne) the Spring session of the Plenary Assembly was held, on the themes: "The Synod of Bishops on young people" and "Populism and social cohesion".

## ECUMENISM

On 23 July 2016 there was a celebration of the **60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Ecumenical Pastoral Care by Telephone (TelefonSeelsorge)** initiative. On 9 August 2016 the collection



of texts **“The Reformation in an ecumenical perspective”** was published. On 1 September 2016, the Catholic Church in Germany participated in the **Ecumenical World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation**, while from 12-21 October 2016 there was an **Ecumenical Pilgrimage to the Holy Land** with some members of the German Bishops’ Conference and the Evangelical Church in Germany. On 11 March 2017 in Hildesheim there was an ecumenical prayer service on the theme **“Healing the memory”** with the participation of the Evangelical Church and the German Bishops’ Conference. On 23 March 2017, the German Bishops’ Conference published an **Ecumenical Statement** to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, while on 28 April 2017 in Kassel the **Ecumenical Week for Life** was opened. On 2 February 2017, Pope Francis received in audience an ecumenical Delegation from the Evangelical Church in Germany. Finally, on 9 February 2017 in Stuttgart there was a **Biblical Congress** with the presentation of the unified translation of the Bible and the new translation of Luther.

#### AWARDS

On 14 November 2016 the Catholic Media Award was conferred. On 11 May 2017 in Vienna, the German Bishops’ Conference **Catholic Award for Children’s and Young People’s Literature** was conferred, while on 20 June 2017, it was the German Bishops’ Conference **Second Award against xenophobia and racism**.

#### MAIN ISSUES AND EVENTS

Among the major issues and events in the course of the year, the following are of note: ecumenical activities marking the 500 years of the Reformation in Germany (opened on 31 October 2016 in Berlin); the participation of 16,000 young people at World Youth Day 2016 in Krakow; the issue of refugees and accommodation for asylum-seekers and the Church’s debate about offering asylum; the protection of life and – in particular – the stance of the German Bishops’ Conference in the debate on assisted suicide; the statements from the German Bishops’ Conference about terrorist attacks in Europe (especially Nice, Munich, Berlin) and the end of the Holy Year of Mercy. Among the statements of particular note: the stance of the German Bishops’ Conference taken around the G20 Summit in Hamburg, July 2017, and the stance of the German Bishops’ Conference taken in the debate and discussions of the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) on so-called “marriage for everyone”.

# GREECE



PRESIDENT  
HIS GRACE MGR. SEVASTIANOS ROSSOLATOS  
ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS



SECRETARY GENERAL  
HIS GRACE MGR. NIKOLAOS PRINTEZIS  
ARCHBISHOP OF NAXOS, ANDROS, TINOS AND MYKONOS



In the period June 2016-May 2017 the Greek Bishops' Conference has held three plenary assemblies:

## SPRING PLENARY (19-26 MAY 2016)

During the meeting, held on the island of Tinos, the bishops reflected on Pope Francis' Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation "*Amoris laetitia*" about marital love and met a representative of *Catholic Relief Services* (Caritas USA), His Eminence Cardinal Theodore McCarrich, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington.

On that occasion, there was a meeting between the bishops and parish priests. As well as the bishops, forty-two parish priests (secular and regular) participated. There was also a study of Pope Saint John Paul II's Encyclical "*Dives in misericordia*". For his part, the Emeritus Apostolic Exarch for the Greek-Catholic faithful in Greece, Mgr Dimitrios Salachas, presented a reflection on the Holy Father's Motu proprio "*Mitis iudex Dominus Iesus*".

## AUTUMN PLENARY (8-11 NOVEMBER 2016)

The Autumn plenary took place in Athens. On that occasion, the bishops studied the following question: "The pastoral orientation of the Church on the basis of the spirit of Pope Francis' Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation "*Amoris laetitia*". They also met with and discussed: the league of Catholic parish priests in Greece; the legal Office of the Greek Bishops' Conference about issues concerning law 4301 (on the legal personality of the Church); the director of the newspaper "KATHOLIKI"; the president of the church court of first instance; and, finally, with the president of Caritas Hellas.

## SPRING PLENARY (4-11 MAY 2017)

The Spring 2017 plenary took place on the island of Tinos. There was a reflection on the sacrament of confirmation; on the creation of the Acta of the May 2016 meeting between the hierarchy and the parish priests; and on the practical instructions to be given to parish priests about pastoral care of families in the light of Pope Francis' Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation "*Amoris laetitia*". This was done with the help of Fr Basilio Petrà, a native Greek priest of the diocese of Prato (Italy).



# IRELAND



PRESIDENT  
HIS GRACE MGR. EAMON MARTIN  
ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH



SECRETARY GENERAL  
HIS GRACE MGR. KIERAN O'REILLY  
ARCHBISHOP OF CASHEL AND EMLY



EXECUTIVE SECRETARY GENERAL  
MGR. GEARÓID DULLEA



## LAUNCH IN IRELAND OF THE WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES 2018

Pope Francis asked that the IX World Meeting of Families (WMOF 2018) take place in Dublin from 22 to 26 August 2018. Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin is its President and the theme is: "The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World". On 22 October 2017 the Co-chairmen of the Council for Marriage and the Family of the Episcopal Conference, Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, formally launched preparations for the WMOF 2018 in Dublin. The Bishops have also launched a logo and hymn for the WMOF 2018 as well as a one-year programme of preparation comprising events and initiatives for families and parishes. A dedicated website ([worldmeeting2018.ie](http://worldmeeting2018.ie)) will be available to cater for Irish and international pilgrims who wish to come to Ireland for the WMOF 2018.

## AD LIMINA VISIT TO POPE FRANCIS IN JANUARY 2017

From 15-25 January 2017 the Irish Bishops undertook the visit *Ad Limina Apostolorum*. The Bishops acknowledged the blessing and goodwill offered by Pope Francis to the Church in Ireland, and the Holy Father's strong encou-

agement to those who live their faith with conviction notwithstanding the many challenges which exist in contemporary culture. The Bishops also acknowledged many constructive meetings with the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia.

## PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE

The Bishops participated in public discussion regarding article 40.3.3 of the Constitution of Ireland noting that a truly compassionate society promotes care and protection of all unborn human life and recognises the equal right to life of the mother. In December 2016 the Bishops published *Two Lives, One Love* as a submission to the Citizens' Assembly on this topic. The Bishops also acknowledged with gratitude the challenging but important work of CURA, the crisis pregnancy agency of the Bishops' Conference, which marks forty years of service in 2017.

## HOMELESSNESS

The rise in homelessness across the country has also been addressed by the Irish Episcopal Conference. According to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, there are almost 90,000 households waiting for social housing in the Republic of Ireland – and over 2,000 children living in homeless accommodation in Dublin. Many Dioceses have undertaken special initiatives for the homeless and people in need around Christmas.

## PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

Along with partners in ecumenical dialogue, the Irish Bishops have focused on the plight of the ongoing persecution of Christians in the Middle East, whose very existence is under threat. The Bishops expressed their solidarity and support for Christians, and for all who suffer and are displaced due to violence in the region. In particular, the Bishops issued a statement on the upsurge in violence in the Syrian city of Aleppo and encouraged the Government to use diplomatic channels and to ask UN Security Council members for a ceasefire and for humanitarian access.

## VOCATIONS

A national Vocation Office at the Bishops' Conference has been established to oversee

and coordinate the work of training diocesan vocations directors and the promotion of vocations to the priesthood.

#### POPE JOHN PAUL II AWARDS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE CHURCH

One important aspect of outreach to the young takes place through the Pope John Paul II Awards, which was created to commemorate the ministry of Saint Pope John Paul II. The award acknowledges young people who take an active part in the life of their parish, in the life of their community and in society. Over 20,000 young people in many Dioceses have successfully completed the Pope John Paul II Award. The award enables participants to become more aware of the teaching and role of the Catholic Church in the world and to engage at a deep level with Christ. For more information about the award, see [www.thepopejohn-pauliiaward.com](http://www.thepopejohn-pauliiaward.com). Several Irish Bishops and over 1,600 Irish pilgrims participated in the World Youth Day during August 2016 in Krakow, Poland. Many Dioceses have undertaken web-based consultations in preparation for the Synod of Bishops.

#### NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Bishops expressed concern about the absence of constructive political dialogue in Northern Ireland which, in turn, is preventing the operation of the devolved Assembly. Bishops urged all parties to avoid the growing vacuum, and instability, and to enter negotiations in a spirit of generosity and positivity

#### APOSTOLIC NUNCIO

A new Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland has been appointed by Pope Francis. His Excellency Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo will replace His Excellency Archbishop Charles Brown, now Apostolic Nuncio to Albania. The Bishops paid tribute to the energy, enthusiasm, warmth and openness with which Archbishop Brown undertook his ministry during his time here, as well as the affection in which he was held by the faithful throughout Ireland.



## EARTHQUAKES

The period June 2016 - June 2017 was marked dramatically for Italy by a series of earthquakes which began on 24 August and continued in subsequent months, affecting the central regions of the country (Abruzzo, Marche, Lazio and Umbria). The church community rallied massively (on 18 September 2016 there was also a national collection), while, on 28 November 2016, the Italian Bishops' Conference signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Extraordinary Commissioner of the Government and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism to identify the priorities, procedures and terms for the recovery of the cultural heritage of religious interest.

## REFUGEES

Another area in which the Bishops have acted in understanding with the institutional representatives of the Italian State is that of seeking humanitarian corridors for refugees (Eritreans, Somalis and South-Sudanese), with the signing, on 12 January 2017, of an appropriate agreement. On 7 March a new agreement enabled the arrival in Italy of 41 people, including many with serious health problems, from the refugee camps of Jordan, while unceasing support has been offered, through the 8xmille funds, to entities working in the migrants' countries of departure and here, for their welcome and integration. In this regard, in recent months work has been on-going to put the finishing touches to an important project which will be presented in Autumn 2017: "Free to leave, free to remain", a campaign on the phenomena of migration which will be developed on the cultural and pastoral fronts, but which also considers the financing and realisation of projects in the countries of departure and in those of the migrants' destination.

## 26<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS, WYD IN KRAKOW, ASSASSINATION OF FR HAMEL

The 26<sup>th</sup> National Eucharistic Congress took place from 15-18 September 2016. *The Eucharist source of mission: "In your mercy you came to encounter everyone"* was the theme which drew delegations from all Italian dioceses to Genoa. Just before, from 26-31 July, the Italian Church also participated in the XXXI WYD in Krakow: 136 Bishops and 2,250 priests accompanied more

than 90,000 young people. During WYD, the Italian bishops were united in prayers in remembrance of Fr Jacques Hamel, the priest assassinated in a church near Rouen, and there was no lack of words of condemnation and hope in the future following the numerous bloody terrorist events which have taken place throughout the year in various parts of the world.

## REFORM OF THE MARRIAGE PROCESS

On 1 June 2016, Pope Francis instituted a working group – co-ordinated by the General Secretary of the Italian Bishops' Conference – to look at the main interpretative and applicable issues of common interest about the reform of the matrimonial process introduced by the *Motu Proprio Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus*. After little more than a month, on 7 July Mgr Galantino was able to present the outcome of the work to the Holy Father, receiving guidance and encouragement.

## CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CATHOLICS' SOCIAL WEEK

In January 2017, thirty years after the revision of the Concordat, the IV national inquiry into Catholic Religious Education was presented, while preparations are on-going for the celebration (in Cagliari, from 26-29 October 2017) of the 48<sup>th</sup> Social Week for Catholics in Italy, which will have as its theme: "The work we desire. Free, creative, participatory and supportive". There are three main objectives: to denounce illegality and exploitation, to raise awareness of good practice, and to create alternative proposals.

## SESSIONS OF THE PERMANENT EPISCOPAL COUNCIL AND THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY

The three sessions of the Permanent Episcopal Council held in September 2016, January and March 2017, prepared for the celebration of the General Assembly, held from 22-25 May 2017 in the Vatican and open to intervention from the Holy Father. During the assembly, for the first time a terna of diocesan bishops was chosen, from which the Holy Father appointed as new President **Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti**, Archbishop of Perugia – Città della Pieve. Thus Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco's mandate guiding the Italian Bishops' Conference came to an end, and in the meantime, on 8 October 2016, he had been elected President of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences.





## CHRISTIAN UNITY

Between 18 and 25 January 2016, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity took place around the world as every year. This year the materials were prepared by members of different churches in Latvia. The theme was "Called to proclaim the mighty acts of God (cf. 1 Peter 2:9)".

## PASTORAL CARE OF THE FAMILY

Holy Family Home, a day care centre for families, adults, the elderly and disabled people, was opened at the beginning of 2016. It is situated opposite the Church of Mary Magdalene, in the historic centre of Riga, and is an initiative of the Church and the Municipality. The centre also provides courses for couples preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage. This work was also welcomed by the State, since in 2017 Holy Family Home began the first courses for couples not affiliated to any Church funded by the Ministry of Justice.

## SACRED MUSIC

To take closer look at the legacy of Catholic sacred music, more than 90 musicians and singers from different Catholic parishes took part in a Liturgical Music Summer Academy "Psallite sapienter" organised by Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences. The programme included three lectures by the well-known theologian and church musician Franz Karl Prassl (Austria).

## PRO-LIFE

Between 21 and 23 October an International Pro-Life Conference "Fundamental human rights to life and freedom of conscience" took place in Riga. It was organised by the Pro-Life Movement in cooperation with Human Life International and 40 Days for Life.

## YEAR OF MERCY

In October 2016 the faithful from the diocese of Liepāja went on pilgrimage to the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Vilnius, Lithuania, to celebrate the Year of Mercy. The pilgrimage was led by Bishop Viktors Stulpins. In addition, bishops, priests, consecrated people and laity gathered in Aglona, Latvia's most-visited sacred site, to celebrate the end of the Year of Mercy with the Mass.

## VATICAN II DOCUMENTS IN LATVIAN

At the end of 2016 all the documents of the Second Vatican Council were published in Latvian by the publishing house "Vox Ecclesiae". In this edition the texts are published in Latin and Latvian making them available to those who want to know more about the teachings of the Catholic Church, as well as to those who study theology and want to follow the original terminology.

## RADIO MARIA LATVIA

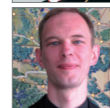
Radio Maria Latvia began broadcasting at the end of 2015 and today can be heard in Riga and its surroundings, as well as in Liepāja and Krāslava. The team has managed to attract a large number of volunteers who help to provide various programmes, Catholic prayers and good Christian music. The content is attractive to the main audience, to the elderly and the sick, as well as to other target groups. Radio Maria Latvia finished its first year with a wonderful concert and gratitude from many radio listeners.

## 39<sup>TH</sup> TAIZE EUROPEAN MEETING IN RIGA

At the end of 2016 Riga welcomed 15,000 young people who came to the 39<sup>th</sup> Taize European meeting. This was the first large-scale Christian event in Latvia, organised with the help of 900 volunteers. Morning prayers and local meetings were held in different parishes of different denominations in Riga and its surroundings. Almost all participants were welcomed in host families, many of them were non-Christian. Although initially it was hard to find host families, in the end the number of families ready to act as hosts was much higher than the number of young people requiring hosting. During and after the meeting social media was flooded with positive and inspirational feedback.

## CONSECRATIONS

In 2016 a new church dedicated to Saint Francis was consecrated in Viesīte, in the diocese of Jelgava. Also three young men received the Sacrament of Priesthood and two Discalced Carmelite nuns made perpetual vows in Ikšķile's convent.



## BEATIFICATION OF TEOFILIUS MATULIONIS

On 1 December 2016, Pope Francis signed the decree recognising the martyrdom of Mgr Teofilus Matulionis (1873-1962), Archbishop of Kaišiadorys, who remained a faithful witness to the truth of the Gospel of Christ, despite the time spent in numerous Soviet concentration camps. The announcement of his beatification was seen as recognition of the testimony of all those who suffered in the Soviet camps and who died for freedom, for the faith and the Church of Christ. The beatification ceremony was held in Vilnius on 25 June 2017, in the square in front of the Cathedral and was presided over by Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. It was an important event not just for the whole of Lithuania, but also for the neighbouring countries where Blessed Teofilus Matulionis served the people of God, as shown by the presence of tens of thousands of people from Belarus, Latvia, Russia, Poland and many other countries. It was the first time that a beatification had been held in Lithuania.

## THE YEAR OF THE VENERABLE ARCHBISHOP AND MARTYR TEOFILIUS MATULIONIS

After the announcement of the recognition of his martyrdom, the Lithuanian bishops proclaimed 2017 the year of the Venerable Archbishop and Martyr Teofilus Matulionis. By doing so, the bishops were able to show how the fame of the future Blessed Matulionis had gone well beyond the confines of the diocese of Kaišiadorys. The proclamation of a special year has also been the opportunity to promote greater knowledge about the future Blessed, to show the example of this witness of faith and faithful defender of the Church, and to ask for divine grace through the prayer for his intercession. A website [www.teofilius.lt](http://www.teofilius.lt) was created for this. There have also been various publications and broadcasts. Pilgrimages to Kaišiadorys Cathedral, where the tomb of the Blessed can be found, have increased. There, pilgrims are warmly welcomed by Mgr Jonas Ivanauskas, current Bishop of Kaišiadorys.

## YOUTH DAYS

From 23-25 June 2017, a thousand or so young people from all over Lithuania met in Vilnius to celebrate together Lithuania's Youth Days on

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K. Driskius)





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K. Driskius)



the theme "The truth will set you free" (John 8:32). The days ended with the ceremony of the beatification of Teofilus Matulionis, an example of freedom.

#### DAY OF PRAYER FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

In response to the Holy Father's recommendation, the bishops of Lithuania decided that from now on the Fifth Sunday of Lent will be devoted in particular to prayer for victims of sexual abuse.

#### THE FEAST OF FAMILIES - ŠIAULIAI

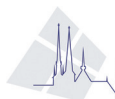
The diocese of Šiauliai, which this year is celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation, organised for the 16<sup>th</sup> time the feast of families, with this year's theme "Consecrate them in the truth" (John 17:17). This now traditional feast brings together into an arena

which can hold thousands of people, many families from the diocese and the country. It is not just an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the importance of the family, but also a good way to support families on their Christian journey .

#### MAIN THEMES OF THE PLENARY

In the course of the Plenary Assembly, the bishops tackled the theme of vocations and the pastoral care of vocations, but also that of pastoral work with young people. They also discussed the reception of the Post-synodal Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. The pastoral care of Lithuanians abroad remains one of the bishops' major concerns. The bishops have spent an appropriate amount of time thinking about the stream-lining of the structure of Caritas Lithuania.





### COMMEMORATION

In 2016 the Archdiocese of Luxembourg celebrated with great fuss the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the election of **Our Lady, Consoler of the Afflicted**, as patron of the city of Luxembourg (1666). Three conferences, with subsequent publications, examined in-depth the historical and theological context. The Civic History Museum, organising guided tours of the historic centre, promoted the numerous Marian statues which adorn the ancient houses. An exhibition by the artist-photographer Jacques Schneider at the Cathedral offered a re-interpretation of these urban Marian representations; another exhibition at the Piconrue Museum in Bastogne (Belgium) shed light on the devotion and patrimony in reference to the Consoler of the Afflicted. A sumptuous *Missa Patrona Civitatis* was composed by the Cathedral organist, Paul Breisch, and a film was made to illustrate Marian devotion in Luxembourg as well as how it is currently practiced. The foundations of the ancient Chapel of Glacis, the first place for devotion to Our Lady of Luxembourg, were brought to light and analysed. The Saint Pius X Union organised a musical competition, the winner of which was presented during the Night of the Cathedrals, in May 2017. A new CD by the Cathedral Choir presents an anthology of Marian compositions. A pilgrimage with the statue of the Patron of the city visiting parishes, schools and nursing homes, was an especially privileged moment. The Jubilee ended solemnly on 9 October 2016 with the re-election of Our Lady as patron.

### CENTENARY OF THE FATIMA APPARITIONS

For the centenary of the Fatima apparitions and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pilgrimage to Our Lady of Fatima, traditionally celebrated in Wiltz, in the north of Luxembourg, a statue of Our Lady of Fatima was welcomed into the Grand duchy from the end of May to the end of June 2017, so that it might be taken on pilgrimage throughout the whole of the Archdiocese, with celebrations, prayers, vigils and liturgies in the different parishes and communities. Present at the Wiltz pilgrimage, on Ascension day 2017, were the President of Portugal and the Grand Duke of Luxembourg.

### REFORM OF THE PASTORAL STRUCTURES

This year the Archdiocese also worked on the major territorial reform of the pastoral structures, planned for some years. At the start of the great national pilgrimage for the Octave to Our Lady of Luxembourg, on 7 May 2017, the former parishes and relative parish communities, the missions and the deaneries were officially suppressed and 33 new parishes were created; now the City of Luxembourg is one parish (previously there were 19). Now the task is to instill life and coherence in the new church structures.

### THREE CONVENTIONS

The three agreements signed with the State on 26 January 2015 are entering into force. The **law on the future financing of the Churches** through an allocation by the State was approved and came into force in September 2016. One course entitled "Life and society" destined to replace **Religious Education** and a secular moral course in state schools is about to begin: the course was introduced into secondary education in September 2016, and will be introduced into primary schools at the start of the 2017 Autumn term. The measures for organising parish catechesis from September 2017 constitute a major challenge for the new parishes from the logistical point of view and from that of welcoming volunteers able to take on catechesis for children and young people, as well as inter-generational catechesis. As regards the third agreement – **the abolition of the fabric of the churches** and the creation of a fund destined for all religious buildings used for Catholic worship – it is yet to be implemented thanks to a specific law, which is making headway but not without problems due to the opposition of the former fabric of the churches. We are awaiting the opinion of the Council of State before the plan for the law can be completed and submitted to a Parliament vote.



## MALTESE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

For the first time, Malta took the role of Presidency between January and June 2017. Malta focused on the following priorities: migration, the single market, security, social inclusion, Europe's neighbourhood and the sustainability and development of the maritime sector.

## GENERAL ELECTION

Malta held its general election on 3 June 2017 and the Labour party led by Joseph Muscat gained a majority of 55% of the popular vote. This election was held after four years of a five-year term with allegations of corruption marking the campaign. The state opening of the thirteenth Parliament since independence took place on June 24 starting with a Pontifical Mass presided over by His Grace Mgr Charles J. Scicluna. For that occasion, the Bishops published a Pastoral Letter (May 2017), entitled *Shouldering our responsibility*.

## LAWS

July 2016: Parliament approves amendments to the Criminal Act that repeal legislation that censured the vilification of religion, decriminalises pornography and criminalises revenge porn. December 2016 - Law penalizing gay conversion therapy: Under the new "Affirmation of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression Act", anyone found guilty of trying to "change, repress or eliminate a person's sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression" will face fines or a jail sentence.

July 2017: Approval of Marriage Equality Bill which legalizes Gay marriage.

## MIGRATION

As part of the Year of Mercy, the Church ran a campaign to address the reality of migration at the parish level. Named 'Nilqgħu lil barranin' (Welcoming the stranger), this initiative was administered by the Malta Emigrants Commission (MEC) and saw no less than 90 migrants being hosted and/or supported by no less than 20 parishes in Malta and 4 in Gozo. This complements the work that is being done by the Emigrants Commission and the Jesuit Refugee Service on the level of advocacy, support for asylum seekers and accommodation (14

residencies that can accommodate up to 400 people). Throughout 2016-2017, the Diocese of Gozo entered into various Private Public Partnerships (PPP) with the Government of Malta, opening respite centres and shelter homes for the old and ageing.

## PALLIATIVE CARE

Both in society at large and in Parliament, end of life issues are being raised and the possibility of medically-assisted dying contemplated. In this context the bishops wrote an open letter to the Members of Parliament with regards to palliative care. (*Bishops' Open Letter to the Members of the Maltese Parliament on medically-assisted dying*, 24th July 2016).

Moreover the Church in Malta took the initiative to join forces with Hospice Malta (a voluntary organization) to open, in the coming years, a specialized home offering professional care free of charge. The new home will be known as St Michael's Hospice. The facility will be managed by a registered foundation in collaboration with entities already active in the field.

## ECUMENISM AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

From 26 June to 2 July 2016 the Diocese of Gozo welcomed nineteen Christian Iraqi students aged between 12 and 16 and five teachers who live in Erbil on an educational, cultural and spiritual exchange programme, as part of the Jubilee of Mercy celebrations. A number of initiatives – including a concert and prayer service with the participation of the Otto Philharmonic Orchestra of Berlin (20 and 22 April 2017) – were organized for the fifth centenary of the Lutheran reformation with the collaboration of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission.

In August 2016, Bishop Mario Grech invited Mohammed Elsadi, Imam of the Muslim Community in Malta, to participate in the festal Mass during the Santa Marija feast in Gozo, with the aim of fostering better relationships between the Catholic and Muslim community. Inspired by the Lebanese Council of Ministers (2010) to declare the 25 March – feast of the Annunciation – a national day, as of 2011 one particular parish in Malta has taken the initiative to organize on an annual basis a Christian-Muslim encounter of prayer and reflection. This



year the meeting took place on 10 March 2017 with the theme “Mary in the Gospel and in the Koran”.

#### RESTRUCTURING OF THE CURIA (DIOCESE OF MALTA)

During the period under review further steps were taken to implement the on-going reform. An Archbishop’s Council was set up and this policy-making body meets regularly every fortnight. The various Commissions, Institutes and Secretariats, each headed by a Delegate, are now firmly anchored.

The Archbishop’s Council has taken a number of key decisions, such as: a reform of the Church Media – this is ongoing; a better Governance within the Administrative set up, namely through registration of local entities with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations; and the establishment of an independent Internal Audit Department. Moreover the *Justice and Peace Commission* has been re-established.

#### CHILD PROTECTION

The Safeguarding Commission is now well established. It goes beyond the legal aspect and includes assessment of risk, management of risk and work on prevention. A standard training programme for priests, seminarians and pastoral workers is being set up to be implemented in the coming months.

#### DOCUMENTS

[Position paper on the Bill on Conversion Therapy \(February 2016\)](#)

The legislation on the affirmation of sexual

orientation, gender identity and gender expression is apparently seeking to protect a category of people who may find it hard and painful to come to terms with their condition as being different from that of their peers or the rest of the population. An analysis of the provisions of the Bill, however, shows that everyone in practice will be hindered from having free access to professional guidance, advice and any other therapeutic help that may be appropriate and needed with respect to one’s sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

[Position paper on the Equality Bill \(October 2016\)](#)

This position paper was written at the request of the Catholic Church in Malta by a group of experts in law, ethics and theology, heads of schools, educators, and parents. It was written in response to the Government’s call for a public consultation on the Equality Bill. Without imposing its moral teachings legislatively in a pluralistic society, the Church wants to participate in the public consultation on this Bill out of its concern that every human person matters.

[Criteria for applying chapter 8 of \*Amoris Laetitia\* \(January 2017\)](#)

In line with the directions given by Pope Francis, the Bishops of Malta and Gozo offered guidelines to the priests in the two dioceses, in order that they may accompany people through “a responsible personal and pastoral discernment” to an awareness of their life situation in the light of Jesus (AL 300).



# MOLDOVA (REPUBLIC OF)



HIS LORDSHIP MGR. ANTON COSA  
BISHOP OF CHIȘINĂU



MGR. CESARE LODESERTO



*The Catholic Church in Moldova, at the start of its twenty-fourth year of activity, first as Apostolic Administration and subsequently as a Diocese, is in continual growth and above all "pastoral adaptation" to the needs and conditions of the country, taking into consideration, too, the small number of Catholic faithful.*

## PRESBYTERAL COMMUNION AND PERMANENT FORMATION

The condition of the clergy in the Republic of Moldova demands great commitment and care, since the majority are *fidei donum* priests and religious, even if there are now the first native priests, so the Bishop has continued with his intention to increase presbyteral communion and dialogue and has been carefully and scrupulously committed to working with clergy and religious, with constant presence in pastoral areas and in personal dialogue. The aim to give quality to the life of the clergy, already in itself impoverished due to conditions in the country, continues to represent the constant objective through a major commitment full of generosity and openness. It is not just about guaranteeing correct presence and closeness, but also promoting events and opportunities of a formative nature, a guarantee of the pastoral future of the Catholic Church in Moldova.

## EVANGELISATION AND FORMATION OF THE LAITY

Equally important has been the work undertaken for the formation of the laity and in particular for greater involvement in participatory bodies, like Parish Pastoral Councils. The attention of the laity has enabled the appropriate strengthening of the parishes and their pastoral commitment in liturgy, catechesis and charity.

## CATECHESIS

The Diocesan Catechetical Commission has been established and so a reflection course begun on the formation of catechists, the use of formative texts, sacramental preparation, catechesis of young people and adults. The Commission's work has led to a greater awareness of the situation in the parishes and an understanding of the real future needs, so that

catechesis might be a supportive element for evangelisation.

## LITURGY

Life in the parishes is focussed fundamentally on the Sunday liturgy, which represents the most important moment of encounter and dialogue with the community, which comes together on the Lord's Day to celebrate the Eucharist and live out the necessary church communion. The objective of the diocesan pastoral plan has been to give greater impetus to the community liturgy, to liturgical propriety and to song.

## CHARITY

In previous years a substantial transformation of Caritas had been launched, and this continued until to the opening of a larger office more able to respond to the different needs. The diocese's commitment to helping those who are last and looking to the margins remains a priority, thanks to the commitment of Caritas and all the other bodies involved in social assistance in the diocese. Much more far-reaching plans have been developed, from working to children and young offenders, to the welcome of minors and the prevention of social difficulties, from welcoming those sleeping on the streets to the care of alcoholics, from care for the housebound to soup kitchens. Charity is one of the strongest opportunities for witness and evangelisation. The activities of parish Caritas groups and the involvement of increasingly motivated laity have been strengthened with the same aim of a more effective presence throughout the diocese.

## THE ROLE OF CHURCH MOVEMENTS

The movements are another point of reference in church life, in particular through increased collaboration with Renewal in the Spirit, which has in Moldova its only foreign mission and its structure for formation and social activity, too, and the Neocatechumenal Community, and they are already becoming two important elements present in areas of the capital and other areas of major population density. Also of note is the commitment of the Focolarini Movement and Catholic Action. The movements have been asked for greater collabora-

tion in the life of the parishes and in evangelisation and Christian witness.

## NEW CHURCHES

The creation of new parish churches and the improvement of existing ones continues, because the communities, even if numerically small, need to be able to gather in a place of faith and have a clear reference in the presence of the priest. In view of this, the Bishop's commitment to finding the funds needed for the construction of churches and the completion of existing ones has been tremendous. The lack of economic resources has certainly not stopped the desire to give the diocese places suitable for worship and work continues in this vein.

## INTERNATIONAL CHURCH RELATIONS

For the small Moldovan ecclesial body, relations with the sister churches are important, starting with nearby Romania, where the presence of the Bishop of Chişinău at meetings of the Bishops' Conferences of that country is believed

to be important. But attempts are made in every way possible to be present and dialogue with all the Churches where relations are important, such as Poland, Ukraine, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Austria. These are very open church bodies and from where comes assistance for support of the clergy, works of charity, pastoral work and care for church buildings

## RELATIONS WITH THE MOLDOVAN STATE

The intense commitment of the new Apostolic Nuncio to Moldova, based in Romania, now in the second year of his work, has meant there are significant developing relations with the Moldovan authorities and the political world. After all, the Diocese has never ceased to report on its own problems, and in particular the resitutation of church property.



## RESEARCH ABOUT SAINT DEVOTA

Saint Devota, patron saint of the Principality, was a 3rd century virgin martyred in Corsica. Her body, put on a boat, would end up beaching in the port of Monaco. In 2015, the diocese wanted to make an inventory, identify and preserve the remains of the reliquaries of Monaco Cathedral, including those of the Saint. The anthropological analysis carried out was able to confirm the human nature of the bones in the reliquaries. So the results corroborate the story of the martyrdom. The bones are those of a young female, with bone injuries which testify to acts of violence. A special conference led by Dr Elena Rossoni-Notter (Monaco Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology) and by Dr Yves Darton (specialist in osseous paleopathology) was held in the church of Saint Devota on 25 January 2017. In addition, this year on the evening of 26 January there was a live broadcast on the French Catholic channel KTO marking the 25 January 2017 feast of Saint Devota.

## VARIOUS MEETINGS

The liturgical year was marked by numerous conferences and debates organised by the Department for Formation. These meetings tackled topical issues: does marriage still have a future? Transhumanism, modernity and contemporary confusion. More than 60 meetings are organised every year. The Department for Culture presented various photographic exhibitions and performances, including "Mother Teresa: Shadow and Light", also presented in Paris.

## DIACONATE ORDINATION

At the start of the year, Monsignor Bernard Barsi instituted as acolyte Guillaume Conquer. His diaconate ordination took place on 16 September in the Principality's Cathedral.

## THE "NIGHT OF WITNESSES"

For the fifth celebration of the "Night of Witnesses", the organisation Aid to the Church in Need devoted a special evening in Monaco, on 26 March in the church of San Carlo, to those who are suffering persecution due to their faith. The three speakers, Sr Marie-Catherine Kingbo (Community of Servants of Christ in Niger), Fr Jacques Mourad (monk of the Community of Mar Moussa in Syria) and Fr Philippe Blot (missionary priest in Korea) moved the whole assembly.

## NEW DIOCESAN HOUSE

In the presence of Prince Albert II and the Apostolic Nuncio Mgr Luigi Pezzuto, Mgr Bernard Barsi blessed the foundation stone of the future Diocesan House in Monaco on 8 May. Many people were present, both key diocesan personnel and benefactors. The four aims of the Diocesan House are: To welcome, to form, to meet and to be open.

## PASTORAL PROJECT

This year the Archbishop has undertaken a variety of pastoral visits. He was thus able to observe and collaborate with the parish communities on the pastoral project: "Missionary disciples, counsellors and parish stakeholders".







## VISIT OF CARDINAL SANDRI

In November 2016, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, **Cardinal Leonardo Sandri**, visited and consecrated the new church of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Mukachevo. Many bishops and priests took part in the ceremony.

## CENTENARY OF THE APPARITIONS AT FATIMA

On 13 May 2017, the Eparchy of Mukachevo celebrated the centenary of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima. The Divine Liturgy, celebrated in the Cathedral of Uzhorod, was presided over by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Presov, His Grace Mgr Jan Babiak SJ. Many bishops and priests took part.

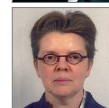
## VISIT OF CARDINAL NYCZ

From 10-12 June the Archbishop of Warsaw, Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz, visited the Eparchy. Along with His Lordship Mgr Milan Sasik, they blessed the foundation stone of the new *Redemptoris Mater* Seminary near Uzhorod.

## COMMEMORATION

2017 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the martyrdom of Blessed Teodor Romza, killed by the Soviet regime on 31 October 1947. A conference on the figure of the Blessed is being prepared and it will be linked to a solemn liturgy to mark this important commemoration for the eparchy.





## SEXUAL ABUSE

On 28 June 2016, the previous *Deetman Committee*, the committee which was carrying out an independent investigation into sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church, published a closing report. This report provides a summary of what the Catholic ecclesiastical Province in the Netherlands has done over the last five years to give assistance to victims of sexual abuse and to minors who were victims of violence by priests and religious.

The general conclusion here is that the Catholic Church has become aware that acknowledging, compensating and assisting the victims also serves a public function. In this conclusion of its report, the Deetman Committee based itself on what the Catholic Church has done to acknowledge the suffering inflicted and what compensation and assistance it offered. The Catholic Church also assumed 'responsibility for the complaints about sexual abuse which could not be made with sufficient credibility. This task, for which there was a broad call also by Parliament, has been completed', the Deetman Committee concludes. [Link to the closing report \(PDF\)](#).

use. From that date the new text has been used in the liturgy. The translation was the work of a joint commission (*Commissio mixta*) from the Netherlands and Flanders, which is working on new translations of several liturgical texts.

## CLOSING THE YEAR OF MERCY

On Tuesday 15 November 2016, about 2,000 Dutch citizens walked through the Holy Door of the Basilica of Saint Peter. They were on a pilgrimage to Rome with bishops and Catholic organisations as part of the Holy Year of Mercy. In Saint Peter's, they celebrated Mass on 'Nederlandse Dag' ('Dutch Day') with almost all the Dutch bishops and Cardinal Eijk as main celebrant, after which Pope Francis addressed them. Cardinal Eijk, on behalf of the Dutch Bishops, took this opportunity to give Pope Francis a booklet entitled 'Herbergzaam Nederland' ('Hospitable Netherlands'), providing an overview of the commitment in many places in the Dutch church province on behalf of refugees and foreigners.

[Link to the summary of the Dutch work in connection with refugees and foreigners, Herbergzaam Nederland \(PDF\)](#).

## NEW TRANSLATION OF "THE OUR FATHER"

On Sunday 27 November 2016, at the beginning of Advent in the Netherlands and Belgium, a new translation of the Lord's Prayer came into

## ELECTIONS

During the country's elections in March 2017, the Dutch Bishops sent out a joint letter encouraging everyone to get out and vote.

Photos by  
Ramon Mangold.  
Tekst AK, Utrecht, June 2017





Photos: Ramon  
Mangold.  
Tekst AK, Utrecht,  
juni 2017



"Voting is a right and a privilege because we live in a democratic society. However, it is therefore also an obligation to make a contribution to the general well-being. We can use the elections to make clear what we want for people and for our society", the bishops wrote. [Link to the letter from the Dutch Bishops \(PDF\).](#)

#### DEDICATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

On Saturday 13 May 2017, the Dutch bishops, accompanied by many others, went on pilgrimage to Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe Basiliek (the Basilica of Our Lady) in Maastricht to dedicate seven dioceses to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This took place during Vespers, which was led by Cardinal W.J. Eijk, Archbishop of Utrecht and primate of the Dutch Catholic ecclesiastical Province. [Link to the video report of this on KatholiekLeven.nl.](#)

#### DEATH OF BISHOP-EMERITUS ERNST

On the evening of Friday 19 May 2017, His Excellency Hubertus Ernst, emeritus bishop of Breda, died at the age of 100. Mgr Ernst was

Bishop of Breda from 1967 to 1992. When he reached his 75<sup>th</sup> year, he offered his resignation. Pope John Paul II accepted his resignation, but appointed him Apostolic Administrator. In this role, Mgr Ernst managed the diocese until 26 November 1994 when Bishop Muskens succeeded him. Mgr Ernst was the eighth Bishop of Breda.

#### NEW BISHOP FOR THE DIOCESE OF GRONINGEN-LEEWARDEN

In a crowded Sint Jozefkathedraal (Saint Joseph's Cathedral) in Groningen, His Excellency Ron van den Hout was ordained as Bishop and took the seat of the bishopric of Groningen-Leeuwarden. Mgr Van den Hout is the fifth bishop of Groningen-Leeuwarden.



# NORDIC COUNTRIES



PRESIDENT  
HIS LORDSHIP MGR. CZESŁAW KOZON  
BISHOP OF COPENHAGEN



SECRETARY GENERAL  
SR. ANNA MIRIAM KASCHNER



## PASTORAL LETTER "FROM CONFLICT TO COMMUNION"

On 15 October 2016, in preparation for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, the Bishops' Conference of the Nordic Countries published a pastoral letter entitled "From Conflict to Communion", in which the need to carry out reform was acknowledged, especially in an "ecclesia semper reformanda", while also underlining how much harm Christians of different denominations have done instead of discussing the necessary doctrinal questions. So the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation must not be just an opportunity for celebration, but also to reflect, a commemoration in the spirit of repentance.

The question of shared Eucharist is a recurrent theme in the framework of ecumenical dialogue; a painful question for both parties. Although the longing for common Eucharistic celebration is justified, *"it remains the case that the unity around the Lord's table must at the same time express the full unity of faith"*.

The bishops explained that different ideas still persist about the sacramentality of the Church, the interpretation of the Petrine office or the role of Mary and of the Saints, which should not be insurmountable and should enable a rapprochement. At the same time, however, the Bishops in their letter deplored how despite a mutual convergence on questions of faith, it appears that in recent years deeper divisions have opened up with regard to ethical and moral questions which makes the dialogue harder.

## THE HOLY FATHER IN LUND AND MALMØ (SWEDEN)

It was a matter of immense joy to learn that the Holy Father would participate from 31 October – 1 November 2016 in the commemorative ecumenical celebration of the Reformation in Lund. On that occasion the Pope met with the President of the International Lutheran Community, the Jordanian Bishop Munib Younan and the General Secretary Martin Junge, in a ecumenical service of prayer commemorating the Reformation in the Lutheran Church in Lund. Subsequently, the ecumenical initiative shifted to Malmö Arena, which put at the centre of the world the signing of a joint statement on the part of both denominations. On All Saints' Day, Pope Francis celebrated Mass with the

Catholic community in Malmö. Just a small part of the Swedish population claims to be Catholic – c. 113,000 faithful belonging to the Catholic Church in the country, equal to 1%.

## CONSECRATION OF TRONDHEIM CATHEDRAL (NORWAY)

The new Cathedral of Sankt Olav in the Norwegian city of Trondheim was consecrated on 19 November 2016. The new Cathedral testifies to our apostolic consciousness and represents the re-awakening of the Catholic Church in Norway. The community of Sankt Olav numbers c. 7,000 members and is rapidly growing. Sixty or seventy Catholics decide each month to join the community. Hence the need to have a cathedral larger than its predecessor, which was run-down, and which can offer room for catechesis and community meetings. The community of Sankt Olav is proud of its new church: "The new Cathedral testifies to our apostolic consciousness and represents the re-awakening of the Catholic Church in Norway", says the parish priest Egil Mogstad.

## DISMAY AND ASTONISHMENT AFTER THE TERRORIST ATTACK IN THE SWEDISH CAPITAL OF STOCKHOLM

The Swedish capital was profoundly shaken by the terrorist attack on 7 April 2017, with the theft of a lorry which was subsequently driven into a crowd in the pedestrian area of the centre of Stockholm, resulting in 5 deaths and seriously wounding 14 others.

## THE CHURCH IN NORTHERN EUROPE CELEBRATES ITS FIRST CARDINAL

On 21 May 2017, at the end of the Angelus in St Peter's Square, the Holy Father announced the elevation of 5 new Cardinals, including Bishop Anders Arborelius OCD, Bishop of Stockholm. The Cardinal himself was surprised by his appointment, which he learned from two priests during a working trip. After the anniversary of the Reformation and the Holy Father's visit to Sweden, the Cardinal is interpreting his appointment in the light of a greater commitment to Christian Unity. It is the first time in the history of the Nordic nations that they have had a Cardinal.



## VISIT OF POPE FRANCIS TO POLAND

From 26-30 July 2016, Poland hosted the visit of Pope Francis. In the framework of the official celebrations of thanksgiving to mark the **1050<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianisation of Poland**, the Pope presided at the solemn Eucharistic liturgy at the shrine of the Madonna of Jasna Góra. In fact, for the whole of 2016, the Catholic Church, along with all Polish Christians, commemorated the 1050<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conversion of the country to the faith of Christ. Subsequently, the Holy Father also visited the former Nazi concentration and extermination camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The culmination

of the Pope's visit to Poland, however, was **World Youth Day** in Krakow, with the participation of about 2 million people from 187 countries and which aroused great interest throughout the world. In the course of his meeting with young people, Pope Francis encouraged them to "get up from the sofa" and to be "more active".

## YEAR OF MERCY

At the end of the Year of Mercy, on Saturday 19 November 2016 at the Shrine in Łagiewniki, the **Jubilee Act of Adherence to Jesus Christ King and Sovereign** was proclaimed. The proclama-



PHOTO  
source: M. Mazur/  
[www.episkopat.pl](http://www.episkopat.pl)







tion of the Act in all the dioceses and in all the parishes of Poland happened subsequently on the Solemnity of Christ the King.

#### COMMEMORATIONS

One of the most important events of 2017 was the **25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the re-organisation of the Catholic Church in Poland** determined by John Paul II in the Bull "Totus Tuus Poloniae Populus" of 25 March 1992. Then thirteen new dioceses were established, while eight of those already in existence were raised to the rank of Archdioceses.

The central celebrations for the **100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparitions of Fatima** took place on 6 June 2017 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima of Krzeptówki in Zakopane, where twenty years previously John Paul II had come to give thanks for prayers and for having been saved from assassination. During the celebration at Zakopane the Polish bishops renewed the solemn Act of Entrusting the Church in Poland to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

#### PLENARY ASSEMBLIES

In the course of the Plenary Assemblies, the Polish bishops expressed to the Holy Father their recognition of the importance of the **Apostolic Exhortation** "Amoris laetitia". In Poland, a Directory is currently being prepared which will provide a better understanding and

application of the papal document in the pastoral care of spouses and families. In the area of the **defence of human life**, the bishops have repeated on a number of occasions that it constitutes an essential value to be preserved, always and in any case, from the moment of conception until natural death. In that field, the bishops have also recalled the teaching of John Paul II, emphasising that every child possesses the right to life. The humanitarian crisis linked to **refugees and immigrants** was discussed a number of times during the plenaries of the Polish episcopate. The bishops recalled here the teachings of Pope Francis supporting the idea of humanitarian corridors and the programme of Caritas Polska "From family to family" which consists in directly supporting families affected by the armed conflict in Syria.

#### DOCUMENTS

**Christian patriotism** is the title of the document approved by the bishops during the plenary on 14 March 2017. There are two parts to the document. In the first, the bishops present the *Amor patriae* in the Christian perspective, while in the second highlight the need for an adequate education in patriotism. With regard to the entering into force in Poland of new norms in the Penal Code introducing the obligation to inform the legal authorities of cases of paedophilia, in the course of the plenary of the bishops on 6 June the relative **Guidelines** were updated to correspond with the current norms.

During the plenary on 7 June, the Polish bishops adopted the **Directory** about service of the sick and terminally ill which unifies pastoral care throughout the whole of the Polish territory.





## CENTENARY, CANONISATION AND VISIT OF THE HOLY FATHER TO FATIMA

2017 was marked by the Centenary of the Apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima and the canonisation of the little shepherds Francisco and Giacinta Marto, which took place on 13 May, during the Holy Father's visit to the Marian shrine (12-13 May).

To mark the Centenary, the bishops approved a *Pastoral Letter* entitled "Fatima, sign of hope for our time". This document underlines the topicality of the message of Fatima to revitalise the faith and the commitment to evangelisation. The *Pastoral Letter* highlights how the message of Fatima is a gift and rich blessing for the Church and for the world, a call to conversion and a prophetic proclamation of the mercy of God and peace.

In addition, the bishops expressed profound joy and gratitude for the canonisation of Francesco and Giacinta Marto and on that occasion approved a *Pastoral Note*: "With Francesco and Giacinta Marto, called to be saints in charity".

The presence of Pope Francis in Portugal was experienced as a great event not just by Catholics but by all Portuguese citizens. About a million pilgrims were present at Fatima.

## CATECHESIS

The bishops approved a *Pastoral Letter*: "Catechesis: the joy of meeting Jesus Christ", taking into account the contributions of various diocesan bodies. Catechesis was proposed as a journey which involves the whole person in the joyful experience of the encounter with Jesus Christ, lived in the environment of the church community. This document was examined and warmly welcomed by the different Christian communities.

## FIRES

In June 2017, a wild fire left many victims and the destruction of many houses. The Church collaborated with the government agencies to prevent and combat these natural disasters which

this year as never before have damaged severely the whole country. The bishops published a *Pastoral Note*: "Taking care of the common home, preventing and avoiding the fires", as an appeal to everyone for awareness and commitment in the face of the recurring tragedy of the fires in the country.

## PRISON PASTORAL WORK

This year, the Plenary Assembly of bishops reflected at length on prison pastoral work, with particular reference to the Church's religious, legal and social initiatives in 50 prisons, currently housing about 14,000 people deprived of their freedom. The following actions and concerns were highlighted: the formation and accompaniment of workers appointed to prison pastoral work, the creation of a specific service in each diocese, the social and ecclesial involvement of parishes, associations and groups, the encouragement of projects on behalf of prisoners and their re-integration into society and the role of collaborators and volunteers.

## PASTORAL CARE OF THE FAMILY

The bishops continued reflections on the criteria for pastoral guidelines for the application of Chapter VIII ("Accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness") of the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, in particular in pastoral and personal monitoring and discernment, under the guidance of the bishop of the diocese. Reflection was very much present during the episcopate's Pastoral Days on the theme "Formation of conscience and discernment", with the help of the Jesuit theologian Fr Miguel Humberto Yáñez Molina.



### ROMANIA ON PILGRIMAGE TO ROME

From 9-11 September 2016, delegates from all the Catholic dioceses and eparchies of Romania went on pilgrimage to Rome, in the Holy Year of Mercy. About 500 people participated, including laity, male and female religious, priests, and four bishops: His Grace Mgr Ioan Robu, Metropolitan Archbishop of Bucharest and Vice-president of the Romanian Bishops' Conference; His Lordship Mgr Petru Gherghel, Latin Bishop of Iași; His Lordship Mgr Virgil Bercea, Greek-Catholic Bishop of Oradea Mare; and His Lordship Mgr Cornel Damian, Auxiliary in Bucharest.

### POPE FRANCIS INVITED TO ROMANIA

Expressing the great desire not just of the Catholic faithful, but of so many Romanians, the Romanian Bishops have invited the Holy Father Francis to visit Romania. The Pope's visit would be a witness to the paternal care of the successor of Peter for the good of the Romanian people, which bears Rome in its name and Latin-ness in its spirit. The Pope's invitation was among the issues discussed in the last two plenary sessions of the Romanian Bishops' Conference, held in Oradea (26-28 September 2016) and Cluj-Napoca (3-5 May 2017).

### INTERVENTIONS OF THE ROMANIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

*The situation of the Catholic secondary school in Târgu Mureș* is of some concern to the Catholic Bishops of Romania, who have publicly expressed their indignation at the way in which the authorities obstructed the functioning of the school. They have asked for a swift clarification of the situation, so that teaching may not be stopped illegally.

**To protect and promote the truth about marriage and the family** the bishops have repeated, in an open letter, the need to review Article 48, paragraph 1 of the Romanian Constitution: the replacement of the current formula "[marriage] of the spouses" with "between a man and a woman" reflects more clearly the understanding of marriage and the family in Romania. The bishops thus support the request signed by 3 million Romanians for a referendum for a change in the Constitution.

**Dialogue with education representatives.** This request was made in two letters. The Romanian Bishops wish to resolve some issues present in

current legislation: various aspects of Religious Education in schools, the status of theological schools, denominational schools and the secondary school examinations in these schools, and, finally, the structure of the school year. The Romanian Ministry has met with a Catholic delegation, led by His Lordship Mgr Aurel Percă, Auxiliary Bishop of Iași, responsible for education on behalf of the Romanian Bishops' Conference.

**The situation of St Joseph's Cathedral** is a matter of concern to the Romanian Bishops, who have asked the Mayor of Bucharest to proceed with the demolition of the illegal building which endangers the Cathedral. It is some years since the court declared the building illegal and decided on its demolition, but up to now the mayors have ignored the legal instructions.

**The proliferation of sects and groups** which are largely of a New Age tendency is a danger and the Romanian Bishops' Conference has alerted Catholics to it. Using concepts with Christians echoes, the bishops have explained, and at the same time magic and spiritualist practices, such groups develop a confused and selfish spirituality, with recourse to so-called "angels" or "spiritual guides" and in fact manipulating clear concepts of Christianity, in a syncretism devoid of consistency. The bishops' call was publicised by all Catholic media outlets in the dioceses.

### 2017, JUBILEE YEAR IN ORADEA

The Latin diocese of Oradea is celebrating the 825<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canonisation of its founder Saint Ladislaus, with a Jubilee year devoted to the King Saint. Various pastoral and cultural events are scheduled, along with a diocesan pilgrimage to Oradea Cathedral on 14 May last.

### BISHOP MARTON ARON, TRANSLATED TO ALBA IULIA CATHEDRAL

With the approval of the Holy see, the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia moved to its Cathedral the body of Bishop Marton Aron, whose cause for beatification is underway. On 29 September 2016, at a solemn Mass the new funeral monument in the Cathedral was unveiled and blessed, in the presence of all the Romanian Bishops and the Apostolic Nuncio, His Grace Mgr Miguel Maury Buendía.



## BEATIFICATION

On 11 September 2016, the beatification of **Wladislaw Bukowski**, a Catholic priest who gave his life for the mission among prisoners held in Siberian lagers, took place in Karaganda in Kazakhstan. There were a large number of pilgrims from Russia, with the participation of all four Catholic bishops from the Russian Federation.

## MEETINGS SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 2016

The **pilgrimage** of Russian bishops and faithful to Rome to mark the Jubilee of Mercy took place from 12-17 September 2016, while on 30 October 2016 the Catholic Bishops in the Russian Federation re-instituted the **Day of Mercy** with a collection of offerings to be donated each year to a charitable work in the dioceses. From 17-20 November 2016 the Pan-Russian Congress on Mercy took place in Marks.

## PLENARY ASSEMBLIES

The **XLIV Plenary Session** of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of the Russian Federation was held in St Petersburg from 13-14 October 2016. The bishops approved some liturgical texts.

The **XLV Plenary Session** took place in Sochi from 16-17 March 2017. The bishops approved the *Ratio Formationis* for permanent deacons in the Russian Federation. A new President of Conference of Catholic Bishops was elected, **His Lordship Mgr Clemens Pickel**, Ordinary of the Diocese of San Clemente a Saratov.

## COMMISSION MEETINGS

The meeting of the Commission for **charitable work** of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of the Russian Federation took place from 11-12 October in Moscow, while 7 February 2017 saw the meeting of the Commission for pastoral care of **young people** take place in Saratov.

## MEETINGS JANUARY-JUNE 2017

To mark the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**, and in the year recalling the start of the reforming work of Martin Luther, the Catholic and Luthern Churches organised various events, 23-24 January 2017, of a prayerful and cultural nature as part of the path from distance to rapprochement. Also participating in these events were representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, of the Armenian Apostolic Church, of the Coptic Church, of the Syriac Church, and of the Baptist and Pentecostal communities.

The Plenary of the **Consultative Christian Committee** took place on 26 April 2017 in St Petersburg on the theme "Faith and overcoming civil disagreement: the lesson of a school". From 27 April-3 May 2017 the Pastoral Conference of the Diocese of San Clemente a Saratov took place in Astrakhan.

On 13 May 2017, in Karaganda, in Kazakhstan, the bishops and apostolic administrators present in the Russian Federation, in Kazakhstan and in the Central-asiatic republics, concelebrated to mark the centenary of the **apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima**.

The Pastoral Conference of the Archdiocese of the Mother of God of Moscow took place in Vilnius (Lithuania) from 6-9 June 2017.







## LITURGICAL TEXTS

During this year the Bishops' Conference of Scotland has published two new liturgical texts: *the Order of Confirmation*, which was a joint publication with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales; and *the Order of Celebrating Matrimony* which is approved for use only in Scotland.

## CCEE MEETING

In November of 2016 the Conference was privileged to host the annual meeting of media officers, spokespersons and Bishops in charge of social communication of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE). It was held in Glasgow from November 16-19. The theme of the discussions was most relevant for our times: 'Communicating the Christian message in increasingly secular societies.'

## CHILD ABUSE INQUIRY

In April of this year the Conference began its formal engagement with the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. The scope of the Inquiry is limited to children who had been in care over the one hundred years until 2014. It is being chaired by a High Court judge, Lady Smith. The first engagement was a call for written evidence based on a questionnaire provided by the Inquiry. This was followed up by a series of public hearings at which witnesses, suggested

by the Bishops' Conference, were questioned on the written evidence. Lady Smith has publicly thanked the Conference for its cooperation with the Inquiry so far. The Inquiry continues.

Running alongside the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, the Conference continues to implement the recommendations of the McLellan Report, which had been commissioned by the Conference of Bishops as an independent investigation into the safeguarding policies and procedures of the Catholic Church in Scotland. It is expected that the implementation will be complete by the end of 2017.

## ELECTIONS

May 2017 saw a general election to the United Kingdom Parliament. It had been called by the Prime Minister, Theresa May, to strengthen her hand in the Brexit negotiations which have just begun. In fact, the Conservative Government came very close to losing the election: the Conservatives have lost their majority in the House of Commons and have only managed to remain in power by securing a coalition deal with the Democratic Unionist Party of Northern Ireland.

The General Election saw a reduction in the number of Scottish National Party Members of Parliament being returned to Westminster, although they still make up the largest



political grouping among Scottish Members of (the UK) Parliament. Because of this, the call for a second independence referendum seems to have been put on hold for the time being by the Scottish Government.

#### ANGLOPHONE SAFEGUARDING CONFERENCE

This year's Anglophone Safeguarding Conference was jointly organised by the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service, the Safeguarding Commission of Malta and the Centre for Child Protection (CCP) of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome from 19-22 June. The 2017 theme, Celebrating Hope, was explored from different perspectives, including hope for survivors and for victims. In a powerful keynote presentation, the 111 delegates at the Conference listened to the experience of five survivors of intrafamilial abuse. This allowed them to reflect on best practice in responding to abuse disclosures and to recognise how hope can spring from the most difficult of situations.

#### COMMEMORATION

The year 2018 sees the centenary of the 1918 Education Act which brought Catholic Schools under the sponsorship of the state for the first time. Planning for different celebrations of this event is already underway. As well as remembering the event, which was so important for our country and for the Catholic community, it is also good that we use it to promote the success of Catholic schooling and the service that it offers to the wider civic community.

#### APPOINTMENT

For the first time, the Bishops' Conference of Scotland has appointed a lay Assistant General Secretary: Mr Michael McGrath. After a very successful period as Director of the Scottish Catholic Education Service, Michael brings his considerable skills in management and organisation to the Secretariat of the Bishops' Conference.





## SLOVAKIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU (JULY-DECEMBER 2016)

From 1 July – 31 December 2016, for the first time the Slovakian Republic presided over the Council of the European Union. The local church and the Slovakian Bishops' Conference were committed to actively benefitting from this event, underlining the themes of the family and Christian values in society and in the public sphere. In this perspective, the Slovakian Bishops' Conference organised two important events in Bratislava: **the meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of Central-Eastern Europe** on the themes: *The family and the migration crisis* (from 8-9 September 2016) and an international Conference entitled *"Family mainstreaming – the way out of the demographic and cultural crisis in Europe"* which took place on 28 October 2016 in Bratislava.

## "COURTYARD OF THE GENTILES" ON POVERTY

A "Courtyard of the Gentiles" event took place for the first time in Slovakia (Bratislava, 22 November 2016), organised in collaboration with the Theology Faculty of Saints Cyril and Methodius of Comenius University with the theme *New forms of poverty: causes and ways*

*out*. Participating in the event was Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, as well as numerous believers and non-believers, academics, politicians and experts working in various institutions. The theme of poverty was chosen because it characterises the current commitment of Slovakian society as such involved in the elimination of poverty.

## CURRENT PASTORAL ISSUES

**Amoris laetitia.** At the pastoral level, the local Church has been involved in the reception of the post-synodal Exhortation on the Family. A national event, aimed at publicising the content of *Amoris laetitia* and discussion of the issues linked with pastoral care of the families, took place at the Diocesan Major Seminary in Badín on 12 November 2016, on the theme *"The message of Amoris laetitia and pastoral perspectives in Slovakia"*.

## Young people and new communities.

Another current phenomenon is that of the new communities, arisen outside the parishes, often of a charismatic nature. These communities which attract especially young people, have great potential development, but must be guided and helped by sound teaching and





Catholic practice. To examine this issue in depth, and in the light, too, of the document *luvenescit Ecclesia*, the Slovakian Bishops' Conference organised a colloquium entitled: "*New communities in the Catholic Church*": the document *luvenescit Ecclesia*, which took place on 10 May 2016 in Badín.

**Meeting of the bishops with Catholic leaders.** The Slovakian Bishops' Conference is committed to deepening dialogue between the bishops and priests, consecrated people and above all with the laity – leaders or representatives of the various groups, movements, associations and communities. To that end, three years ago the Slovakian Bishops' Conference set up an annual national meeting. This year, the theme chosen was "*New evangelisation. From identity to evangelisation*". These events serve as a platform for the Slovakian bishops to be close to their flock, and to hold and develop open discussion within the Catholic Church on current issues. The event was held on 28 March 2017 at the Catholic University in Ružomberok, with great interest shown by the participants, especially the laity.

#### PUBLISHED STATEMENTS

In the context of a continued decline in the Slovakian population, on 7 March the bishops published the [\*Statement on the demographic situation\*](#). Through this appeal, the bishops set out to support legislation in favour of families and open to life. On 16 June, to mark the Slovakian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the bishops published a [\*Statement\*](#), underlining the common values of the Christian legacy of Europe.

#### MIGRANTS

The Slovakian Bishops' Conference pays careful attention to the situation of migrants. In collaboration with the Czech Bishops' Conference (ČBK), a Conference on the theme "*Religion and migration*" was organised for 21 February 2017 in Bratislava, with the participation of Cardinal Dominik Duka. Experts from Slovakia and the Czech Republic spoke about the phenomenon of migration from various aspects: historical, biblical, social, cultural and ecclesial.

#### COLLABORATION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN SLOVAKIA

The representatives of the Catholic Church in Slovakia continue to develop collaboration with the representatives and leaders of other religions as well as with the Jewish community. There are regular meetings, always devoted to current issues which have a certain interest in society and in public opinion (e.g. the initiative to keep Sundays special).

In the context of this collaboration, the Slovakian Bishops' Conference organised a pilgrimage to Rome and to the Vatican, in which participants included, as well as Catholic bishops, also the leaders of the Lutheran Evangelical Church and senior representatives of the Central Union of the Jewish communities in Slovakia.



### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN SLOVENIA IMPORTANT FOR THE LIFE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

In June 2016 Slovenia celebrated the **25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its independence** from Yugoslavia. To the numerous celebrations and commemorations was added the traditional Mass for the Homeland celebrated in Ljubljana Cathedral. It is an anniversary which provides an opportunity to recall the role of the local Church in Slovenian independence, thanks also to the invaluable support offered then by CCEE and the Bishops' Conferences in Europe. October 2016 saw the start of the **translation of the bodies** of people killed in Tito's Communist regime, at the end of the Second World War, from the abandoned mine of Huda Jama near Celje to Maribor cemetery. More than 2,000 people will finally have a dignified burial after more than 70 years. On 17 October 2016, the President of the Republic Borut Pahor was received in audience by Pope Francis. In February 2017, the **President of the Slovenian Chamber of Deputies** visited the Holy See, meeting various heads of dicasteries to express the gratitude of the Slovenian political leadership for the recognition of twenty-five years of the declaration of Slovenia's independence. In February 2017, the *Constitutional Court* published a verdict recognising that **Christian festivities in Slovenia** are not discriminatory towards those belonging to other faiths. The controversy had begun with the request by a member of the Islamic community seeking clarification on the issue. He stated that adherents of other religions were discriminated because of Christian festivities (Christmas, Easter, Easter Monday, the Assumption, All Saints, etc.) and that these harmed the neutrality of the State.

### SIGNIFICANT CHURCH EVENTS

In June 2016 **Cardinal Beniamino Stella**, Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, visited Slovenia to mark the national *Dies Sanctificationis sacerdotalis*. In the same month we celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the new dioceses in Slovenia. At the **ecumenical and inter-religious level** worthy of note is the joint meeting and media conference of the representatives of the four major religious communities in Slovenia to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Slovenian indepen-

dence and in July the now traditional visit of the senior representatives of the Patriarchate of Moscow to the Slovenian prelates. On this occasion, the Archbishop of Ljubljana, His Grace Mgr Stanislav Zore, the Orthodox Metropolitan of Zagreb Porfirije and the President of the *Department for Foreign Relations* of the *Patriarchate of Moscow*, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, solemnly signed a **Joint Declaration on ecumenism**, on respect for life and for the family. A return visit to Metropolitan Hilarion in Moscow was undertaken in May 2017 by the Bishop of Celje who is responsible for ecumenism in the Slovenian Bishops' Conference, His Lordship Mgr Stanislav Lipovšek.

An ecumenical celebration was held in Murska Sobota on 6 November 2016 to mark the **500 years since the Reformation**. Participants included various Catholic bishops, Lutherans and Pentecostals, expressing the desire to continue joint dialogue. Also taking part was the President of the Republic, various mayors and representatives of the authorities, as well as the Apostolic Nuncio to Slovenia. The Secretariat of the Slovenian Bishops' Conference has continued with the up-dating of the Slovenian Bishops' Conference **website**, with a **new graphic**, increased content and greater integration with social media, and as well as the already existing profiles on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Flickr](#) and [Google+](#) have been added. The Slovenian Bishops' Conference has also published the second edition of the [Annual Report](#) with the presentation of statistical data for the decade 2005-2015.

### MAIN THEME OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE SLOVENIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

The traditional Plenary Assembly of the Slovenian Bishops' Conference with guests from the surrounding Bishops' Conferences took place in November 2016. The issues discussed included pastoral care for marriages, the preparation of young people for marriage, and the welcome of couples and individuals living in so-called irregular unions. It is a process which the Slovenian Bishops have undertaken since the publication of the document *Amoris laetitia* and discussion will now move to bodies at the diocesan and parish levels.



## THE SOCIAL SITUATION IN SPAIN

The formation of the new government presided over by Mariano Rajoy, which came to power in October 2016, after 10 months with an executive which limited itself to ordinary administration, was a relief for society. The configuration of the *Cortes*, following the general elections, has turned out to be very different compared to the previous legislatures, a factor which must be taken into consideration. In the midst of the changes in which the whole of Europe is immersed, this present reality in our Spanish society demands a profound reflection on the values on which we must base ourselves. Another topical issue is the so-called Pact of the State of Education, in which the Church is defending its right to make its presence felt in this extraordinary situation of development and dialogue to reach a common law in the area of education which represents citizens, so decisive for the present and future of society.

## THIRD SPANISH EDITION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL

A new Spanish edition of the Roman Missal was published in October 2016. This, the third publication of a new Spanish edition of the Roman Missal in conformity with the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council, provides a good opportunity to re-examine and improve Eucharistic celebrations in Spanish. Therefore, the Spanish Bishops' Conference Episcopal Commission for Liturgy prepared the new edition which, having been approved by the 94<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the Spanish Bishops' Conference, which took place 19-23 April 2010, finally received the necessary

*recognitio* from the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments on 8 December 2015.

## DONATION PORTAL

Donation portal on the Internet: developed by the Spanish Bishops' Conference, this was presented and activated in November 2016. Thanks to a simple procedure, each portal **enables donations** to reach each of the **23,000 parishes** in Spain, the **dioceses** or **Episcopal Conference** directly.

It is a pioneering portal in the universal Church, since it brings together in a unique information network the potential contributions destined to each parish or diocese in Spain. In making these contributions, the donor can benefit, as provided for by Spanish law, from tax cuts of up to 75% of the sum paid.

## ELECTIONS IN THE SPANISH BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

The 109<sup>th</sup> **Plenary Assembly (13-17 March 2017)** renewed all the post-holders of the Spanish Bishops' Conference, with the exception of the mandate of the General Secretary, the only one to remain in post for five years. His Eminence Cardinal Ricardo Blázquez Pérez, Archbishop of Valladolid, was re-elected President of the Bishops' Conference, and His Eminence Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera, Archbishop of Valencia, was elected Vice-president. The General Secretary is still José María Gil Tamayo.

## BEATIFICATIONS

Another event which filled the Spanish Church with great joy, because it symbolises the greatest act of love, was the beatification of the 115 martyrs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, led by the Dean José Álvarez Benavides de la Torre, which took place on 25 March in the diocese of Almería. In this celebration the Church beatified the first female gypsy, Emilia "la Canastera" (basket-maker). More than 5,000 pilgrims, many of them with gypsy origins, went to the event coming from the birthplaces of the martyrs.

## Formation of priests and of young people

The Plenary Assembly of the Spanish Bishops discussed two fundamental issues: the priestly vocation and pastoral care of young people. The sacrament of priesthood requires initial and permanent formation within the community.







In addition, the responses which young people should give to the preparatory document for the Synod of Bishops about them constitutes another concern for the Spanish Church. The Church wants to listen to what people at this such a decisive age think, experience and dream, as well as their doubts and hopes.

#### CCEE SYMPOSIUM IN BARCELONA

It is necessary to underline also that Barcelona hosted the CCEE Symposium on young people. More than 200 participants including bishops and those responsible for pastoral work with young people, schools, universities, vocations and catechesis in Europe's Bishops' Conferences, met from 28-31 March to discuss and tackle the theme of accompanying young people.

The participants were welcomed by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Westminster and Vice-president of CCEE, Cardinal **Vincent Nichols**; by the Vice-president of the Spanish Bishops' Conference, Cardinal **Antonio Cañizares Llovera**; and by the Archbishop of Barcelona, His Grace Mgr **Juan José Omella Omella**.

#### PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT ON THE CHURCH'S ACTIVITIES

On 1 June the Spanish Bishops' Conference presented an *Annual Memorandum on the activities of the Catholic Church* for the period in 2015. This report illustrates the great work undertaken by the Church, using the resources obtained from contributions. One of its objectives is the transparency of the Church in the eyes of society.



## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS FOR THE SWISS BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

The **new Presidency** of the Swiss Bishops' Conference began on 1 January 2016, for a three-year mandate (until 31 December 2018): His Lordship Mgr Charles Morerod OP, President; His Lordship Mgr Felix Gmür, Vice-president; Rt Rev Urban Federer OSB, third member of the Presidency.

During the Jubilee of Mercy, there were many initiatives which took place in the dioceses: Holy Doors, area pilgrimages, episcopal visits to the "margins".

On 1 June 2016 the **St Gotthard rail tunnel** was opened. His Lordship Mgr Felix Gmür wrote a pastoral letter to mark the occasion (01.08.2016). On 28 September 2016 a conference organised by the Bishops' Conferences of Germany, France and Switzerland on **migration waves towards Europe** took place in Berlin.

On 5 December 2016, the Swiss Bishops' Conference made its own the intentions of Pope Francis to establish a National Day of Prayer and Penance for victims of sexual abuse, organising a public liturgical office of the Swiss Bishops' Conference at the basilica of Valère in Sion.

In February 2017 (3-10), the Commission of the Swiss Bishops' Conference for dialogue with Muslims went to Benin for a **symposium** on "Le

*vivre ensemble entre adhérents de différentes communautés religieuses au Bénin et en Suisse*".

For further information: **Document 1** in [DE](#) – [FR](#); **Document 2** in [DE](#) – [FR](#).

On 12 February 2017, there was a commemoration at the University of Fribourg, in the presence of the Swiss Bishops, of the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the historical meeting between Pope Francis and Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, held in Havana/Cuba on 12.02.2016. For further information, a news release in [DE](#) – [FR](#) – [IT](#)

On 9 March, the Bishops' Conference organised a study day in Berne on the work of the Synod of Bishops 2014 and 2015 on the family and on "Amoris Laetitia".

On 1 April 2017, a national ecumenical day commemorating and celebrating the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the national Saint **Nicholas of Flüe** and the 500 years since the **Protestant Reformation** took place in Zug. For further information: **Document 1** in [DE](#) – [FR](#); **Document 2** in [DE](#) – [FR](#) – [IT](#).

Again in ecumenical matters, on 22 April 2017 the President of the Swiss Bishops' Conference met in Geneva Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, visiting Switzerland to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ecumenical Centre at Chambésy. On 20 May 2017, a delegation of the Swiss Bishops' Confe-



rence went to Wittenberg (Germany) for the world exhibition "Tore der Freiheit" to mark the 500 years of the Reformation. For further information: **Document 1** in [DE](#) – [FR](#); **Document 2** in [DE](#) – [FR](#). On 18 June 2017, Cardinal Kurt Koch and the Anglican Primate Justin Welby participated in the official national celebration in Berne, organised by the Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches (FEPS), to mark the 500 years of the Reformation. On 7 April 2017, the General Secretaries of the Bishops' Conferences of France, Germany and Switzerland met in Zurich to launch the joint project of a "Day for young people" with a view to the 2018 Synod of Bishops. The official celebration for the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saint Nicholas of Flüe took place on 30 April 2017, in Landenberg.

#### PLENARY ASSEMBLIES

The 312<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly of the Swiss Bishops' Conference took place in Einsiedeln (06-08.06.2016). The bishops decided to appoint a Catholic delegate for pastoral work in the area of palliative care at a national level. At the 313<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly of the Swiss Bishops' Conference which took place in Fischingen (05-07.09.2016), the bishops discussed *inter alia* the banning of the burqa and similar clothing. At the 314<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly of the Swiss Bishops' Conference at Sion et Viège (05-07.12.2016), the bishops drew up important agreements for the financing of the compensation fund for victims of sexual abuse outside the statute of limitations, which will be in force for a period of five years.

The 315<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly of the Swiss Bishops' Conference took place in Mariastein (07-08.03.2017) delegated the bishops for the pastoral care of young people to co-ordinate the preparations for the next Synod of Bishops 2018. For further information, see the new release in [DE](#) – [FR](#).

At the 316<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly of the Swiss Bishops' Conference which took place at the Benedictine Abbey of Einsiedeln (29-31.05.2017), the bishops introduced the new translation "Et ne nous laisse pas entrer en tentation" for the Our Father to take effect from Easter 2018. For further information, see the news release in [DE](#) – [FR](#).

#### DOCUMENTS

**Message** from the Swiss Bishops' Conference, the Federation of Protestant Churches (FEPS), the Roman Catholic Central Conference of Switzerland (RKZ) and from the "Mehr Ranft" Association to mark the 500 years of the Reformation and the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Saint Nicholas of Flüe, whose jubilees will take place in 2017 (official commemoration on 01.04.2017 in Zug). Message of 05.01.2017 in [DE](#) – [FR](#).

**Joint Declaration** of the Swiss Bishops' Conference, the Swiss Province of the Cappuchins and of the Diocese of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg, and meeting of the President of the Swiss Bishops' Conference with journalists in Fribourg for the publication of Daniel Pittet's book, *Mon Père, je vous pardonne*, in which he talks about the sexual abuse suffered in childhood at the hands of a religious. Declaration of 13.2.2017 in [DE](#) – [FR](#) – [IT](#).







## ATTEMPTED COUP D'ÉTAT

In the night between Friday 15 and Saturday 16 July 2016, some Turkish military attempted a coup d'état against the Government and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The coup failed, even if not all the rebel military gave up or surrendered to the police. The day after Turkey's longest night, with 265 deaths and hundreds of wounded, 2,839 soldiers had been arrested, 2,745 judges removed and about ten magistrates detained. The rendering of accounts has already begun.

## DEATH OF ARCHBISHOP TCHOLAKIAN

After 48 years of devotion to the Church of Christ as Archbishop, and after the acceptance of his resignation, at the age of 95, from the pastoral care of the Archeparchy of Istanbul for the Armenians, on 16 September 2016, at the age of 97, His Grace Mgr Hovhannes Tcholakian, Archbishop Emeritus of the Armenian Catholics of Turkey, died.

## CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

The Constitutional referendum of 16 April 2017 brought presidency to the country. In the voting, the "Yes" votes came to 51.2%, the "No" votes 48.7%. The 18 Articles accepted will modify the current Constitution and give to the President the power to govern by decree: the President will assume the tasks of Prime Minister, will appoint the Government, the senior military officials, the rectors of the universities, the head of the security service, some senior leaders and magistrates, and the judges of the Constitutional Court. There will no longer be a true division between the executive, legislative and judiciary power. Parliament will have a secondary role and will no longer be able to vote motions of no-confidence.

## NEW PATRIARCHAL EXARCH

From 2 July 2017, Fr (Abuna) Orhan Çanlı has become the new Patriarchal Exarch of Turkey for the Syro-Catholic Church. Fr Çanlı is married, with a son and a daughter, and succeeds the Chorepiscopus Mgr Yusuf Sağ.

## PLENARY ASSEMBLIES

The Ordinaries of the ecclesiastical jurisdictions present in Turkey have been very involved in

responding to current challenges. In fact, they have met twice in Ordinary Plenary Assemblies, once in an Extraordinary Plenary Assembly, and once, at the request of the Apostolic Nuncio, His Grace Mgr Paul Russell, in an Assembly of just the Latin-rite bishops. At this last meeting, the bishops reflected on the following questions: what are the perspectives for the Church in Turkey? And how to tackle the question of the legal personality of the Church in Turkey? The resolution of this last question would mean certain gaps could be filled, allowing, in particular, greater and more eloquent mobility in pastoral and administrative activities. To mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the approval of the first Statutes of the Turkish Bishops' Conference (Prot. No. 315/74, Rome 30 November 1987), in the Extraordinary General Assembly held Tuesday 18 April 2017, there was discussion of and movement towards the revision of some articles of the Statutes of the Turkish Bishops' Conference. Approval is awaited from the Holy See.

## CULTURAL ACTIVITIES 2016 - 2017

Dr Rinaldo Marmara continues to highlight the cultural dimensions of the work of the Holy See, through conferences, colloquia and publication of books.

On 15 September 2016, at the offices of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Dr Marmara presented his book *"Les Levantins de Smyrne XIX siècle"*, supported by Mr Lucien Arcas. In this publication, Dr Marmara highlights the importance of the Church Archives in Turkey. Of note among the church and diplomatic figures present at the event were His Grace Mgr Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States; and His Excellency Mehmet Paçacı, Turkish Ambassador to the Holy See. Also present were two Latin bishops from Turkey, Mgr Lorenzo Piretto and Mgr Rubén Tierrablanca Gonzalez.

The Mayor of Beyoğlu (Istanbul), Mr Ahmet Misbah Demircan, inaugurated the first conference on the Levantines of Pera (now Beyoğlu), on 23-24 September 2016. In his address opening the conference, Dr Marmara highlighted tolerance and hospitality in the Ottoman Empire.

On 21 November 2016, Dr Marmara gave a



conference on the Levantines of Turkey (Latin Catholic Community-Church) at the French Institute in Smyrna. Then at the invitation of the Mayor of Bornova (Smyrna), on 22 November 2016 he gave a conference on the Latin nature of Smyrna as part of the inauguration of an exhibition of Levantine artefacts. Finally, Dr Marmara is continuing the project of protecting

the Turkish archives of the different Congregations: Cappuchins, Conventuals and Franciscan Minors, with the patronage of Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, and of Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki from the Archdiocese of Cologne. The project began under the patronage of Cardinal Joaquim Meisner.

# UKRAINE

## SYNOD OF THE GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH



PRESIDENT  
HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK  
ARCHBISHOP MAJOR OF KYIV-HALYČ



SECRETARY GENERAL  
HIS LORDSHIP MGR. BOHDAN DZYURAKH  
BISHOP OF THE ARCHEPARCHY OF KYIV-HALYČ



### CARDINAL PAROLIN IN UKRAINE

With his official visit to Ukraine on 15-20 June 2016, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, brought the sign of the closeness and solidarity of the Holy Father and the entire Catholic Church to the country a victim of Russian military aggression. "The suffering you are experiencing, even if it concerns your land directly, calls on the consciences of individuals and the whole international community", said Cardinal Parolin, reminding Europe not to forget the suffering of the Ukrainian people and to support it along the path to peace, justice and freedom. As the Pope's envoy, the Secretary of State launched the humanitarian action "Pope for Ukraine".

### HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The humanitarian crisis, caused by the armed conflict in the East of Ukraine, is being tackled by the Catholic Church both at the international and local level. In recent months, the first tranche of 6million Euros from the extraordinary collection called by Pope Francis reached its beneficiaries. The offerings were managed on the Pope's behalf by Cor Unum in collaboration with a specialist local Committee. In addition, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church is carrying out a whole series of pastoral initiatives to help the people who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders, to support those who

have been dispersed and help families who have lost those close to them in war. "Caritas Ukraine" is playing a crucial role in this charitable and pastoral work.

### MEETING OF THE SYNOD

"**Diaconia – service of charity to one's neighbour**" was the major theme of the Synod of the Greek-Catholic bishops, which took place from 4-11 September 2016 in Lviv. In the meeting, the hierarchs also tackled issues about the pastoral care of soldiers, the formation and accompaniment of families of priests, as well as the pastoral care of Ukrainian migrants in Western Europe. At the conclusion of the work of the synod, the Bishops published a **Pastoral Letter** entitled "Service of one's neighbour – diaconia in the life of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church".

### UKRAINE CONSECRATED TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF THE THEOTOKOS

The **Forum of Ukrainian migrants** promoted by the department for the pastoral care of migrants took place at Fatima from 21-23 October 2016. More than 110 delegates from 14 European countries focussed on three aspects of life in the diaspora: the spiritual accompaniment of migrants, the education of children and young people, and the civil activity of Ukrainians in Europe. The meeting





# UKRAINE

## SYNOD OF THE GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH



ended with a solemn celebration of Mass with the participation of more than 6,000 faithful, in the course of which His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk consecrated Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of the Theotokos.

### MEDIA ISSUES

The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church's **Strategy for communication and media activity** was approved by the Permanent Synod in May 2017. One of the projects developed in the framework of this Strategy is a series of television programmes "The open Church" devoted to the promotion of the social teaching of the

Catholic Church and Christian values in Ukrainian society.

### DEATH OF CARDINAL HUSAR

**The funeral of the much-loved Cardinal Liubomyr Husar, Major Archbishop Emeritus of Kyiv-Halyč, who died on 31 May 2017,** was transformed into a spontaneous and moving homage on the part of the Ukrainian people to its "national patriarch" who enjoyed indisputable authority recognised by the whole of Ukrainian society. Thousands of faithful in Lviv and Kyiv, the civil authorities as well as representatives of the Churches and the country's religious organisations, took part in the funeral commemorations. Pope Francis expressed his final homage to the late Cardinal through his special envoy – Archbishop Cyril Vasil, Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. In the Letter of condolence addressed to His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the Pope recalled the extraordinary commitment of Cardinal Husar to the "rebirth of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church", **"his tenacious faithfulness to Christ"**, as well as his fruitful apostolic and ecumenical activity.

### COMMEMORATION

On 12 June 2017, His Beatitude Sviatoslav published a **Pastoral Letter** to mark the commemoration of the **70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the so-called "Operation Vistula"** in the course of which more than 145,000 Ukrainians were expelled from ethnic territories inhabited by them in Eastern Poland. The leader of the Church called for prayers for the victims of this crime and invited the faithful to set out along the path of purification of the memory, of reconciliation with the neighbouring peoples as well as a new pastoral and missionary impulse of the Greek-Catholic Church in Poland and in Ukraine.

### DEFENCE OF THE FAMILY

**The inter-denominational March** in defence of the family and for the promotion of family values, promoted by the Pan-Ukraine Council of the Churches and religious organisations, took place for the second time on 3 June 2017 in Kyiv and in other cities in Ukraine.



# UKRAINE

## BISHOPS CONFERENCE



PRESIDENT  
HIS GRACE MGR. MIECZYSLAW MOKRZYCKI  
ARCHBISHOP OF LVIV



SECRETARY GENERAL  
HIS LORDSHIP MGR. VITALIJ SKOMAROVSKYI  
BISHOP OF LUTSK



### CURRENT NUMBERS

Our Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops consists of one Metropolitan Archdiocese and six dioceses; seven Ordinary Bishops, six Auxiliary Bishops and four Bishops emeritus.

### JUBILEE YEARS 2016-2017

We are experiencing two years of major celebrations: 25 years of religious freedom after the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), 15 years since the visit of Saint John Paul II to Ukraine (23-26 June 2001) and 100 years since the apparitions of Our Lady in Fatima. Different celebrations were held in the dioceses on such occasions.

### YEAR OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA IN UKRAINE

Our Plenary Session of November 2016 decided to announce a "Year of Our Lady of Fatima" in 2017. Each diocese is organising a diocesan pilgrimage day. The national event took place on 16 July 2017 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Berdychiv (Region of Vinnytsa).

### BISHOP JAN SOBILO APPOINTED HEAD OF THE "POPE FOR UKRAINE" INITIATIVE

On 24 April 2016, by a decision of Pope Francis, a special collection in favour of Ukraine was held throughout Europe. The Latin-rite Catholic Bishop Jan Sobilo, Auxiliary Bishop of Kharkiv-Zaporizhia, was appointed Head of the Com-

mission which examines the different projects for distributing the funds. 16 million Euros (11 million collected by European dioceses and 5 coming from the Vatican) are being distributed.

### PLENARY SESSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE: PLANNING THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

Our Conference of Bishops held its **47<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Plenary Sessions** in November 2016 and March 2017. The bishops discussed the immediate future and made some pastoral plans. Bishop Vitalii Skomarovskyi was appointed Head of the Commission on Relations with the State and Bishop Jan Sobilo Head of the Justice and Peace Commission. Other appointments: President of National Caritas-Spes, Fr. Petro Zharkowski, and new members of the Commissions on Family Ministry and Youth Ministry were confirmed.

### APOSTOLIC NUNCIO PREACHES RETREAT FOR THE BISHOPS OF BOTH RITES

In November 2017, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, the Apostolic Nuncio to Ukraine, preached a joint retreat for both Roman and Greek Catholic Bishops at the Roman Catholic Seminary of L'viv Archdiocese. The main theme of the retreat was: Prophet Jonah as icon of the mission of Bishops in Ukraine. After this two-day retreat, bishops held joint meetings.





### RENEWAL OF THE LITURGY

The Conference is working on the translation from the "Editio Typica" of all liturgical books. The first volume of the Lectionary has been already published as well as the Rite of Christian Burial and other books containing liturgical hymns.

### STRONG TIES BETWEEN OUR CONFERENCE AND LEBANESE MARONITES

The President of the Conference, Archbishop Mieczyslaw Mokrzycki, visited the Patriarch of Antioch and head of the Maronite Church, His Beatitude Bechara Boutros Cardinal al-Rahi in May 2017. Maronites benefit from pastoral care in Catholic parishes of the country and organise their own structures under our "umbrella".

### NEW BISHOPS OF THE CONFERENCE AND A RETURN TO THE FATHER'S HOUSE

On 29 January, Bishop emeritus Stanislaw Padewski OFM Cap, the first Bishop Ordinary of Kharkiv-Zaporizhia, passed away at the age of 75. His body reposes in Kharkiv Cathedral. Two new bishops were appointed: Mgr Vitalii Kryvytski SDB (44 years old) as new Ordinary of Kyiv-Zhytomyr (vacant after Archbishop Petro Malchuk OFM died on 27 April 2016) and Mgr Eduard Kava OFM Conv as Auxiliary Bishop of L'viv Archdiocese. Mgr Vitalii was consecrated on 24 June 2017 in St. Alexandr's Cathedral in Kyiv and Mgr Eduard in Lviv on 21 June 2017 and is currently the youngest bishop in the world (39 years old).

### MARCH IN DEFENCE OF LIFE AND FAMILY

Together with the Ukraine Council of Churches and Religions Organisations, a forum of representatives of almost all religions in Ukraine, the Latin-rite Catholic Church, for the second time in its history, organised a National March in defence of Life and the Family. A Latin-rite Catholic priest was the main coordinator. The March took place in Kyiv on 3 June 2017.

### PASTORAL LETTERS

During this pastoral year our Conference has issued 3 joint Pastoral Letters addressed to all our believers on the following issues: Families, Young People and the centenary of the apparitions Our Lady in Fatima.







## YEAR IN MEMORY OF SAINT LADISLAUS

To mark the 940<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ascent to the throne and the 825<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canonisation of the knight King Saint Ladislaus, and uniting with the solemn events organised by the State, the Bishops' Conference set out to commemorate the sovereign of the Árpád dynasty with a series of events extending to various neighbouring towns where the Saint is venerated. On 17 September, to mark the opening of the memorial year, the diocesan Bishop András Veres celebrated Mass in Győr, at the Cathedral of the Assumption.

## YEAR IN MEMORY OF SAINT MARTIN – GREETING OF THE EUROPEAN BISHOPS

At the conclusion of the commemorative Year of Saint Martin, the Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE) sent greetings in a letter to the Hungarian bishops and faithful. The letter was addressed to Bishop András Veres, President of the Hungarian Bishops' Conference, and to Cardinal Péter Erdő, former President of CCEE.

As concluding event of the Year of Saint Martin, the Hungarian Bishops' Conference and the Hungarian Government organised a solemn congress on 10 November with the title "Saint Martin and Europe", held in the Parliament's Senate Hall.

## NATIONAL COLLECTION TO SUPPORT CHRISTIANS PERSECUTED IN THE MIDDLE EAST

As a sign of solidarity and fraternity the Hungarian Bishops' Conference once again established a collection to help Christians persecuted in the Middle East, to which donations can be made to the current account created for this purpose (Hungarian Bishops' Conference, CIB Bank, 11100104—18181490—14000003). The aim of collection is to build a school in Iraq, which according to the plans is already awaiting its first students in September.

## APPARITIONS OF FATIMA

The Hungarian Bishops' Conference decided that in 2017, to mark the centenary of the Marian apparitions at Fatima, a national meeting should be organised. In various dioceses there is a tradition that on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of each month, corresponding to the date of the Fatima apparitions, the faithful participate

in a pilgrimage and meet to pray together. On the centenary of the apparitions, the faithful will meet in prayer also to implore the gift of peace, on 13 October 2017, the last day of the apparitions.

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL DAYS

Catholic Social Days were held in Győr on 25-27 June 2017. The motto of the event was *The joy of love experienced in the family is also the joy of the Church (Amoris laetitia)*.

## OPENING OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity took place from 17-24 January, taking as its reference point: *Called to proclaim the mighty works of the Lord!* (1 Pet 2:9).

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE 52<sup>ND</sup> INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

The 52<sup>nd</sup> International Eucharistic Congress (IEC) will be held in Budapest from 13-20 September 2020.

The website is: <http://iec2020.hu>.

Thirty-nine diocesan missionaries will help prepare the Budapest Congress. Their task will be to present to parish groups, to local Catholic schools and to other communities, the aim of the Eucharistic Congress through the summary which has been distributed to each missionary. The missionaries have already begun their work. The IEC logo bears the following motto: *All my sources are in you* (Psalm 87:7).





## ANDRÁS VERES, THE NEW DIOCESAN BISHOP OF GYŐR

On 16 July 2016, in the Cathedral of the Assumption in Győr, the new Bishop of the Diocese of Győr was installed, András Veres, President of the Hungarian Bishops' Conference, transferred by Pope Francis from the episcopal See of Szombathely.

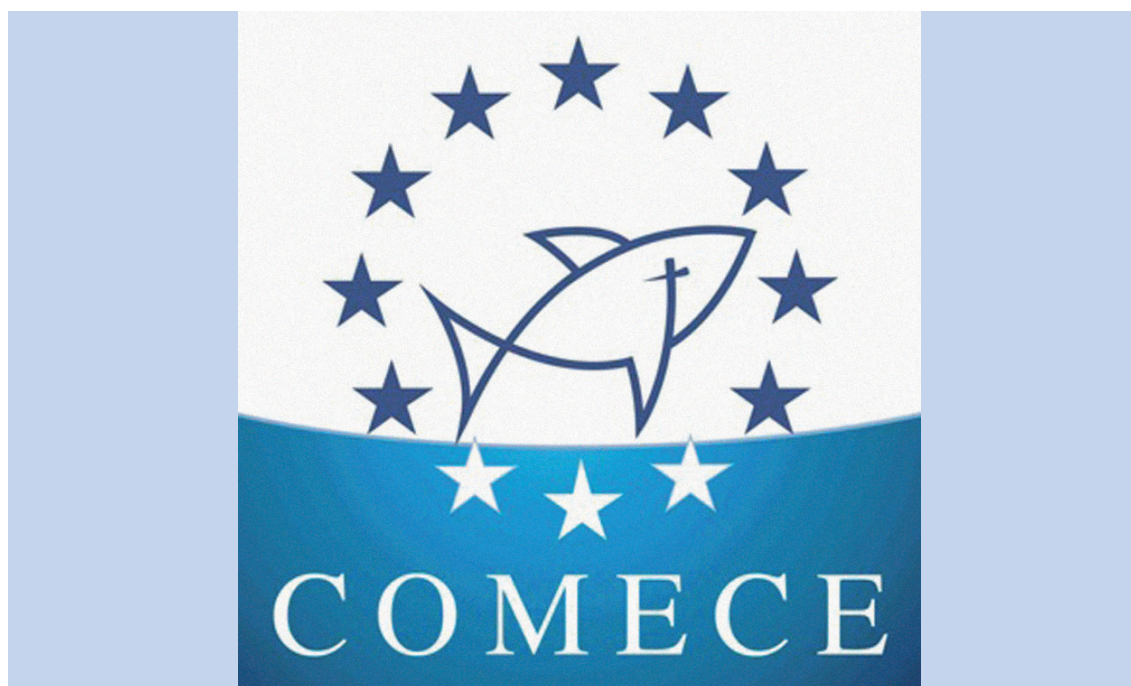
## LÁSZLÓ VARGA HAS BEEN APPOINTED BISHOP OF KAPOSVÁR

On 25 March 2017, His Holiness Pope Francis appointed László Varga, already Vicar General of the Diocese of Kaposvár, diocesan bishop of the diocese.

## JÁNOS SZÉKELY BECOMES DIOCESAN BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF SZOMBATHELY

On 18 June 2017, Pope Francis appointed János Székely, Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Esztergom-Budapest, as new diocesan Bishop in the Diocese of Szombathely, transferring him from his titular See of Febiana.

# FROM COMECE



## AUTUMN PLENARY MEETING ON THE PLIGHT OF EUROPE'S POOR

The plight of Europe's poor was the main topic of the plenary session of the Bishops of COMECE on 26-28 October in Brussels. 119 millions Europeans, almost a quarter of the European population, are at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

During this meeting, the bishops representing the Catholic Church in the 28 EU member states dialogued with Caritas Europe, the humanitarian arm of the Church, with representatives of the European Commission and local authorities. In particular, they noted of the willingness of the European Commission to move forward and strengthen dialogue on this and EU policy matters with the Church.

After their deliberations, the COMECE Bishops worked on a forthcoming position paper which will include concrete proposals and which places the dignity of the human person at the centre of the political measures to fight against poverty.

The bishops have also visited five Catholic organisations in Brussels, working with the poor. They spent an evening with volunteers and they listened and exchanged with the people cared for by these organisations. Analysing the negative perception expressed

by the citizens of many member states towards the EU, the COMECE Bishops recalled that it is essential for EU institutions to be truly at the service of the people of Europe, particularly of the most vulnerable.

## SPRING PLENARY MEETING ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

At the opening of the Spring Plenary, COMECE President Cardinal Marx reaffirmed the strong support of the Catholic Church for the European project: "There is no suitable alternative to cooperation in Europe, because working together is the best way to maintain peace in Europe, to meet the economic and social challenges of globalization, and to become again a point of reference for humanity, as Pope Francis hopes for Europe."

COMECE will organise a Dialogue on the future of the European Union on 27-29 October 2017 in Rome, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties. The Dialogue, entitled *Re-thinking Europe*, will be organised jointly with the Holy See and take place in the Vatican

The Dialogue of Rome aims to promote deeper reflection on the future of the European Union, in order to recover the thrust and the enthusias-



sm that Pope Francis indicated to the members of the European Parliament and on the occasion of the conferral of the *Charlemagne Prize*.

Therefore, during their Plenary Assembly in Brussels, the COMECE bishops dealt with the issues that they intend to address during the Congress in Rome next October: the crises and their causes, the social dimension of Europe, the different concepts and visions of Europe and the European Union.

## COMECE MET WITH POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis met COMECE Standing Committee in Santa Martha at the Vatican last May, 16. During a two-days visit to Rome and the Vatican City, COMECE Standing Committee met several European and Vatican authorities in order to discuss the main challenges of the European Union and the ways the Church can support the European project in a moment in which Europe itself seems to be at a crossroads.

The common main subject of the meetings was “Rethinking Europe”, the major high-level Forum of Dialogue that COMECE is organizing in collaboration with the Holy See and that will be held in Rome between 27-29 October 2017, marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Rome.

The idea of organizing Rethinking Europe in the shape of an open forum of dialogue was in COMECE’s agenda since two years, and it is with great enthusiasm that the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community welcomes the Holy See’s collaboration and the direct participation of Pope Francis.

The main message of the Church is to put the human person back at the heart of the European public policy and the Dialogue of Rome will be a milestone of this process.

## SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION STATEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF WORK

Under the chairmanship of Mgr. Ambrosio, the COMECE Social Affairs Commission met on June, 2 in Brussels. Together with EU representatives, the committee of experts exchanged views on the *EU reflection paper on the deepening of the Eurozone*, the *European Solidarity Corps* and *the European Pillar of Social Rights*.

In close collaboration with the Secretariat, the COMECE Social Affairs Commission drafts contributions and statements on EU initiatives in the field of social, employment and economic affairs. Delegated experts from the bishops’ conferences meet biannually. The next gathering will be held on 28-29 November 2017 in Brussels and discuss the COMECE contribution to the *ILO centenary initiative on the future of work*.

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

*The following is the report from the Holy See's Permanent Mission to the Council of Europe which highlights issues tackled by the Council of Europe.*

In the last year (August 2016-July 2017) the Council of Europe has continued to deal with issues raised by the massive arrival of **migrants and refugees** in Europe, with the first aim being that of ensuring that the member States guarantee migrants protection of human rights envisaged by the European Court of Human Rights. In the ministerial Session held in Nicosia (Cyprus) on 19 May 2017, a plan of action was approved for the benefit of migrant children and a group of experts, in dialogue with civil society, is carrying out a codification of the existing norms in the area of detention of child migrants. The plan for the definition of a framework of competences for education in democratic citizenship is entering the operative stage: a totality of content, but also of attitudes and abilities which the educational path should encourage, with a view to a better integration between students belonging to different cultures, a prerequisite for the construction of an inclusive society. On another front, a new Convention on violations involving cultural assets, aimed at preventing illegal trafficking and destruction of cultural assets, is open for signature.

In the October 2016 Session the Parliamentary Assembly rejected a report on **surrogate motherhood** which had as its objective that of arriving at a legal framework of "altruistic" surrogate motherhood in Europe. By the 24 January 2017 *Grande chambre* verdict, the European Court of Human Rights held it to be legitimate for a State to take away a child from a couple who had obtained the child abroad through surrogate motherhood, when there is no genetic bond with either of the two members of the couple. By contrast, when a genetic bond exists, the Court forces even States which forbid surrogate motherhood to recognise the parental bond. In the April 2017 Session, the Parliamentary Assembly approved a Resolution on the protection of the rights of parents and children belonging to religious minorities, which seeks to set limits on State interference in educational issues.

As well as following the activities described above, the Holy See's Mission has continued to participate in the work of c. 25 inter-governmental Committees. *Inter alia*, it has made contributions to the elaboration of the "**European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st century**", the "**Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023**", and the "**Gender Equality Strategy**" still being developed. The Holy See has also taken part at various international conferences of the Council of Europe, some at a ministerial level.





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