

European Network Church on the Move Conference with Bishop Jacques Gaillot in Lisbon

Press Release, Lisbon, May 6, 2007

Ten years after the founding of We are Church – Portugal, Jacques Gaillot, Bishop of Partenia came to the 17th Conference of the European Network Church on the Move held in Lisbon from May 3-6, 2007. The theme was “The People of God in a World on the Move”. Forty three delegates from 12 countries, representing 21 organizations discussed their collaboration with the Council of Europe, as it has applied for participative membership as an NGO. A review was made of the relations over the last year with the European Parliament and with the Council of Europe on the role of religions in Europe and their position with regard to the State.

Those who took part in the **Forum on Theology and Liberation, in Nairobi, Kenya** in January 2007, previous to the World Social Forum gave an account of what had taken place with respect to the Workshop of the European Network on “Spirituality for another possible world” and the contribution in that workshop will be published in the European Network’s journal “EuroNews”.

It was agreed to continue the work with the Polish representative and fight for civil and religious liberties in Poland. It was also agreed to write to support the parish community of San Carlos Borromeo, Madrid, which has been threatened with closure by the Madrid hierarchy, causing an immense wave of protest and consternation. Members of the EN will be present in the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly of Churches in Sibiu, Romania in September 2007.

The **Study Day** on May 5 was held in the Dominican Priory in Lisbon, attended by a large number of people who came from different parts of Portugal. Bishop Jacques Gaillot gave a talk, communicating his great love and simplicity with regard to people as individuals, within the great social and cultural variety of the present day world. He transmitted confidence and trust with regard to the dramatic changes that are occurring in a world on the move, and reminded the listeners that Jesus cannot be confined to a Church but is a real presence in humankind. The feminist theologian Teresa Martinho Toldy stressed the value of women and how important it would be if the institutional Church were open to their charismata. The participants at the Conference went to visit an immigrant community in Prior Velho, on the outskirts of Lisbon, where a development project started by Christians, has done much to improve the quality of life of the community. A book titled *Ser Igreja* (Being Church), was launched, to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of We are Church, Portugal, containing texts by a wide range of contributors.

One week before the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Bishops (CELAM) will be opened by Pope Benedict XVI in Aparecida/ Brazil, the European Network welcomes and supports the demand made by some 100 respected Catholic university professors for an “intelligent reorganization“ of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. and repudiate the Vatican’s condemnation of the teachings of Jon Sobrino, a famous and respected liberation theologian in Latin America.

The **next Annual Conference** will be held in Strasbourg, France, in 2008, from May 1-4, with a study day on the topic “Relations between Church and State”. The next but one Annual Conference will be held in London, Great Britain, in 2009, from April 30 until May 3 with an emphasis on spirituality and feminism.

The European Network "Church on the Move", founded in 1990, at present consists of some thirty three grass roots groups working for reform of the Catholic Church in 13 European countries: Austria, Belgium, The Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom and has affiliated members in the USA. Internet: www.european-catholic-people.eu

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