



Editorial

The Poor

It is said that when it was finally clear that Pope Francis I was elected pope, his first thought was that he must use his new position to do something for the world's poor – that he should first and foremost be *their* pope.

Already as a cardinal in Buenos Aires, he was known for his simple way of life, for preferring to live with the less privileged rather than withdrawing into the princely palace that came with the position.

His choice of the name Francis sent a strong signal externally. Francis – or more precisely the holy St. Francis of Assisi – is one of the most significant and best-known saints of the Church. He was a privileged man who took a radical consequence of the words of Jesus to the rich young man who wanted to know how he could inherit eternal life: “Go and sell all your possessions and give it to the poor... Then come and follow me!”

The Gospel comments laconically that he went sorrowfully away because he was very rich.

The present pope is Francis the FIRST. No other head of the Church has previously designated St. Francis as his special model by selecting his name.

This, of course, says something about a Church which has not always listened attentively to the admonition of the Sermon on the Mount not to collect riches here on earth...

Focusing on poverty Pope Francis sends out an important signal to many. His message about The Simple Life is a reminder to Church leaders and to Christians all over the world that although the Church as an organisation must relate to this world and cannot live by spirituality alone, the followers of Jesus will lose their credibility if their focus becomes worldly splendour and material enrichment.

Such criticism also strikes the rich part of the world. While 10% of the world's population owns 84% of the riches of the world, 20% live in so-called “absolute poverty”. Every three seconds a child dies as a result of poverty - while at the same time new possessions and increasing wealth seem never to satisfy the craving of others.

When Jesus claims that it is easier for a camel to come through a needle-hole than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, the intention is probably to focus on the consequences of the values that

people chose to emphasise. If one's whole life revolves around consumption, there will not be much time left for a meaningful life with durable values, and it will also result in statistics, like the ones above, which tell of an unjust and inequitable distribution of the world's goods.

A majority of the world's absolute poor are women. Women are often deprived of rights and bear many burdens in relation to employment, childbirth, childcare and other obligations. Even in Europe, which belongs to the more privileged part of the world, it is women who bear the greatest burdens in connection with the economic crisis that is increasingly rampant.

Thus the fight against poverty and the struggle for a better life for women are often two sides of the same coin. This was apparent during the Andante General Assembly in April which brought together women from 18 of the Andante European member organisations. The priorities that the organisations chose to focus on in the coming period: **poverty, trafficking/violence against women and bio-ethics** - are all central to the fight for women's rights and human dignity.

An increasing number of European countries find themselves in a serious economic crisis. People are unemployed or are unable to find work; many cannot pay their loans or even their daily expenses and see no solution to their problems. In a number of European countries women are still fighting for basic fundamental rights, equal opportunity for employment, equal wages for equal work or the same pension as men. When crisis strikes, it is usually women who are the first to be forced to settle for inferior conditions despite the fact that they are also traditionally the ones who feel the greatest responsibility for the family and the children and who suffer the most when their home is taken from them.

Some women resort to drastic solutions to their financial problems. They may end up as job-seekers in a foreign country leaving small children behind or

even take to the streets as beggars or prostitutes. Countries of destination find that the poor of Europe are knocking on their doors and are both embarrassed and annoyed. There can be no solution to the problem without a recognition that poverty must be put on the agenda. Education, employment possibilities and the freedom to create their own life is the the only way to secure that women will not become victims of violence, trafficking or finding themselves in a situation where they have to struggle in poorly-paid jobs with few future prospects or being without support in illness or old age.

With new technology come not only new knowledge and new opportunities but also new ways to exploit others as we see in many of areas of bio-technology. One question affecting women in particular is surrogacy. Some claim that surrogacy is simply a way for childless women to be helped to become mothers, but looking into facts, we see that what is really happening is an agreement with a focus on "goods and services". The poor woman - the weak party - is offering her womb in order to get a badly needed income, but is in reality paying a high price, whereas the rich party benefits and takes advantage of a weak woman's poor conditions.

Thus we see that poverty has many faces and that the faces of women are often the most dominant. When Pope Francis in his way kindles a hope, it is the wish of many that he will not only lift up the poor, but *the poor women* in particular. The Pope cannot change economic models or political systems, but he can be a voice for those without a voice.

Poor women do not only need a hand to reach for in trouble, they need opportunities to take hold of their own destiny. And to care for the poor - and women - is also to lift them up from oblivion or from the place where others have wanted them to stay. If Pope Francis truly becomes these women's pope, then, indeed, he will have succeeded in doing something for the poor!

This requires, however, a recognition that women -

who make up more than half of the active part of Christianity - will become more visible in the Church. Quoting Bishop Bernt Eidsvig (the bishop of Oslo): "It is important to have such channels for the laity into the hierarchy because they may constitute a necessary corrective when it comes to developing the Church."

"The one who has the shoe on knows best where it is pinching," says an old proverb. It is women themselves who can best tell about their lives and the challenges they are facing as citizens and as members of the Church. Therefore it is also important to let women talk - and talk *with* them rather than talk *to* them. The Catholic Church is hierarchical and with the exception of a few countries, the presence of men is top-heavy. Some women's organisations - such as Andante - are trying to be "a necessary corrective" by listening to the "grassroots" and channeling concerns from "the bottom up" rather than the opposite.

Women who are taken seriously, do not represent a threat, but rather an enrichment for the Church. In these times women from many parts of the world are praying that our new Pope in his great concern for the world will see just that!

Mette Bruusgaard

GLIMPSES FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2013

Study-Days and Statutory Assembly

The 2013 Statutory Assembly of Andante took place on the 27th and the 28th of April, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia. There were 17 organisations represented, and one organisation voted by proxy.

Here are some of the items discussed:

*** Presentation and ratification of a new member organisation**

The membership of the Austrian organisation KAV-FI (Katholischer Akademiker Verein – Fraueninitiative) was accepted and ratified by the Assembly.

The president of KAV-FI, Brigitte Gutknecht, whose organisation consists of around 30 women from university background, presented the organisation. Their objective is to make women's voices heard within the academic environment, church and society which is traditionally a very masculine environment. The organisation is focused on extending its contacts with Christian organisations, on cooperation with churches in Eastern-Europe as well as on improving contacts with international organisations. KAV-FI has an independent judicial status and is recognised by the Archbishop.

*** Presentation of the Activity Report**

Each organisation was given a nicely-bound issue of the Activity Report of the years 2010-2012. In the introduction to the report, Marie-Louise van Wijk-van de Ven wrote:

... the mission of Andante is essentially about contributing to 'the good life' for all. As an Alliance, Andante constitutes a network of Catholic women's organisations in Europe, and its 'internal' network is extremely important in the effort to accomplish this mission. We do so in different ways: through our



electronic Newsletter and other publications where we highlight important issues. Moreover, by organising study days, summer schools and conferences, we offer to our members the possibility of sharing our knowledge, our experiences (good or bad). This is not about convincing one another but about joining forces in order to find solutions. Every mutually respectful encounter will shape us, give us something, enrich us. This is how we grow without always noticing. As an Alliance, Andante also networks with other organisations and institutions. In this context, I will first of all point out the Council of Europe where we have participatory status. This gives us the possibility to co-operate on equal terms with other non-governmental international organisations/NGOs represented there. We are active in and follow closely several commissions and work-groups but concentrate especially on themes that are particularly important for women. Nevertheless, much remains to be done and the CoCoA cannot do all of it alone. The CoCoA needs contributions and active help from all its member organisations and the women they represent. Let us show the world and each other the richness of our diversities, our experiences and our knowledge, our spirituality and our visions of the future. Let us continue to walk together – bringing with us the realities of our lives, so often very different, and yet marching with the same rhythm: andante...

The 2010-2012 period has been a time of intense activity for the CoCoA with a focus on: • The organisation of three important events: The General Assembly in 2010 in Strasbourg (France) and two Summer School sessions – one in August 2011 in Reute (Germany) on the Spirituality of women, and the other in July 2012 in Leitershofen (Germany) on our responsibility towards Creation. • Activities and initiatives in the field of communication and public relations such as the development of our homepage and database; the publication of our electronic Newsletter with a wide distribution in Europe; the update of the Andante flyer; the close contact with the member organisations. • Networking and the

active participation, in the name of Andante, at numerous events – both national and European. There has been a special attention on our participation at the sessions of the conferences of the NGOs at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France. • The formation and the launching of the 'Common Prayer' of Andante, devised and based on the joys and hopes, the fears and sorrows, the expectations and visions of women from the member organisations of Andante.

- In addition to all this, and with the aim of preparing different events and activities, the CoCoA has held its working meetings on a regular basis: three in 2012, three in 2011, and three in 2012. After each meeting the member organisations have been informed about the decisions and the progress of the planning made during the meeting – either through the Newsletter, a letter or directly by the members of the CoCoA.

*** Presentation of the Finance report**

The organisations have received a finance report in April, 2013. Claire Rennggli-Enderle presented the report with additional comments. She stressed the fact that one reason why the financial situation is a positive one, is that the CoCoA have made a great effort to cut costs wherever possible (travels, accomodations, translations etc.) and the organisations have also made important contributions. The costs of the Secretariat have been very low as much of the work was done by the CoCoA itself when a secretary was not available for many months. The German organisations kfd and KDFB very generously made available help to prepare the summer-schools of 2011 and 2012.

As in former years La Journée mondiale de la Prière in Switzerland has supported women from Central and Eastern-Europe, making it possible for them to participate in Andante activities.

The expenses of Andante come from activities such as participation at the Council of Europe, networking, representation and participation at

events, as well as publications.

The Andante flyer has been printed in French, German and English, and the Andante prayer in eight languages.

*** Election of the new Coordinating Committee of Andante**

The Assembly bid farewell to an enthusiastic and devoted chair, Andante's "Founding Mother", Marie-Louise van Wijk-van de Ven, who has worked tirelessly and with great success for the establishment and the promotion of Andante over the past 7 years as well as to Claire Renggli- Enderle who has been her close associate and Andante's competent and loyal head of finances. Thanks were also expressed to Maria Theresia Opladen and Sophie Pujalte for all their good work and efforts on behalf of Andante in the out-going CoCoA. Inese Augskalne (LKSA, Latvia), Mette Bruusgaard (NKKF, Norway), Maria Demeterova (KHZS, Slovakia), Zsuzsa Laczkóné Huszka (KNFE, Hungary) and Mary McHugh (NBCW, United Kingdom) were all re-elected to the new CoCoA. The new CoCoA was moreover strengthened through the addition of Waltraud Deckelmann (KDFB, Germany), Gisela Hoeve (Unie NKV, the Netherlands) and Vroni Peterhans- Suter (SKF, Switzerland) who were elected board members. Mary McHugh was elected the new chair with Mette Bruusgaard and Waltraud Deckelmann as vice-chairs.

*** Plans and activities for the next period (2013-2016)**

The concerns from the Study-Days as well as suggestions from organisations and the outgoing Board were put to a vote, and the Co-ordinating Committee for the 2013-2016 period was given the mandate to concentrate in particular on the themes dealing with poverty, trafficking and bio-ethics.

At the same time the Assembly endorsed the proposal to encourage all member organisations to

use the last Saturday of September (2013: the 28th) as an Andante Day for the Creation where issues regarding the protection of the Creation are put on the agenda one way or the other by each member organisation in their own country.

Several proposals of areas for the new CoCoA to work on, were put forth during the discussion : • to improve communication • increase memberships • reach out for the young • focus on training • extend the network • strengthen relationships with the Church • improve contacts with Eastern Europe • increase activity at the Council of Europe

The date of the next Andante Assembly was set for the 14th to 17th April, 2016. Investigations are being made concerning the possibility of having this Assembly in Great Britain.

*** Thanks expressed**

Many thanks were expressed to Maria Demeterova and her great team of Slovak women for their kind hospitality and for the wonderful cultural programme arranged for the participants of the third Andante General Assembly.

Interview with new president

Mary McHugh

Please, tell us something about the background for your work for Andante.

I first became involved with Andante, when I represented the National Board of Catholic Women of England and Wales at a meeting of European Catholic women in Trnava in 2004. In that year a large number of countries joined the European Union, many from Eastern Europe. At that meeting there was a consensus that a need existed for a European association of Catholic women's

organisations. I subsequently became a member of a group charged to study the feasibility of creating such an association. This research should include the why-what-how-for whom of it: define the aims and objectives; draft statutes; find out which country would be the most appropriated to be registered in and be sure that the statutes of the association would meet the national law of that country; will there be enough organisations willing to join the association; etc. As a result, a meeting was organised in May 2006 in Budapest where the statutes were adopted by the representatives of some 20 organisations. Thus, this meeting became the Constitutive (and first General) Assembly of 'Andante – European Alliance of Catholic women's organisations'. In 2010, I became a member of the coordinating committee, CoCoA.

What have been the biggest challenges during your time as member of the CoCoA?

The biggest challenge for me during my three years on the CoCoA, has been the complexity of the organisation, and the need to work in three languages. My French is basic and I have never learned German. It was helpful that the CoCoA worked in English. I have been greatly supported by fellow CoCoA members. I have learned a lot about how important the meetings of member organisations are to them, not just the General Assembly, but also the Summer Schools. I also appreciate how much work is involved in the organisation of a single summer school.

What have been the most rewarding achievements?

I think the most important achievement for Andante has been its recognition by the Council of Europe, as an International NGO with Participatory Status. This was achieved because of superb leadership by Marie-Louise and the joint efforts of representatives in many countries in lobbying their representatives during our appeal process.

In your opinion, what is the role of Andante in present-day Europe?

Europe today faces many new challenges. Women who share the Catholic faith and its social teaching can, by uniting their voices across many countries, have positive influence for the common good. Andante can help to raise awareness amongst Catholic women; share their experiences; and coordinate action.

What are your dreams for the future of Andante?

My dream is that Andante is more widely known and respected for its work. That it encourages and involves women of all generations and is present in all the countries of the Europe.

Other comments?

I know that in many countries and organisations, Andante is only known about by the leaders of those organisations. I would like to see more grass-roots members interacting with Andante via its website. I would also like to see the growth of the group of "Friends of Andante" especially in those countries that do not have Catholic women's organisations.



Two Presidents.

Marie-Louise and Mary.

Interview with the outgoing president,

Marie-Louise van Wijk-van de Ven

Marie-Louise, please, tell us something about the background for your work for Andante.

It's a long story, actually...After having finished my doctorate (way back in the past!) I was asked by an organisation of university women in the Netherlands to join them. I declined: what would I do in an organisation of women only... If anyone at that time had told me that in the future my prime (pre)occupation would be to work with and for women, I would have declared that that person must be out of his mind... At the time my husband and I already had a little girl of 6 months and we were expecting a second child. It was only when our second girl was born that we learned that she had a twin sister...As you can well understand, with three girls in 14 months, I was really absorbed by the work at home and to the extent that I had to leave my teaching position in upper-secondary school. Four years later I had gradually resumed a (more) social life: I had started giving conversation courses as well as catching-up lessons for students with difficulties, had trained to become a journalist, started playing tennis again, joined a group of women who came together on a regular basis to discuss 'politics' etc. When I discovered that almost all the women were members of the Guild of Catholic women in the small town where I lived, I joined them. First as a passive member, but very soon in an active way: as the editor of the monthly bulletin, in advertising/contact with the press, as a committee member. First as their representative working on the regional and national level, from there on to the international – and in particular in WUCWO (World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations) as responsible for The European Region as well as their Newsletter (published 4 times a year in 4 languages). One may say that I had, indeed, made a career in the women's

movement!

As Mary has pointed out, at one given moment, the responsible persons from several European organisations felt a need to become organised in a more structured way, with an official status, which is necessary in order to be recognised as a partner by the European institutions. At first one tried to achieve this within WUCWO, in such a way that each region would have its own formal status with its own statutes. Unfortunately, this was opposed by WUCWO – one reason being that it would require a restructuring of the Union. Then the European organisations decided to try to organise themselves as a European grouping – not in competition with the European Region of WUCWO, but in complementarity.

Mary has already described the process leading up to the creation of Andante. At the Assembly in Budapest in May 2006, I was elected president; last April, after 7 years of service, I passed the torch on to Mary.

What have been the biggest challenges during your time as president of Andante?

I would like to distinguish between the internal and the external. Within the organisations: try to spread «the idea of Andante» among members on the regional and local level and succeed in giving them a sense of belonging to our Alliance. After all, it is all about their interests and about making their voices heard when representing Andante at European institutions or other NGOs; it is not (only) about the voices of the people in charge.

Then I turn automatically to the external. One of the greatest challenges was to change the refusal to grant us participatory status at the Council of Europe to a positive decision.

What have been the most rewarding achievements?

Then again, the internal and the external. I am proud that every year since the foundation of Andante, we have been able to organise an 'event'- Study-Days that have preceded the Assemblies, Conferences, Summer-schools. I think that it is extremely important to offer to our member organisations the possibility to meet at least once a year in a context that is above the national movement. From the reactions of participants we understand that they have greatly appreciated these meetings and perhaps even more important, they have found there the inspiration and ideas to organise, at the level of their own organisations, study-days on one or several of the themes from the Andante meetings.

In terms of the external: the success of our campaign to obtain participatory status at the Council of Europe. Also, little by little, we have succeeded in becoming known in other European contexts: the IXE Group, the Comece, the EU, European parliamentarians, other NGOs. We are always ready and pleased to cooperate whenever asked.

In your opinion, what is the role of Andante in present-day Europe?

To contribute to a better 'climate' in Europe and thereby, elsewhere in the world. Presently, we see so much hatred, distrust, violence, misunderstanding – between individuals, religious groups, ethnic groups... I think that as Catholic women our primary task is to act for justice (also economic justice; think of all those people living in lack of security), for mutual respect and the practice of Human Rights for all – also when people have a different way of living their lives than we have. These are big words, I know. I also know that together, small things can do something big. I am certain that if everyone of us, where she lives, would do something in this field – with all the women of

Andante, this could have an astonishing effect.

When I have talked about 'climate', 'justice' and 'violence', that is because I think this also goes for our behaviour towards Creation. It was not for nothing that the theme of one of our summer-schools was 'We are the inheritors of the Earth – what can we do to live responsibly?' We have a great responsibility towards future generations. The type of 'climate' that they will have depends on us...!

What are your dreams for the future of Andante?

A more frequent 'come and go' between the organisations and the CoCoA: to inform and be informed about what is going on – on the CoCoA/Andante level (steps taken, decisions, projects) as well as on the level of the organisations (activities and actions, projects). I would also like to see reactions to articles and appeals in our Newsletter and that those responsible in organisations see to that the Newsletter is known and that they encourage members to subscribe individually. Also: a much greater involvement from our organisations in the work for Andante on the European level, for instance to act closely with their delegates of international bodies, their parliamentarians and governments in order to make sure that they ratify the Conventions of the Council of Europe – in particular the one regarding Violence against women. Another wish (dream, if you would like) is to see an increase in the number of member organisations – especially from Southern countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece...) and those from Central Europe and the East. That would give us more strength and a greater presence on the European level.

Moreover, we should have one or two 'supplementary' women who would be capable of representing Andante at the Council of Europe. The meetings of commissions and work-groups often take place simultaneously.

Being on one's own makes it impossible to follow all and/or contribute on the part of Andante in regard to works of the NGOs or to contact the members of the Parliamentarian Assembly.

Other comments?

Actually, no; except maybe to tell you how I have experienced seven years as president of Andante. These have been intense years. Often I had to 'run after myself' in order to do all that had to be done, for instance prepare the Summer-Schools, the Assemblies. Likewise for everything regarding the Newsletter and the Website. On the other hand, it has been a rich experience. I said so in my message to the participants at the Assembly after my return from Bratislava: it has been a period of discovery and apprenticeship, of experiencing solidarity, joy and friendship. I have had incredibly interesting meetings, met fantastic women... I would wish that many of us could make a similar journey. I know that this is not always possible. But I am convinced that by sharing our experiences, even those that may appear insignificant, we can all contribute to the work for The Common Good and make alive our name 'andante'. So let us march together. I shall be at your side...

women and the crisis exposed in the fields of values and ethics. The participants of the Study Days were divided into dialogue groups allowing women of very different backgrounds to share and "weave" their different experiences. This was also done in a very concrete way as each group presented at the end of the session a woven cloth made by the women of the group which will later be put together and made into a big tapestry.

You can find photos here:

http://www.flickr.com/photos/kfd_bundesverband/8766410210/in/set-72157633543178143

- and speeches made during the session on the Andante website: www.andante-europa.net



THE STUDY-DAYS

The theme of the Study Days high-lighted both the challenges and the many areas of problems facing Europeans today, but also focused on the hopes and possibilities represented by women joining forces and working together to create "a Europe of Hope". Women representing Andante member organisations expressed concerns about poverty, human trafficking, the situation of migrant workers, the need to protect the Creation, bio-ethics, care for elderly people and others in need, violence against

Life is But a Weaving

Corrie Ten Boom (The Tapestry Poem)

*My life is but a weaving
Between my God and me.
I cannot choose the colors
He weaveth steadily.
Oft' times He weaveth sorrow;
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper
And I the underside.*

*Not 'til the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Will God unroll the canvas
And reveal the reason why.*

*The dark threads are as needful
In the weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned
He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him.*

ANDANTE DAY OF CREATION

At the end of the summer school 2012 there was a call from the participants to create an annual 'Andante Day for the Environment' when the wonders of creation would be celebrated as a reminder of the threat to the earth from climate change. This day could be marked by environmental initiatives, such as tree planting; or by individuals and families deciding to reduce energy consumptions, and thereby carbon emissions to a bare minimum for one day.

The General Assembly 2013 followed this up by endorsing the proposal to encourage all member organisations to use the last Saturday of September (2013: the 28th) as an Andante Day for the Creation. From several of the Andante member organisations there are reports that activities are being planned for the 28th of September, 2013.

SKF together with Vie et Foi, (Switzerland), KDFFB (Germany) and acf (France)

Earth, where are you heading? SKF organises a Creation Day in the Basel region together with women's organisations from Suisse Romande, Germany and France on the 28th of September. SKF commemorates this day with a celebration at

the Elisabeth Church. Words of welcome will be from Maya Graf, the president of the national board and by Clara Slawik from the organisation Plant for the Planet. After the ceremony there will be a potluck and individual walks on the Climate Trail along the German-Swiss border. The Board is looking forward to welcoming a great number of participants – men, women and families.

ACFL (Luxembourg)

ACFL is planning an Andante Day of Creation of Luxembourg: On 28 September 2013 at 10.30 am. there will be a meditative walk in Rindschleiden or Nommern based on the topic "Celebrating Creativity".

NKKF (Norway)

NKKF is inviting members and others to a seminar on The Day of Creation on the 28th of September. The theme will be: "What can we as women of the Church do for the environment?". A politician and a priest will introduce the theme for discussion. NKKF is also associated with The Norwegian Council of Churches where one of the goals is to encourage Norwegian politicians to focus on environmental issues in connection with the national elections taking place on 9 Sept. 2013.

The concern for the Creation, for environment, is expressed in many fora throughout the world. **World Environment Day ('WED')** is celebrated every year on 5 June to raise global awareness of the need to take positive environmental action. It is run by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The World Council of Churches: 1 September to 4 October is Time for Creation. The beginning and the end date of Time for Creation are linked with the concern for creation in the Eastern and the Western traditions of Christianity, respectively. September 1st was proclaimed as a day of prayer for the environment by the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I in 1989. The Orthodox church year starts

that day with a commemoration of how God created the world. On 4 October, Roman Catholics and other churches from the Western traditions commemorate Francis of Assisi, known to many as the author of the Canticle of the Creatures. The proposal to celebrate a Time for Creation during these five weeks was made by the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu in 2007. The following year, the WCC Central Committee invited churches to observe Time for Creation through prayers and actions.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

June 2013 session of the INGO Conference As usual here were many committee and working group meetings during this session, some of them taking place simultaneously. This made it sometimes difficult for Andante's representatives Mary McHugh and Marie-Louise van Wijk to choose which meetings to attend in addition to the plenary sessions of the three big committees and that of the INGO Conference itself. Having in mind the Andante areas of interest we decided to take part in the meetings of (i.a.) the working groups 'Extreme poverty and human rights'; 'Access to digital media for all'; 'Human Rights and Religions'; and those on 'Gender Equality'. In addition we managed to attend some 'side events' which are always useful for establishing contacts with members of the Parliamentary Assembly and other representatives. NGO participation in political decision making processes was the main focus of discussion at the June 2013 session of the INGO Conference. Participants took stock of the current situation of NGO participation at local and national levels and looked at possibilities for more youth participation and the impact of the Code of Good Practice for civil participation in decision-making processes. www.coe.int/T/NGO/code_good_prac_en.asp. In

this context Anne-Marie Chavanon, Chair of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee, moderated a Panel discussion on 'NGO participation in political decision-making processes: a reality or still a challenge to be met?' Speakers from different countries and institutions gave examples of the many challenges but also of opportunities and good practices.

Human Rights and Religions This working group of the Human Rights Committee of the INGO Conference was set up by François Becker (France; representative of 'Churches and Freedom') some 4 years ago and Andante representatives have taken part in it from the very beginning. Thanks to Becker's tireless hard work and perseverance a recommendation to the member States of the Council of Europe on this very interesting but sometimes sensitive subject could be adopted at the plenary session of the INGO Conference. The final text will be available as soon as some last amendments will have been included in it. Two other texts – one proposing to leaders and members of religions lines of thought and action to respect and promote Human Rights; the other, an appeal addressed to citizens and NGOs in the various countries – must still be finalised. It is planned to submit them to the vote at the next session of the INGO Conference, January 2014.

Gender Equality There are two working groups dealing with this theme, both under the energetic leadership of Anje Wiersinga (Dutch; representative of the International Alliance of Women). One group focuses on the need of including gender equality in political and democratic processes, particularly during and after conflicts. In this context, after the hearing organised during the previous INGO session, a recommendation on women in the Arab countries was presented. The other group is a more informal one and deals not only with various aspects of gender equality but also with violence against women. **For all information on the Council of Europe: www.coe.int**

Gender stereotyping in the media Across the world, women are under-represented in leadership positions in the media. Gender stereotyping – either subtle or blatant – sadly remains a reality. Andante was represented by Marie-Louise van Wijk at a Conference ‘Media and the image of women’, organised by the Council of Europe in partnership with the Dutch Government, 4-5 July 2013 in Amsterdam. The conference addressed concerns and challenges related to stereotyping and sexism in the media, freedom of expression and gender equality. It also assessed challenges posed by, and the potential of new media technologies to advance gender equality. A [short video](#) as well as the full programme and other details can be found at the Council of Europe’s website: www.coe.int.

NEWS FROM ORGANISATIONS

GERMANY:

Soli bread Action 2013 by KDFB and Misereor

Under the motto "Soli bread - tastes good and feels good," the German Catholic women of KDFB and the Catholic relief organization Misereor have conducted a nation-wide cooperation in the framework of the Lent Campaign 2013: "We are fed up with hunger."

During the seven weeks of Lent 12 KDFB-diocesan associations and 140 branch associations were engaged in the Solibread-Action. Across Germany, numerous bakeries participated. They offered a special bread with a benefit of 50 cents per bread. The donation check was handed over by KDFB Vice President Beate Born to Monsignor Pirmin Spiegel, the chief executive of Misereor, in the closing ceremony of the Solibread-Action during the women's peace pilgrimage on 4 May. At that point the revenue amounted to more than € 50,000.

The money will benefit four Misereor projects in

Kenya / Tanzania, Haiti, Madagascar and Bangladesh that are committed to work for just structures, educational opportunities and to overcome hunger and poverty.

“With this action The Women's Federation and Misereor side deliberately with women and families in Africa, Asia and Latin America," explained KDFB President Dr. Maria Flachsbarth and Monsignor Pirmin Spiegel, CEO of Misereor. The goal is to promote safe living conditions in the countries of the South, so that people can strive to live off their own livelihood and develop positive future prospects. Women especially need support because they are often the sole breadwinners of the family.

For the first time this was a joint event by KDFB and Misereor and should be continued in the next two years - 2014/2015. Materials and information about the campaign and about the projects that are supported through the Solibread-Action, can be found on www.frauenbund.de and www.misereor.de

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Press release

In a press release it is announced that Bettina Ismail has been awarded the Ellen Ammann Award of the Bayerischen Landesverbandes des Katholischen Deutschen Frauenbundes (KDFB). The prize, which is awarded for the first time, will honour women who highlight causes of undesirable social developments. For her commitment and great efforts Barbara Ismail received 2,500 euros as well as a kame – a piece of jewellery which stresses the contribution of a single woman. In 2001 the 50-year old Ismail from Markt Schwaben founded the "Open House - Open Heart". At first it was mainly about the demand and better integration of asylum seekers, now it is more generally for foreign school children and their families. A particular concern of Bettina Ismail's is the support of women in everyday-life and in education. Elfriede Schiessleder from KDFB made it clear why such a prize has been established:

"At a time where there is still a one-sided focus on the performance of men, it is necessary to have a better view on the courage of women. The determination to go ahead and change circumstances also when no-one believes in one's capacity, is beneficial for our co-existence and our future." The chair, Barbara Stamm, explained why she has taken over the patronage for the award: "We want to make sure that the models of the past – and Ellen Ammann is an example - are secured for the present. For her diaconal thoughts and action meant finding the causes for undesirable social developments. And there are many – even today."

In her speech Eva-Maria Welskop Deffaa from the federal board put women in the centre, saying: "You were not invited, but came of your own accord. You explored territory that was previously unexplored and had been refused access both by ecclesiastical and secular authorities."

An award for second place was given to Tita Kern from München for bringing on the way the establishment of ASPN (Aufsuchende Psychozial-systemische Notfallversorgung) – psycho-social emergency relief in support of families, children and young people with exceptionally stressful experiences. In third place, the jury chose Mary Geiss Wittmann from Amberg. She fights for women on many fronts, for instance through the "Moses Project" for anonymous and confidential birth. The two were each given 1,000 euros. Recognition was also given to Andrea Teichmann from Ingolstadt for establishing expert advice regarding sexual violence in the city and its surrounding and to Rosi Mitter Meier from Garching, for founding the self-help group "Because of Down", based on unconditional acceptance. (The full text of the press release edited by Ulrike Müller-Münch can be found in the German section of the Newsletter)



Happy prize winners

Book: "The door is open" - The 2nd Vatican Council from a female perspective

Under the title "The door is open - The Second Vatican Council - instructions for reading from a female perspective" the Theological Commission of the KDFB has published a book on the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. Key messages of the Council are highlighted in the book from a woman's perspective; specific questions and methodological suggestions open up for discussion. It is impressive to read reports from time-witnesses who followed the call of Prof. Dr. Margit Eckholt, chair of the Theological Commission in the organisation's magazine "KDFB Committed – The Christian woman". They describe how they experienced that time and also share their view on the developments until today. An extensive literature and links directory, photos from the 4th Session of the Council, at which the former President Dr. Gertrude KDFB Ehrle participated as lay clerk, complete the 152-page book in square format. It costs € 14.80 and is available at any bookstore.

More information: www.katholikinnen-und-konzil.de

NORWAY:

A VOICE FOR THOSE WITHOUT A VOICE

Anita Pratap is an expatriate Indian journalist and author who has received a number of prizes for her work. Among other things she has worked for Time Magazine and India Today and has covered problem areas such as Afghan women's conditions under Taliban, the Civil War in Sri Lanka and the Kashmir conflict. She is today married to the Norwegian ambassador to Japan, and during the St. Olav Festival (a religious and cultural festival in Trondheim, Norway, celebrating the introduction of Christianity in 1030) she was invited to give a lecture on “*The next step – to give women authority*”.

“We can agree to strengthen the position of women”, Pratan says. “But how do we succeed? We cannot say that *this* is how it functions here, therefore we should do the same to strengthen the position of women in another country. There are cultural differences to consider. Countries are at different stages of development. What is right for a woman in one country, may be fatal for a woman in another.

Take an example from Saudi-Arabia where I lived for four years. The whole world was preoccupied with the fact that women there were not allowed to drive a car. But what we saw was that rich women had a chauffeur and the poor did not have a car. So the problem only concerned a small segment of women in society. A much greater problem was the fact that women could not work. This shows that it is better to leave it to the women of individual countries to identify what they actually need. There is never an easy solution; no size fits all when it comes to equality.”

Having been invited to speak in connection with the celebration of the centenary of the introduction of Norwegian women's right to vote (1913), Pratan continues: “Women who have obtained a better standard of living and increased equality can inspire others by showing how they live their lives – lives

that may seem very distant for a women in Afghanistan or DR Congo. They have to fight their own battle, but psychologically it may help knowing how the situation is for instance in this country”.

Pratan thinks that the work to strengthen the situation for women in different countries has shown results. So what next? “Up until now we have focused on women as a goal in themselves. But should our focus still be better jobs and higher wages?” She wants to move the focus to seeing the independence of women as a means to obtain other goals:

“We must use the historical opportunity ahead to create a better world. We are much better off than a hundred years ago and have advanced greatly, but still there are basic problems in so many places – problems such as bad governance, corruption and destruction of the environment.” This is where Pratan thinks that women must use their position actively. “I see no point in having women as leaders of Statoil or Pepsi if they do not contribute to preventing the destruction of our environment. We must use our power, our intellect, to create a better world.”

From Adresseavisen/Aftenposten 3 Aug. 2013

SPOTLIGHT ON ...

NKKF Norges Katolske Kvinneforbund (The Catholic Women's League of Norway)

Some facts about the organisation: NKKF was founded in 1924 and is one of a few nation-wide lay organisations within The Catholic Church of Norway. In a country of long distances and a disperse population, one of the main objectives of the organisation is to strengthen the contact between Catholic women in Norway and to represent them in various connections. NKKF organises meetings, mini-seminars, lectures, church services and

pilgrimages. It has a homepage: katolskekvinner.no and publishes a newsletter (NKKF-NYTT) twice a year. Through sales and collections NKKF women support a project for poor and abused young women and children in Sri Lanka. NKKF wants to focus on and make visible women's efforts and their work for and within the Church and to contribute to innovative ideas for women's service today and in the future. As an organisation of lay people, NKKF expresses the opinion and views of Catholic women to the bishops and other church bodies and is represented in The Episcopal Laity Council. The Norwegian government recognises NKKF as a contributor to public hearings on matters concerning women, and in a small way NKKF represents an alternative voice in a secular Norwegian society. NKKF promotes contacts between Catholic women across national borders. It participates in ecumenical work and is engaged in various fields of work for and by women – also internationally through memberships in Andante and WUCWO.

Facts about the Norwegian Catholic community:

The first Catholic congregation since the Reformation had introduced the Lutheran state church in Norway in 1536, was established in Oslo in 1843. From a very slow start there are today about 116 000 registered Catholics in Norway (2.3 % of a population of close to 5 mill.) - and in addition the estimate is that the Church provides services for at least another 100 000. The Catholic community is the fastest growing of all the religious communities in Norway, and this becomes very clear when visiting a crowded Catholic church on Sundays when masses in many different languages succeed one another. The growth is above all a result of a great increase in immigration over the past 30 years, and today the biggest non-ethnic Norwegian Catholic groups are the Poles, the Philippines, the Lithuanians, the Vietnamese and the Chileans. Ethnic Norwegians of two Norwegian parents who were raised Catholic, constitute a small minority. Ever since the writer and Nobel Laureate, Sigrid Undset, converted to Catholicism in the 1920ties, a small, but noticeable group of

Norwegians have followed in her foot-steps – and this tendency has increased over the past decades both as a consequence of more tolerance and open-mindedness to Catholic practice and thinking, as well as a growing estrangement from the official Lutheran church that in the eyes of many has become much too eager to follow popular political trends. Today the Catholic Church in Norway consists of 35 congregations spread across the country but with a great concentration of people around the capital of Oslo as well as around the bigger cities Bergen, Trondheim and Drammen. There is one diocese for southern Norway, one in Trondheim and an auxiliary bishop for the North. A number of religious communities operate in various parts of the country, and the country has five Catholic schools. Despite the fact that the Lutheran Church (with 80% of the population as its members) still has a number of privileges, full religious freedom is secured for all Christian denominations as well as for other religious communities. Each denomination and each religious community receives a fixed sum for each registered member from the state.

Challenges: Originally the structure of NKKF was an organisation based on small, local groups in the different congregations that in turn had a collective membership in NKKF. These groups consisted of women who in various, practical ways gave services and assistance to their local church. Closely connected with the congregation there was very often a Catholic hospital run by nuns of big congregations with their Mother House somewhere in Europe. Through their congregations, the sisters held memberships in NKKF. All of this has changed drastically. Instead of collective memberships, which only exist to a small degree today, NKKF now consists of individual members. The women of the congregations are less likely to organise themselves “as women”, and with the coming of the welfare state, the Catholic hospitals have been taken over by the state and the number of sisters has also dropped considerably. As a consequences of this the NKKF memberships have shrunk, and is still

shrinking as very few young people choose to join. Today NKKF-NYTT is sent to no more than 250 individual members and “interested groups” - and considering the potential of an expanding church community, this is not encouraging. With the decline in memberships, the organisation also suffers economically, as it is self-sufficient with no other sources of income than membership fees.

There are, of course, many reasons for the decline. Most Norwegian women work, and time is limited. Many prefer to engage themselves in separate projects rather than become part of an organisation, fearing a long-time commitment. A modern society is booming with various activities, and what is looked upon as “traditional women’s activities” is not of top priority. The Norwegian society has come very close to obtaining full equality between men and women; many do no longer see the need for a particular engagement on behalf of their gender, but prefer other idealistic projects where men and women work together. NKKF welcomes all Catholic women in Norway as members regardless of their views on particular questions. Still there are women who find that the organisation is far too conservative – or fear that it is far too liberal...Many of the non- ethnic Catholic women come from countries where they are not used to raising and discussing sensitive ethical or social issues as part of their engagement as church members, and this as well as language difficulties make them prefer to remain in their own group with their own culture where the focus is often more “purely religious”. Even sister congregations seem to prefer to stay within their own circles. And all of this despite the fact that the Oslo-bishop, Bernt Eidsvig, has promoted NKKF and spoken generously about the organisation, saying that it is important for the Church “to have such channels for the lay-people ... because they may constitute an important corrective in the development of the Church”. The Norwegian-born Eidsvig, has appointed women to a great number of important positions in his diocese. On the other hand, a number of imported priests from quite conservative communities in for instance

Poland, uphold a more traditional view on women’s place in the Church. At times this creates tension for progressive Norwegians, and at times it is also a problem for NKKF.

Next year NKKF will be celebrating its 90tieth anniversary, and for its active members plans are being made for the coming year and for the coming decade. NKKF still intends to be a voice both within the Church and within society, as it has been in many instances. An area of great focus for NKKF has always been the rights of women and children and the work against violence and abuse. Inspired by NKKF, the Catholic community in Norway adapted a plan for procedure in cases of sexual abuse committed by people of the Church, and this text has proved to be very useful. In the increasingly secularised society of Norway, it has also become important to voice alternatives to very technical solutions to moral problems. One example here are the very sensitive issues related to bio-ethical problems where Christians often feel a need to give a sign of warning.

Facing its immediate future, the biggest challenge for NKKF as an organisation will be the need to recruit new members. Several initiatives have been launched in order to succeed in this work. In a church consisting of such great numbers of immigrants, it is important for its women to reach out a hand to the newcomers. The Catholic Church in Norway has received much praise for its ability to integrate so many different groups of various background into its community. As an organisation NKKF has made sincere efforts to follow up the good initiatives, contacting key persons from different language groups and inviting immigrant women to events, encouraging them to share their experiences and reactions. At the same time it is necessary to rejuvenate the organisation. Last year NKKF approached the young women of NUK (Norwegian Young Catholics) and both last year and this March the two organisations organised as a joint project a mass for women on the 8th of March. The hope is that this co-operation will continue and that

some of the younger women will see NKKF as a way to follow up their work in NUK. Whereas former generations of NKKF-women often focused on charity and practical ways to help building their congregations, a main focus today is to create awareness, a social conscience and a bond between Catholic women in Norway, supporting them in their effort to contribute positively as Catholics to their society and within their church. Despite being a minority within a minority, NKKF continues to make imprints and the hope is that this will continue!

Mette Bruusgaard *NKKF president 1997-2009*

IN MEMORIAM

Sister Ágota Baternay

On 9 August Sister Ágota Baternay rsc was called home to her Creator at the age of 82. Sr. Ágota Baternay was one of the co-founders of Andante – the European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations. After the Assembly in Budapest in 2006 which saw the foundation of this European Women's network she served on the Co-ordinating Committee of Andante from 2006 till 2010.

The story of Ágota's life was anything but simple: called to be a Religious Sister she had to leave her homeland Hungary as a young novice because of the Communist regime. As a member of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus she received her formation and education in France and Italy. After taking her solemn vows she went to Austria where she studied, worked as a teacher, and became involved in the Catholic Women's Movement of Austria (kfbö). After the fall of Communism she was able to return to Hungary.

In 1995 she founded Keresztény Női Felnőttképzési Egyesület (KNFE), the Association of Christian Women for Adult Education in Hungary. Many Hungarian women were able to improve their work in their professions, their families and society, thanks to the education developed by Sr. Ágota Baternay. Building on this experience the KNFE has conducted educational courses in Romania for Hungarian speaking women and supported the foundation of a Romanian Women's Organisation.

Central to her vocation for Sr. Ágota Baternay was the education and empowerment of women who, thanks to their strengthened self-esteem and rooted in their faith, commit themselves to the creation of a just and socially equitable society. We are grateful to Ágota Baternay for her vision and her commitment for the position of women in Church and Society. May she rest in peace.

Claire Renggli

