

NEWS from the

## ECUMENICAL FRATERNITY

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### Dear Friends,

Recent months provided several opportunities to make the Fraternity's work better known abroad. During July 12-16 our Treasurer, Sr Carmen Farrugia, represented us at the consultation of the International Council of Christians and Jews in Eisenach, in the former East Germany. It was an apt site for the major issue: How can Jews and Christians cooperate in the new Europe? She reports that workshops on "Possible Elements of a Common Religious Basis" were especially lively.

Earlier our Executive Secretary was at Loyola University during June 23-July 18 as a MacArthur Foundation Visiting Peace Scholar, thanks to Prof. C.F. Jegen, B.V.M. She lectured on "Christians in the Crossfire: Partisans and Peacemakers in the Arab-Israeli Conflict", "Ecumenism and Jewish-Christian Dialogue in Israel" and "Theological and Archaeological Developments in Israel" (this at Valparaiso University).

During September 3-6 the Executive Secretary was invited to address the Sixth Israel Conference of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christen für Israel in Germany on "Anti-Judaism Today" and "The Significance of Israel for Christians". Other speakers included Rabbi Prof. N.P. Levinson on "What Jews and Christians Share and What Divides Them". Our thanks go to the organisers of the conference and to the Wilms family of Munich.

The most important journey during these months, however, was when our President headed the Catholic side at the meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee at Baltimore in May. For the first time, both sides called for normalisation of relations between the Holy See and Israel.

It anticipated the decision of Israel and the Vatican on July 29 to set up a joint committee to discuss normalisation. Its meetings will start at the Ratisbonne Center in Jerusalem, which is also directed by our President.



## Study Programme

Our studies on the theme "Holiness (Kedushah) in Jewish and Christian Tradition" continued on March 26, when **Prof Maurice Gilbert, SJ** of the Pontifical Biblical Institute spoke on "The Holy One of Israel in the Book of Isaiah". He emphasised that the "Holy One of Israel" is the transcendent and the near One, who sanctified with His holiness His people, His land and His city, but also the One to whom "you have haughtily lifted up your eyes" (Isaiah 37:23).

On April 30 **Prof Elizabeth Revel Neher** of the Hebrew University gave a lecture on "The Representation of the Holy Place in the Christian and Jewish Art of the Middle Ages". Using slides she showed us how many themes connected with the Jerusalem Temple passed from Jewish to Christian art. The Christian contribution consisted in combining these themes into a systematic representation.

A small study group of Fraternity members met on May 1 to examine "The Reception of the Jewishness of Jesus in Modern Christologies". The discussions were so fruitful that the same theme was chosen for the **Annual Retreat Weekend** of the Fraternity. It took place at the house of our old friends, the St Joseph Sisters of Kiryat Yearim (cf. 1 Samuel 6:21 ff.), on May 30-31. In addition **Dr Kirsten Pedersen** spoke on "The Traditional Exegesis of the Psalms in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church". This was the thesis for which she recently received a doctorate from the Hebrew University. We are happy to hear that a publisher has been found for this important pioneering study.

The Fraternity also sponsored, together with the Ratisbonne Center and the Department for Comparative Religion of the Hebrew University, a morning of study on March 27. A lecture by **Prof Jacques Briand** (in

French) on "The Rupture between Rehoboam and the Tribes in 1 Kings 12" was followed by a response by **Prof Alexander Rofé**. The proceedings were ably chaired by **Dr Marcel Sigriste** of the Ecole Biblique.

At the **Annual General Meeting** of the Fraternity, held on May 29, it was decided that our subject of study for the academic year 1992-93 would be "Jewish and Christian Principles of Religious Pluralism". Among other decisions **Sr Carmen Farrugia** was reelected Treasurer and **Dr Kirsten Pedersen** was reelected to the Steering Committee.

## Reception in Honour of David Flusser

Our last newsletter (February 1992) announced the forthcoming publication of *The New Testament and Christian-Jewish Dialogue: Studies in Honor of David Flusser* (as no. 24/25 in our series *Immanuel*). This volume of over 300 pages has proved extremely popular; besides our regular subscriptions a considerable number of extra copies have been sold through bookshops and to visitors.

As a further expression of our appreciation for **David Flusser**, Emeritus Professor for Early Christianity and the Judaism of the Second Temple Period at the Hebrew University - and a frequent contributor to *Immanuel* - the Fraternity organised a reception in his honour on October 20. Well over 100 Fraternity members and other friends and colleagues of **Prof Flusser** came to celebrate this joyful occasion. They included representatives of Mayor **Teddy Kollek**, the Northelbian Church and the Dutch Reformed Churches, which together with the *Evangelisches Missionswerk* (Hamburg) had helped to



Switzerland, two groups from Berlin (Pastors Perkiewicz and Spier), groups from Aachen, Hamelin (Frau Bruns), Munich, the Protestant Academy of Iserlohn (Pastor Schmitt) and Halle. Another group was led by Pastor Kastig. Individual visitors included Judith Banki, Deputy Director for Jewish-Christian Relations of the American Jewish Committee, and Superintendent Gerbeit of Neukölln, Berlin. Our Executive Secretary also participated in a panel consulted by Bishop Dr Klaus Engelhardt, Presiding Bishop of the German Protestant Churches (EKD).

In May Propst Jörgen Sontag brought a study and pilgrim group from the Northelbian Church and Jean Carter Holmes brought an American group. Dr G. Raymond Carlson, General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God, led a delegation to investigate the possibilities for study seminars in Israel.

Paul Mendel led a group sponsored by the Council of Christians and Jews in Britain in June. There was also a group from the Northelbian Church led by Rev Ingrid Homann and an executive delegation from the Episcopal Diocese of Washington. Despite absences during the summer break, we were also able to see an interfaith group from Chicago (John Levine) in July and a group from the U.S. Council of Jewish Federations in September.

Also in June, a most stimulating symposium was organised in Jerusalem by Prof James Charlesworth of Princeton Theological Seminary on "Hillel and Jesus: Jewish Leaders in the Land before 70". At the first working session, Prof Charlesworth invited our Executive Secretary to recount how the dream of such a symposium was born during an earlier visit by him to the offices of the Fraternity. He deserves many congratulations for the immense effort required to turn the dream into the reality of Jewish and Christian

scholars from Israel and abroad meeting to discuss one another's contributions to this theme, which are due to be published as a book.

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The Jewish festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles) is always an especially joyful time in Jerusalem, as Jewish families build little tabernacles on their balconies or in their gardens. Here they eat and even sleep, recalling the situation of the Israelites in the desert. This year it was the occasion for us to organise a study seminar during October 12-21 for pastors from the Northelbian Church (led by Propst Sontag and Rev Homann) on "The Festival of Tabernacles as the Time for Our Joy" (a quotation from one of the prayers used in this season).

Studies were led by Prof Dr Chana Safrai, well known as a teacher in the Netherlands as well as Jerusalem. They covered rabbinic exegesis of what the Bible says about the festival, how the festival was celebrated in the time of Jesus and is celebrated today, and the theological hints suggested by the way in which the tabernacles are built and lived in.

All these aspects were brought to life not only by having such a stimulating teacher but also by participation in the ongoing festivities. This included a meal in a tabernacle hosted by Rabbi Schalom Ben-Chorin as well as visits to synagogue services. So, besides the theoretical studies, we saw how the joy of fulfilling God's commands can be both a Christian and a Jewish experience.

Yours Fraternally,

Rev Petra Heldt (Executive Secretary)