

ECUMENICAL Theological Research FRATERNITY in Israel

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President: Prof. Fr. Marcel Dubois OP | Executive Secretary: Rev. Petra Heldt

NEWSLETTER NO. 22 March 2001

Dear Friends,

In these days in Jerusalem we pray with much longing: *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, it is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!* (Psalms 133). May we share with you some "dew of Hermon" from the mountains of Jerusalem:

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

"To Cure the Wounds that Divide Us" Lecture Series 2000/2001

In the wake of the epoch-making joint Lutheran-Catholic Declaration on the centuries-old dispute regarding the "justification by faith", **Rudolf Pesch**, Professor Emeritus of the Albert-Ludwigs-University in Freiburg and **Knud Jeppesen**, Professor for Old Testament at the University of Aarhus, met on February 22 at the Fraternity for an evening discussion on that topic. The sharp wit and insights of both scholars led us to look into the common roots in the first Christian communities.

March 22: **Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen-Pedersen** challenged us with "Women in the Eastern Churches". Her presentation included an overview of the Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian and Syrian traditional and current position of women in the Church. An active member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for over 4 decades, Sr. Abraham has lectured on this topic world-wide and composed literally hundreds of articles in her areas of expertise which includes the making of icons. The publications are available for your reference at the Fraternity offices!

The Flusser Symposium

It is a pleasure to invite you to the international David Flusser Symposium on May 23-24, 2001. The opening reception and lecture will be held at *Tantur* on the evening of Wednesday May 23 and

the next day we will be hosted by *Ratisbonne* for this special series. May we clarify that the gift towards this Symposium, mentioned in the last Newsletter from The Sisters of Zion/Beit Ruth was actually from **The Mediterranean Province of the Sisters of Zion**.

Special Lectures

Members of the Fraternity were involved in the following special lectures:

*Feb. 8, **Rev. Dr. John Pawlikowski**, "Continuing Theological Challenges for Jews and Christians" at the *Tantur Ecumenical Institute*.

*Feb. 18, **Dr. Stephen Need**, *King's College*, "Elements of Prophecy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam", at *St. George's College*.

*Feb. 28, **Sr. Dr. Mary Boys NDS**, "Has God only one blessing- Judaism as a source of Christian self-understanding" at the ICCI headquarters.

*March 19, **Prof. Arij A. Roest Crollius SJ**, *Gregorianum*, "How do Christians deal with Pluralism: Some Jesuit Responses", at the Hebrew University.

*March 26-28, "From Hellenistic Judaism to Christian Hellenism", International Colloquium at the Hebrew University.

CHARITABLE SERVICES

It is with sadness that we report the death of **Mr. Ghassan Ajzkeh**, architect of the *Mar Efrem* Syrian Orthodox School of Bethlehem, on March 23. Ghassan was an expert in his field, well-respected by his fellow colleagues and much-appreciated by his community.

The *Mar Efrem School* continues to enjoy the blessing and support of our constituents world-wide: Generous contributions have been received from *Kindermissionswerk* in Aachen, Germany - towards furnishings. *The Sisters of Grandchamp* here in Jerusalem have likewise taken to heart the *Mar Efrem* school; one of the Sisters bravely delivered their gift to our office, on one of the coldest and windiest days of this winter! **Our friends in Coventry** remain actively-engaged in

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fund-raising for this Millennium project. Without you (pl.) there would be no school!

Teamwork (UK) has responded to the acute need of the Coptic Orthodox Christians in Jerusalem, providing support for the Coptic Church' school in the Old City of Jerusalem. It is a joy and a blessing for the *Fraternity* to communicate your gift to this institution devoted to providing a Christian education, in the very heart of Jerusalem!

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Jerusalem 2001 Conference

Organized by the *Sisterhood of Mary*, this event will be an eminent forum of reconciliation between Jews & Christians, April 18-20. You are invited in spirit and presence! For further details: beth-avr@internet-zahav.net.

DIPLOMATIC FUNCTIONS

Mr. Ariel Kenet, the Director of the Department of Religions, Religious Movements and Communities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel will retire in September. The work will be continued by **Mr. Gadi Golan**.

Our long-standing friend and colleague, **Rabbi David Rosen**, Director of the *Anti-Defamation League (ADL)* Israel office for the past 4 years, has been appointed to a position of premier leadership of international faith relations with the *American Jewish Committee (AJC)*. We extend to you our warm congratulations and blessings!

FRATERNITY COMMUNITY NEWS

New Melkite Patriarch

Archbishop Lutfi Laham was Patriarchal Vicar of Jerusalem for almost 20 years! He has now been elected Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, of Alexandria and of Jerusalem. Congratulations to the new Patriarch **Gregorios III** in his new position!

New Syrian Catholic Patriarch

H.E. Monsignor Gregoire Pierre Abdel Ahad, long-time friend of the Jerusalem community, was elected to be the Syrian Catholic Patriarch and was warmly welcomed by **Mar Severios**, Archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox Church, with a special liturgy in Syriac. As Patriarch, Monsignor Abdel Ahad took the name of **Ignace Boutros VIII**.

St. John of the Desert Monastery

The Fraternity members have fond memories of rich days of retreat with the Melkite Priests of St. John's. The recent development in which the Custody of the Holy Land is again in charge of the picturesque mountainside has placed the Melkite community in temporary homes in the Old City.

Student Christian Forum

Vicka Mortensen, gave a presentation on the Russian Orthodox Church, on March 5. In view of Vicka's new baby girl born on April 1 (*congratulations!!*) **Natalie Posti**, the Fraternity Office Assistant will be joining **Sr. Abraham** in coordinating the *SCF*.

Birthdays

Hearty birthday congratulations to three pillars of the Fraternity: **Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen-P**, and to our nonogenarians **Fr. Marcel Dubois** & **Fr. Bargil Pixner!** *Thank you* for being shining examples of the Christian life and faith in the Holy Land.

Visitors

We welcomed with joy: Former President of the Fraternity, **Dr. Wesley Brown** from Prague; our new Member Abroad, **DomPastor Wolfgang Grusnick** and his wife **Renata** from Luebeck and a group of students from the University of Hamburg with **Michaela Will**, our former intern of the Northelbian Church.

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Gone Before Us

Mother Basilea Schlink, foundress of the *Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary* of Darmstadt Germany, a voice calling for repentance after the Shoa has "gone home" on March 21, 2001 at the age of 96. Her legacy continues prominently in the forthcoming April conference (see above).

NEW BOOKS

Books recently received by the Fraternity

Thanks to **Fr. Michael McGarry**, Rector of the *Tantur Ecumenical Institute*, for his kind gift of 15 valuable books for our library! Furthermore:

~The biography of Rudolf Hoess, a Commander from Auschwitz, compiled by **Manfred Deselaers**, *Und Sie hatten nie Gewissensbisse?* (1996) Dr. Deselaers is the Director of the Auschwitz Centre for Dialogue.

~*The Spiritual Traveler: England, Scotland, Wales* (2000). An ecumenical guide to holy sites and pilgrim routes in the UK.

~*I am Jerusalem* (2000) by **Dr. John N. Tleel**. An intimate look into the wide-faceted Jerusalem throughout the past decades. (\$20 at the office).

From "the mountains of Jerusalem" to all of you a blessed Passover Season,

Rev. Petra Heldt, Executive Secretary