

News from the

ECUMENICAL FRATERNITY

NEWSLETTER NO. 13

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Dear Friends,

As our Fraternity entered its thirtieth year, its work enjoyed recognition on the highest level both locally and internationally. Locally, we were honoured by our first ever lecture from the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Mgr. Michel Sabbah.

The subject of his lecture was "Ecumenism Today in the Holy Land". He surveyed two dimensions of ecumenism here: the relationship between the various Christian churches and that between Christians, Jews and Muslims.

The Latin church embraces equally both Roman Catholics from abroad and locally born Arab believers. His Beatitude noted that the latter live in two contexts. Their theological context is Jewish, since the roots of their faith lie in Judaism. But their cultural context is Muslim because of the influence of Islam on the Arabic language. Therefore introductions to both religions are now available in the seminaries of his church.

Internationally, we were privileged to host the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I. He graciously agreed to preside over the official launching of the latest issue (No. 26/27) in our series *Immanuel*, entitled *Orthodox Christians and Jews on Continuity and Renewal*.

The 255-page volume includes the papers and edited discussions of the most recent meeting of leading scholars and clerics of the two faiths. The meeting was held in Athens and chaired by Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland and Dr Gerhart Riegner of the World Jewish Congress. It had opened with a message of welcome from the Ecumenical Patriarch.

In his address to us, His All Holiness noted the special significance of the name *Immanuel*, which means "God with us" in Hebrew. Truly God is with us, he emphasised, on an occasion when so many Jews and Christians come together to testify to their faith in the One God whom both worship.

Study Programme

Our programme for 1994/95 on "Redeeming Creation" continued on February 23 when **Rev Bruno Hussar** discussed "The Whole Creation Groaning in the Expectation of Redemption" (Romans 8). The same Word of God brings redemption to all, but whereas Christians know the Incarnate Word in the person of Jesus, Jews pursue it in their devotion to Torah study.

On March 23, the Fraternity staged a surprise party for the seventy-fifth birthday of **Rev Prof Marcel Dubois**. After Choral Thanksgiving, Cutting the Cake and various encomiums, the **Latin Patriarch** delivered a lecture honouring the lifelong contribution of Marcel Dubois to biblical ecumenism (details on front page).

Prof Dubois himself took up the theme of "*Redimentes tempus* (Ephesians 5:16)" on April 27. He described the history of salvation as a Christian experience of the three aspects of time. In the Eucharist, as in the Jewish celebration of Passover, a past memory and a future hope meet in a present reality.

The launching of *Immanuel* 26/27, with an address by the **Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople** (details on front page), took place on May 11. **Dr Gerhart Riegner** explained the significance of the volume and read a message of greeting from **Metropolitan Damaskinos**. Other speakers were **Prof Dubois**, **Dr Geoffrey Wigoder** and former Jerusalem Mayor **Teddy Kollek**. The editor, **Malcolm Lowe**, expressed his thanks to the Christian Orthodox and Jewish communities of Jerusalem; he could not have edited the book without having learnt so much from both of them during twenty-five years. He then presented His All Holiness with a special leather-bound copy of the book.

Amongst over two hundred Jewish and Christian guests, the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem was represented by **Metropolitan Timothy**. We are grateful to the many people, including Patriarchal Deacon Tarasios and Miss Sophie, who helped to make possible this historic moment in the development of Christian-Jewish dialogue both in Jerusalem and world-wide.

At the **Annual General Meeting** on May 25, Rev Nicolaus Egender, recently retired Abbot of the Dormition Monastery, was elected President of the Fraternity and Rev Petra Heldt was re-elected Executive Secretary, both for two years. The outgoing President, Rev Bill Broughton, accepted the proposal to give him the new post of Vice-President. Rev Anoushavan Zeghtchanian of the Armenian Patriarchate was elected to the Steering Committee, and Br Pierre Lenhardt was re-elected, as Rev Ermanno Garbi stood down after several years of devoted service. We also bid a grateful farewell to Rev Rien van der Vegt; Mr Bob Mullins was chosen to take his place in organising our Student Christian Forum.

Early the next morning, the Fraternity set out on its **Annual Retreat**. We began in the Jordan valley at the caves where Gerasimus tamed a lion through his saintly courage. After enjoying hospitality at the nearby monastery that commemorates him, we continued to the excavations at the former monastery of St Euthemius. Lunch with the Benedictine sisters on the Mount of Olives was followed with a visit to the newly established prayer garden; here a plaque commemorates Archbishop George Appleton, who was one of the founders of our Fraternity.

That vivid contact with ancient and modern mentors continued to refresh us as we began the new academic year on October 26. As our new President, **Rev Nicolaus Egender** introduced our theme for

1995/96: "Jerusalem in Jewish and Christian Liturgy and Thought". He spoke on "Jerusalem — Mother of Liturgy", giving examples of how the early liturgical practice of Jerusalem had spread to various churches elsewhere.

The Director of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, **Rabbi Dr Gershon Metzger**, presented "Jerusalem in Jewish Prayer and Practice" on November 30. After listing the many times that Orthodox Jews invoke Jerusalem in daily and festive prayer, he turned to the practical result: he had been born into a family that returned to Jerusalem from exile.

The Fraternity's **Traditional Christmas Dinner** was held on December 17. Under the guidance of Canon Bill, this has become a blessing for Christian students who would otherwise have no Christmas celebration. The old and the young shared the spirit of Advent together with stories, poems and hymns.

"Jerusalem in the Tradition of the Apostolic Church of the East" was the topic of **Rt Rev Jacob Barclay, Bishop of Sion**, on December 21. Although textbooks in the West still falsely call his church "Nestorian", he explained that it was always completely orthodox and rejected so-called "Nestorian" teachings from the start. The meeting turned into a "Pan-Aramaic" summit conference, since it was attended by the leadership of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem and by representatives of the Syro-Malabar churches in Kerala, India.

Ecumenical Guide

Rev J. Robert Wright, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at New York's General Theological Seminary, has chosen the Fraternity as the publisher of his innovative study *The Holy Sepulchre: The Church of the*

Resurrection — An Ecumenical Guide. In both the history of the church and the description of its individual parts, he takes equal account of the involvements of all the branches of Christendom, whether Eastern or Western or even Protestant. We trust that this will start a new fashion — an ecumenical attitude — to Christian sites in the Holy Land.

On the practical side, the guide is set in a type that is clearly legible even in the light of the oil lamps that provide the only illumination in some corners of the church! It will cost NIS 10 at our office. For purchasers elsewhere, the price (including postage by surface mail) is: US\$5, £3, FF 25, DM 7 or Fl 8 (payments by cheque should be made only on a bank account in the US, UK, France, Germany or the Netherlands respectively). The price is reduced by 20% for orders of 10+ copies and by 30% for 20+ copies.

Note: *Immanuel* 26/27 (described above) costs NIS 60 at our office; otherwise US\$27, £17, FF 140, DM 40 or Fl 45. Send all orders to: Ecumenical Fraternity, P. O. Box 249, 91002 Jerusalem, Israel.

Visitors

Another selection from our many visitors may make it seem that our own office, in its way, is becoming a site of pilgrimage. During last February, the visit of Rev Prof Wright started a fruitful collaboration (see above); there also came the President of the United Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD), Rev Sharbau. Studies were arranged for Christian students from Norway and rabbinical students from the US.

In March, the Fraternity organised a week-long seminar for the students of Martin Reichenbach from Saxony and a public lecture in which Rabbi Plotkin of Arizona

recounted his personal experience of "The Life and Religious Philosophy of Abraham Joshua Heschel". There also came Rev Stäcker of Hamburg, former Bishop of Stockholm (and Harvard professor) Krister Stendahl, Rabbi Schaalmann of Chicago, who introduced officers of the Fraternity to the delegation of Cardinal Bernadin, a teachers' group from Northrhine-Westphalia and Christian delegates from Greece.

A representative of the Norwegian Council of Churches came in April, as did a group led by Eva Vöhringer of Swabia. Two old friends came in May: Pastor Hermann Keller of Hamburg and Rev Ingrid Homann of the Northelbian Church. The latter brought a delegation from Lübeck Cathedral, which the Fraternity accompanied throughout its visit, out of which an ongoing co-operation has emerged. June brought us delegations from Akzion Sühnezeichen and from the Centre for Political Education of the Federal German Administration.

In August, Dean Seijin Koh of the Institute of Holy Land Studies brought a group of Korean Christians. We also met Dr Luyckx, responsible for interreligious relations at the European Commission, and Christian Cebulj of Dresden University. In September, it was the turn of church groups from Berlin, led by Rev and Mrs Spier, and from the Rheinland, as well as Christian theology students from the US.

A flood of visitors began in October: Sr Ibolya Glancz, Pastor Keller again, Mrs Niemann's group, which received a lecture on "Christian-Jewish Tolerance", Propst Sontag's group from Northelbia, and a group led by Pastors Bartels and Pollin, including members of the EMW of Hamburg. We are deeply grateful to the Northelbian Church and the EMW for their long support. There were also groups of Protestant curates from Breklum in Schleswig-Holstein and from the Church of Hanover; the curates of "Studium

in Israel" received an "Introduction to the Jewish-Christian Dialogue in Israel".

In November, we hosted the first delegation of women priests from the Church of England, met Rev Horten of the Interfaith Museum of Arizona, and lectured to B'nai B'rith Israel on "Jerusalem from a Christian Perspective".

A lecture to the First Mediterranean Cultural Conference in Tiberias took place in December, in the presence of delegates from Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. We also saw Pastor Hanna Lehmig, Director of Studies at the Protestant Academy of Hamburg, and Rev Andrew White, President of the Young Leadership of the ICCJ.

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During August 20-24 in Amman, the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies held an international workshop on "Christian Perceptions of Islam, Muslim Perceptions of Christianity: The Historical Record" under the patronage of Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal. Our Executive Secretary was one of the three official guests from Israel.

Besides its commitment to studying the difficult issues in an open and honest academic manner, the Royal Institute displayed the traditional Hashemite hospitality. Much amusement was expressed over "bringing Petra to Petra". Then it was learnt that our Executive Secretary had praised Prince Hassan's work for interreligious understanding in her article in *Immanuel* 26/27. So a ceremony was organised in which she officially presented the book to him. The Fraternity later received a royal letter and photograph as a permanent memento.

Yours Fraternally,

Rev Petra Heldt (Executive Secretary)