

REPORT ON THE EUROPEAN GATHERING AND PILGRIMAGE IN POLAND, SEPTEMBER '02

EUROPE SINGS A NEW SONG

Kees Slijkerman

About 640 leaders and intercessors from 22 European countries met in Czestochowa, Poland, to experience a strong unity in the Spirit and to listen together to the Lord. As a journalist wrote: 'Brussels may keep fences high between the European countries in the East and in the West, but in Czestochowa last week there was a visible unity of the Continent'.

The theme was: *Europe, put into the deep*, and we surely did. It was the first European ICCRS-conference of leaders and intercessors and it became an impressive and encouraging gathering with a clear message to work with in the coming years.

'Know that you (CCR) are a gift to the Church and know your **identity** in Christ as it is written in Ephesians 1:1-14', was the first message, delivered by Bishop Joe Grech from Australia.

'Use the gift of **tongues in intercession**', said Kim Kollins, 'the Renewal up till now was only the beginning'. The new emphasis on intercession in this time is to prepare a new phase in the renewal of the Church. She challenged the National leaders to organise all over Europe special intercession-meetings between the Feasts of Assumption and Pentecost, if possible day and night or at least eight hours a day.

"We have to face the **historical divisions** of the Church in Europe so that we can overcome them - the division between the Orthodox and Latin part and the divisions in the West after the Reformation," said Bishop Dembowski from Poland. "The Slavonic people in central Europe (including people in Poland, Russia and Ukraine) can become a bridge between West and East," continued the Bishop.

While visiting the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz - symbol of all evil, it became clear why our daily prayer during the Congress began with a new song, *'Lord we confess the sins of our continent'*. We have to face the incredible terrible things that happened on our continent during the wars in the 20th century.



The Lord has mercy for all, so be **merciful for all**. That was the thing we could learn on the same day in Krakow-Lagiewniki, where we met in the new basilica of the Divine Mercy (photo), recently blessed by pope John Paul II. 'If we keep anger in our hearts, we feel like a cactus', said Fr. Grefkowicz from Poland in his teaching on healing and reconciliation. In the Eucharist we experienced reconciliation and forgiveness while we offered our anger and hard feelings on a piece of paper.

On the last full day we went into the deep of **our mission in society and Church**.



The capitalism that is dominating the world since the Nineties causes victims and is in crisis. But in the culture of the economy we can renew our world with new enterprises led by the principles of the gospel. Leo Andringa from the Focolare-movement gave a strong testimony of that.

'If the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is not ecumenical, it is not a renewal at all', said Matteo Calisi quoting Cardinal Suenens. 'The contribution of the Christians to the unity of Europe depends on the unity between themselves', Calisi continued. He mentioned the hopeful and unexpected fact that nowadays 600.000.000 Christians all over the world have experienced the baptism in the Spirit. The Lord has a purpose with that. He is praying: 'that all may be one'.

During the conference we daily sang to the Holy Spirit: *'You entered the hearts of so many faithful. Lead us to unity, give Europe new life.'* Calisi challenged us to bring new life in the official ecumenical activities of our churches.

'If we don't use the charisms in evangelisation, they instead can become a burden', said Nikol Baldacchino, 'The only tool for evangelisation is: people. Jesus is counting on you.'

We were encouraged by the words of bishop Jo Grech: 'there is one way to evangelise: doing it'. 'We need strong Spirit-filled leaders who take the first step and who take the risk. And whatever you do to evangelise: let there be always space for people to come closer to Jesus'.

As one European family we sang daily: *'our co-operation will glorify His Name'*. A lot of things have to be done to realise this. We came to know each other. We created a network of prayer for each other. The European ICCRS-subcommittee wants to keep in touch as much as possible with the CCR in Europe by an English e-mail Info-Letter (Eucril) that can freely be received by

those who sent their e-mail address to the European secretary: kees@stucom.nl

In March 2003 the European committee will meet with national representatives in Budapest to find out **the Lord's plan for the CCR-Europe** in the coming years. Pray for us. And pray for our brothers and sisters in Belarus and the Ukraine, who still suffer persecution from neo-communist governments. One of them gave a touching testimony of that.

The last words in the final Eucharist were this prayer, sang by all: *'Take us and teach us with your Word and your Spirit. And send us together, our future is Yours'.**



This article is written by Kees Slijkerman for the world wide ICCRS-Newsletter, which is in English, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian and French - with thanks to Nikol Baldacchino, who made good English of it. If you are not receiving the ICCRS-Newsletter - including good teachings and news from all continents - we invite you to subscribe and to support ICCRS also financially. Mail to newsletter@iccrs.org or go to **News & Newsletter** on <http://www.iccrs.org>.

*You can hear the song [Prayers for Europe](http://www.stucom.nl/pub/0110/0110.htm) and read the text in different languages at <http://www.stucom.nl/pub/0110/0110.htm>.

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