



EU-CHARIS-INFO-LETTER NO 5

# EUROPEAN CHARIS CONTINENTAL SERVICE OF COMMUNION

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June 21th, 2022

**In this issue:** During an online meeting of the CHARIS European Service of Communion last April 2022, strong testimonies were given, also on ecumenism, one of the three main goals of CHARIS. It reminded me of ecumenism 40 years ago: Pentecost 1982, a historic European ecumenical charismatic conference took place in Strasbourg, with twenty thousand participants from nearly all countries of Europe.

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**CHARIS**

In the final meeting in Strasbourg also thousands of other people from the region participated. Kim Kollins, who served the Renewal in Europe for many years\*, suggested me to observe this anniversary as a moment to reflect on our ecumenical calling and to tell a new generation about it.

In the years after the huge happening in 1982, Catholic charismatics experienced the move 'to the heart of the church', with also new communities that embraced the renewal, but without the ecumenical calling.

In 2014 out of the heart of the church we were reminded again to our ecumenical calling. Pope Francis reminded us that the Catholic charismatic renewal is "born ecumenically".

We have an important duty to work for unity among Christians. It's a new area for many Catholic charismatics, but very important to explore and practice if we don't want to miss God's goal with us. CHARIS will help us in this calling.

## ILLUSTRATIVE TESTIMONY APRIL 2022

In the CHARIS European Service of Communion online meeting on 2 April of this year, we heard a testimony on ecumenism by Adam Strojny, a Polish priest who grew up in a Catholic family. Many Catholic charismatics will recognise the different stages he went through to finally really open his heart for other Christians. Adam went to a priest seminary, where he received a short introduction lesson about ecumenism, “but at that moment I saw an ecumenical calling as an obstacle to me. And I had no possibility to meet other Christians. Actually, I thought that every Christian had to become Catholic.” Adam went to a priest seminary, where he received a short introduction lesson about ecumenism, “but at that moment I saw an ecumenical calling as an obstacle to me. And I had no possibility to meet other Christians. Actually, I thought that every Christian had to become Catholic.”

### ECUMENICAL CONVERSION

But then his bishop sent him to a pontifical University in Rome to study ecclesiology. And for the lectures he had to be mainly in the ecumenical faculty. “I had to study our Catholic theology after Vatican II, including many arguments for ecumenism.” It meant an intellectual development, but also his heart changed. Jesus’ prayer for unity in John 17 convinced him of the fact that our divisions are obstacles for evangelisation. He had to lay down his fear for ecumenism and the pride of ‘we do not need others’. He began to see that real Catholicism pushes us to meet others. Now he is helping to develop ‘ecumenical sensibility’. “What unites us is much more important, than the differences”, like also Pope John Paul II underlined.



## **BAD EXPERIENCES TO TACKLE**

In Poland are also bad experiences to tackle, for example in relation with new charismatic churches, composed of former Catholics, including former leaders of Catholic charismatic renewal. Recently an ecumenical conference of three days took place in Lodz, with leaders from different churches. They took time to listen to each other. And a number of Catholic Bishops and former Catholic leaders washed the feet of each other. This opened various doors.

During the online meeting also was said: those who are not very sure about their own church-identity, are not the best representatives in a ecumenical dialogue. Another challenge are young people who say 'I am just Christian' and are not interested to overcome differences between churches.

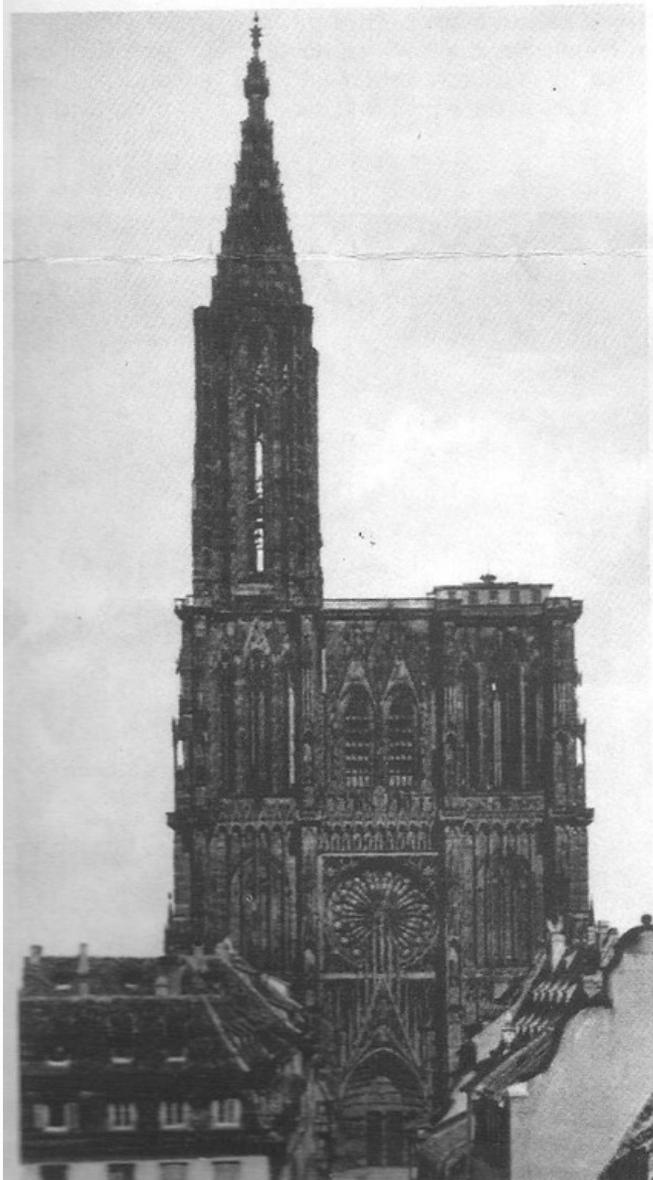
## **ECUMENISM WITH MESSIANIC JEWS**

I was a participant in Strasbourg 1982 and I remember that at one moment in the central programme a messianic Jew was presented, who believes that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel. I remember his name, Ari Ben Israel, and the feeling of excitement. He was not the only messianic Jew in Strasbourg. Over the years, there has been step-by-step good progress in the ecumenical relations with messianic Jews, with a crucial role for Catholic charismatics, because of their intercessory prayer, ability to pray in own words, to pray for healing of memories, to praise the Lord, and to be open for revelations by the Holy Spirit.



Gesprächsbrocken aus einer Unterhaltung, die bei aller Behinderung durch sprachliche Grenzen - keiner von beherrschte beide Sprachen; wir verständigten uns mit einem Gemisch aus französischen und deutschen Satzteilen, nahmen Gesten und Mimik zu Hilfe und wiesen auf Textstellen in unserem Kongreßheft hin, das dreisprachig abgefaßt ist - und trotz konfessioneller Unterschiede doch etwas von der Gemeinschaft im Geist Gottes offenbar machte, von der diese Tage geprägt waren. Ein Gespräch unter tausenden von Gesprächen, die nicht nur in diesen zehn Minuten im Racing-Stadion zustande kamen, sondern die auch sonst überall am Rande des Kongresses stattfanden.

Neben der "Gemeinschaft im Geist", die besonders auch in den vormittäglichen und abendlichen Großveranstaltungen spürbar wurde, gab es auch die Erfahrung des "Getrenntseins im Leib". Am Samstag und Sonntag feierten katholische und evangelische Christen am Nachmittag die Hl. Eucharistie bzw. das Abendmahl auf dem Ausstellungsgelände Wacken, wo der Kongreß tagte, je für sich. Das entsprach der Überzeugung, die bei fast allen Hauptrednern durchklang: Es geht bei der charismatischen Erneuerung nicht um eine neue "Geist-Kirche", die über oder neben den verschiedenen bestehenden christlichen Kirchen und ihren Gemeinden existieren würde. Es geht um die Erneuerung eben dieser Kirchen und ihrer Gemeinden. Der Hl. Geist bringt keine neuen Spaltungen. Durch die charismatische Erneuerung will er persönliche Glaubensvertiefung, Umkehr und eine Evangelisierung in das Herz der Kirchen und der Gemeinden hinein bewirken. In der Linie einer solchen Bewegung kann die Wiedervereinigung der noch getrennten christlichen

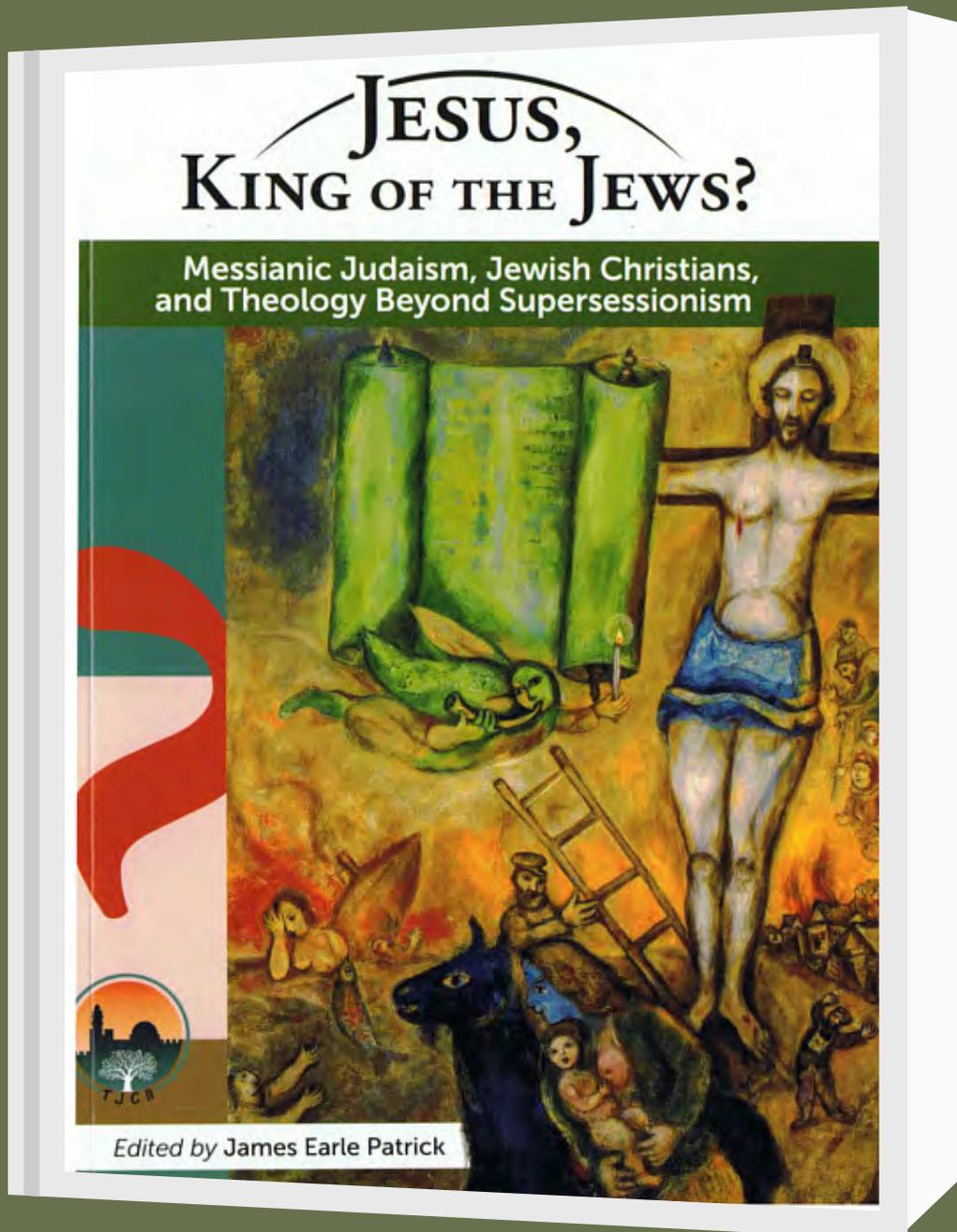




To prepare this conference the popular booklet *Jesus, King of the Jews? Messianic Judaism, Jewish Christians, and Theology beyond Supersessionism*, is published and translated in many European languages.

Cardinal Schönborn in his foreword: "This book is evidence that the Lord is at work today by His Holy Spirit, building His Church and to restoring to it what was lost, so long." See:

<https://www.tjcii.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Jesus-King-of-the-Jews-BACKCOVER.pdf>



In the Netherlands this booklet brought Christians from very different churches together in a online webinar, chaired by me, very well reported in different Christian newspapers.

# CHARIS CELEBRATES ECUMENISM

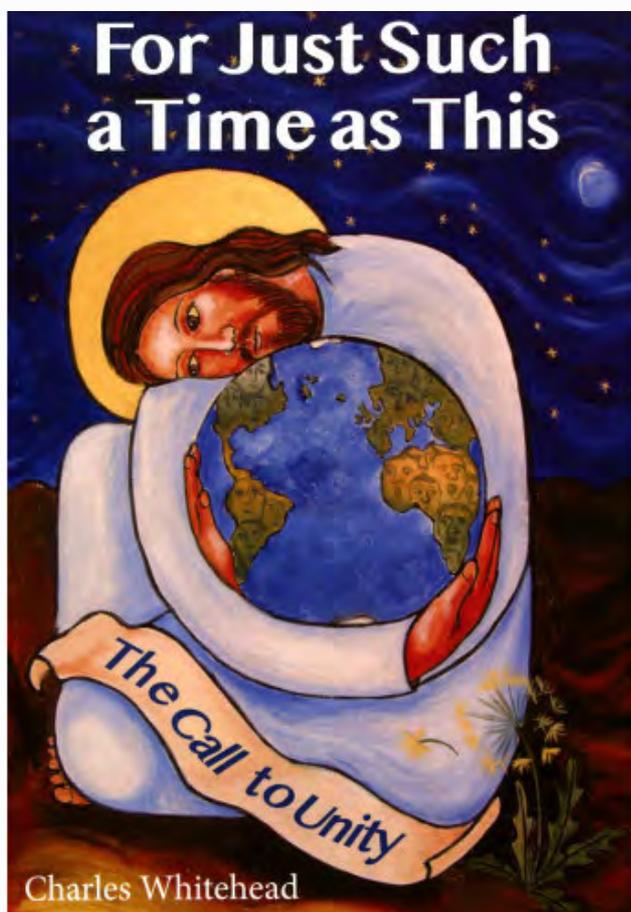
See on the YouTube channel of Charis the *Pentecost ecumenical vigils* 2022 and 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/c/CHARISInternational>

The presentation of *Charis and Christian Unity* by Fr Etienne Vetö: text only is 0459uk on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl); the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5jH0pYhJt4>

## LONG EUROPEAN STORY WITH ECUMENISM

In the renewal in Europe we have a long story with ecumenism as you can read in the *European Historical Overview, 1972-2002* by Kim Catherine-Marie Kollins on *The European Charismatic Consultation* 0468uk; and in her 0469uk *Our journey together - A Personal Journal - on Ecumenism and Charismatic Renewal in the first decade of the new millennium.*

## TEACHING AND STUDY NOW



In the excellent book *For Just Such a Time as This - the Call to Unity* (2021), written by Charles Whitehead, you can find the basic Catholic teaching on ecumenism and what Pope Francis is expecting from Catholic charismatic renewal.

Even more exciting in this book is Charles his ecumenical experience in his home town, with ongoing yearly evangelisation by the very different churches together.

One of the questions they had to tackle in the beginning was: what to do with persons who become interested in the gospel and want to join the church?

They decided: ask them about any connection with the Christian church in the past. If they are baptised as a child, the church that baptised is the first to help this person further on the way to the Lord and to a place in a Christian community. If there is no connection with any Christian church, the person who is in good contact with the new Christian should help him or her further. The book of Charles Whitehead can be ordered from

<https://goodnewsbooks.co.uk/our-catalogue/product/1855-for-a-time-as-this.html>.

The book *Ecumenism and Charismatic Renewal* (one of the Malines documents from Cardinal Suenens, highly recommended by Pope Francis) can be downloaded or ordered in different languages (English 0235uk, French 0235fr, Ukrainian, and others 0238uk and other languages and ordered in print from our bookstore in Rome:

<https://www.charis.international/en/bookstore/>.



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**CHARIS**

The text is approved by the coordinator of the European CHARIS service of Communion, Zoltan Vegh



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