

Report from the CHARIS European Assembly Meeting

Zembrzyce, Poland, 27-29.09.2024

The representations of the national Services of Communion met in Zembrzyce in Poland on 27-29 of September 2024. Each country could be represented by 4 persons: coordinate or delegate, community representative, youth representative and observer. The newly created Service of Communion for Scandinavian countries, CHARIS Nordic, was represented by 2 persons: Justyna Kadziewicz as coordinator delegate and community member and Ulrika Classon, as observer.

The meeting was led by the members of previous coordination team.



Motivation

At the beginning of the meeting we were all welcomed by Tony Laureys (Belgium). Tony reminded us of the role and purpose of CHARIS:

- We are family in Christ and we stand in the same current of grace. We are getting together in order to share the experience the Holy Spirit is leading us through. We want to share and support each other.
- We are called to broaden our perspective. Tony shared his own testimony about how working within CHARIS has enriched him through an experience of prayer, worship, discernment, level of commitment and a perspective that he did not know from his own community.
- Holy Fader asks CHARIS to accompany, guide and build communion between different charismatic realities born from the same current of grace.
- Pope's wish is that the whole church would have experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. He is serious about it and we need to follow. We need to serve the Holy Spirit, each other and the Church. We are a unique movement in the church, like a golf stream, we can embrace and move millions in the direction shown by the Spirit.
- We are called to build Communion in the whole Church including other churches and denominations. In order to achieve it, we need to be united within Catholic Church. It was emphasised that the unity happens at the speed of relationship. There is no unity where there is no relationship. We need to invest time and effort to create relationships, get to know each other in order to truly unite. If the Church is truly united it can impact the life of many
- Pope Francis is calling us to serve to the poor, this can mean share the gospel to people, intercede for them, teach them to pray and to read Bible as daily bread.

Summary of the last 3 years of the European Coordination Team.

Zoltan Vegh (Hungary) shared a short summary about the activities of the previous Coordination Team. The team consisted of 7 people that met twice a year for last 3 years. One meeting each year was held physically, otherwise the team met by online meeting. The main focus of the team was reaching out to the countries not having the Service of communion and help them establish one. Another challenge was the discernment of the role the Continental Service of Communion should have and in which way it could serve the National Services.

Zoltan underlined the importance of the balance in the team, both considering geographical representation, sex or calling (lay, priests, community or prayer groups).

This cooperation led to first common initiatives between realities of Hungary and Croatia i.e. the training in leadership and intercessory prayer for a group of young people from both countries.

The goal of the National Service of Communion should be:

- Openness to other realities present in our countries
- Reaching out to the other realities, prayer groups, communities and inviting them to build a communion
- Spreading the Culture of Pentecost, described in the Acts of Apostles, we need to read this book again and again in order to transform our lifestyle according to the way the apostles lived and served.



Even some problems or challenges were mentioned as common to many countries:

- Attitude towards renewal is not always friendly
- CHARIS is not known in the local church
- Pride, striving for independence, concurrence and need of ownership were mentioned as the attitudes breaking the unity and slowing down the process of unification in the church.

We need to pray and work hard for the unity!

The elections of the Continental Coordination Team

Saturday schedule was dominated by the elections of the new Continental Coordination Team interspersed with the moments of worship.

These elections were preceded by election of European Service of Communion Assembly that would later on have the right to vote for the coordination team.

The assembly consist of coordinators of the national service of Communion (or their delegates), 3 community representatives and 2 youth representatives. The 2 latter ones had to be elected first. The 3 representatives of communities were chosen by the present in the meeting community representatives (only 1 vote per community), as well as the 2 youth representatives were elected by the youth representatives on national level.

The voting was performed in several steps, in order to assure equal and complete representation of all realities present on our continent. On the picture there is a new Coordination Team, together with 2 Europe representatives in International CHARIS Coordination Team.



The day was finished by the intercessory prayer for the European Service of Communion, newly elected Coordination Team and then one by one for all parts of Europe. Under the prayer for Northern Europe we have received a prophetic image about the snow smelting and a spring coming to Scandinavia.

Youth

A separate session was dedicated to the role of youth in the renewal of church.

The pope is encouraging the Church to use the enthusiasm of the young people in a controlled and clever way. There is a need to already now build the new generation that would live in the promises that we receive for the church today. We should rather focus on daily accompaniment of the young people in their life of faith than on big events where they can have an experience of the living Jesus but will then not find guidance or an environment to grow. The pope is emphasising the role of the close individual relation with the young people, spiritual mentorship, guidance and brotherhood. We need to listen to young people, to give them time and hearts as this is this daily accompaniment that bear fruit.

We need to appreciate more in the church the fire and the engagement of the young people even if they are not fully equipped and will sometimes do mistake. We need to be with them even in these mistakes. Young people appreciate when we are authentic to them. They can discern and love the truth. They have this special favour of engagement and faithfulness to Gods calling which allows them to sign up for challenges without fully knowing their scope. They are passionate about partnership with God and so we can see the big fruits of the mentorship of the young people by more experienced church members.

In the discussion about youth related topics, F. Cristopher from Chemin Neuf Community emphasised that working with the youth we shall not forget to guide them first of all in the discernment of their life vocation (marriage, consecrated life or any specific calling)



Prayer groups

The other session on Sunday morning concerned the Commission of Prayer groups. This Commission consist of 7 people representing different continents. Enrico Berardo is representing Europe and coordinating the work of national representatives. Nordic Countries have not yet appointed a contact person for the Prayer group commission and are asked to do so as soon as possible.

Enrico explained that the first task of the commission was to get to know and summarise the information about the communities, their different charisms, state and needs. A good summary of this work is presented in his presentation that is following this report.

One of concerns for the prayer groups was that it is not seldom that the prayer groups are missing the charismatic dimension, due to lack of evangelisation (as charisms are given for evangelisation and will disappear if the evangelisation service is not present) or due to lack of formation and charismatic leadership.

The prayer groups are encouraged to take steps towards becoming a charismatic, living the faith, community.

Also lack of networking for the small communities was mentioned as a risk factor. Being small and staying alone is not a perfect situation. CHARIS can be this place where the networking can happen and the small groups can get help that will help them to grow. It is also very important that all groups get registered and have connection to the Church i.e. through parishes. Being recognised by the local church brings to the community or prayer group spiritual protection and blessing!

High average age of the prayer group members is a real challenge for many prayer groups. There is lack of enthusiasm so typical for young people. Steps should be taken to attract young people to the prayer groups, not only youth, but even children!

Last discussed point was the level of music service in the prayer groups. He stated and all agreed, that even if it is possible to have a prayer group without any music instrument, a music ministry of quality will increase the fruit of the prayer, as a plate is used for serving the meal, the music is a plate on which the Word is served...

Enrico finalised the session by presented a song composed by AI to his own text. It was in Italian and it was great! 😊

Coming Events

We have got information about 5 planned events organised next spring in ROME by CHARIS International. These are:

- WALKING TOGETHER TOWARDS UNITY 31.03-4.04.2025, ecumenical gathering of pastors and priest, 850 places are available and the registration should start very soon.
- INTERCESSION COURSE, 31.03-4.04.2025, 500 places
- ENCOUNTER OF PRAYER GROUPS, 04-06.04.2025
- 3RD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR CHARISMATIC COMMUNITIES, 8-12.06.2025
- ACCOMPANIMENT OF YOUTH COURSE, 28.07-03.08.2025

The participants of the first 2 events will be able, at the end of the events, go together with the Holy Father through the Holy Door in the St. Peters basilica.

CHARIS Financial Situation

At the end of the meeting Zoltan shared about the economic situation of the CHARIS International team. There are currently 5 people employed in the team. Thanks to it many very importance tasks were accomplished like courses, formation programs, work in commissions, events, documents etc....

Unfortunately the situation got worse and CHARIS is facing the decision to reduce the staff numbers.

We were called to express our faithfulness to the Lord even in the area of our finances, so Gods work is able to grow. We are directly and indirectly benefitting of CHARIS work, by their authority and protection as well as high quality formation.

It was calculated that if every prayer group or reality in the word contributes with 10Euro every month, CHARIS International could keep the employment on the same level.