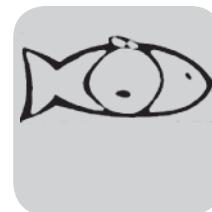


The First Ecumenical Training and Formation for Students and Youth in Hungary: A Report from the Magyar Student Christian Movement



(KÖD)

In his 2006 report the WCC moderator Catholicos Aram I wrote: “The ecumenical formation of youth is of decisive importance for the future of the ecumenical movement.

“The quality and quantity of persons interested in ecumenical life, both in the World Council of Churches (WCC) and elsewhere, is declining. The survival of the ecumenical movement is largely conditioned on the active and responsible involvement of youth.

“A vision requires visionaries to dream and struggle for its realisation. The preparation of a new ecumenical generation is imperative. It must become a major focus for the ecumenical movement. The future belongs to those who have the vision and courage to shape it.”

A Broad and Representative Cooperation

We joined and reflected upon this initiative of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on ecumenical formation, and we have been engaged in the process of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly (Sibiu, Transylvania, 2007) on the national level.

Thus the idea of an ecumenical formation for youth was raised by the Magyar Ecumenical Student Christian Movement (KÖD) and the Benedictine Békés Gellért Ecumenical Institute (BGÖI), Pannonhalma, in Spring 2006.

Following this idea, the two mentioned organisations,

in cooperation with the Youth Committee of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary (MEÖT-IB) and the Ecumenical Youth Office (ÖKI), organised a formation for Christian youth and student leaders.

The Youth Committee of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary (MEÖT-IB) is the broadest and most representative ecumenical youth body in Hungary. Even the Roman Catholic church is a full member in it, although in MEÖT they are only observer members.

Apart from the members involved in its functioning, our ecumenical training and formation project was financially supported by the Roman Catholic Alliance for Youth and Adult Education (KIFE).

Based on SCM Methods and Attitudes

In Autumn 2006, the MEÖT-IB finally accepted this idea and entrusted a team of ten (plus two) delegated members with elaborating a thematic plan and organising the first ecumenical formation for Christian youth leaders in Hungary. They worked together with the Ecumenical Youth Office (they were the two additional members), responsible mainly for logistics.

The team represented a broad Christian spectrum of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Evangelical-Lutheran, Calvinist-Reformed,

After a thorough introduction and some icebreakers, through discussions, the participants uncovered their stereotypes and prejudices about different denominations.

Methodist and Baptist denominations, grassroots ecumenical organisations like KÖD, and ecumenical theological institutes such as the Benedictine BGÖI.

From among the organisers, around seven arrived from SCM circles, and they included even the chairperson of the Magyar Orthodox Youth Federation (MORISZ), which is a member movement of *Syndesmos*, the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth.

Among others, the lecturers included former and active chairpersons and general secretaries of the Magyar SCM (which also supported the event financially); former and active members of the Central European, European and global leadership of the *World Student Christian Federation* (WSCF); and former and active executive committee (ExCo) members of the *Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe* (EYCE).

Recognizes Recognizing the Scandal of Disunity

This ecumenical training and formation did not primarily deal with practical cooperation, since that has its own fora, but rather was an effort for trying to reach convergence in the goals shared by Christian youth and student organisations, questioning the denominational divisions that often look petrified.

The topic, therefore, was Christian unity and its scandalous absence in many fields, areas and dimensions. When inviting participants and lecturers, the same broad Christian presence was always maintained, and even enlarged by a Greek Catholic presence. The key task of the resource persons was determined as follows.

We endeavour to bring to light the fact that divisions between denominations – beyond diminishing the efficiency of mission and evangelism – are grave scandals before God and humanity, and therefore constitute obstacles to overcome according to our possibilities and responsibilities, accepting the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in obedience.

Nevertheless, mutually enriching diversity opens the door to a more complete reception of the Good News and the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. In order to fulfil this serious and soul-lifting task, we prepared a weekend seminar as a first step, from 9–11 February 2007.

The seminar's venue was the Conference House of the Society of the Divine Word (*Societas Verbi Divini*, SVD) in Budatétény (inside the borders of Budapest). We chose workshops, panel discussions and lectures as our most important means and methods.

By Experts of Various Fields

All the events of the seminar were pervaded by the force of a close and friendly being together. Twenty-five resource persons helped sixty participants from all parts of Hungary (and beyond) in deepening their ecumenical, and thus Christian, consciousness.

The academic field was represented among the resource persons, for example, by the rector of the Károli Gáspár Reformed University (KGRE) in Budapest; as well as by professors of ecumenical theology, systematic theology, Biblical theology, hermeneutics and canon law.

Also, a member of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches (WCC) shared his knowledge with us, as well as the chairperson of the Mission and Evangelism Committee of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary (MEÖT).

From the clerical side, we listened, for instance, to a Methodist superintendent; a *protoierei* of the Magyar Orthodox Diocese; school and university chaplains; and Benedictine, Verbita and other monks.

Finally, we could hear the Secretary of the Youth Committee of the Magyar Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops; the director of the Roman Catholic Pastoral Institute (OLI) in Hungary; the general secretary of the Magyar Bible Society; and the leader of the Synodal Office of the Reformed Church in Hungary.



Thus Starting a Whole New Series and Era

On one hand, we worked together intellectually as true disciples, which involved passing on knowledge and understanding concerning the importance of unity. On the other hand, we took part in ecumenical prayers and worship, which furthered our involvement into the spirituality of unity.

After a thorough introduction and some ice-breakers, through discussions the participants uncovered their stereotypes and prejudices on denominations and on the ecumenical movement as a whole. A panel discussion dealt with the models of visible unity.

Lectures followed, dealing with Jesus Christ's call for unity as a Biblical introduction, as well as the history of the four branches of the ecumenical movement: mission and evangelism, faith and order, life and work, and ecumenical formation.

Group discussions gathered spiritual, theological and practical means of unity. One panel discussion was on obstacles on the way towards unity, and another on an emerging ecumenical vision. The seminar ended with an ecumenical worship and an overall evaluation by the participants and the organisers.

Following the participants' advice and considering their evaluation, we have already started to prepare the continuation and further development of this ecumenical training and formation for students and youth, and to confirm our commitment to support such initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Europe as a whole.

THE HUMANITY POEM

Anastasia Gkitsi

(CONSTANTINOPLE, SUMMER 2004)



*Tantalized the words drop'd
and painted with their blood
the verses.*

*They drop'd weak
like the corpses of precocious fighters
like the unshaped bodies of children
like the bare facts of history.*

*And as the last verse
of the stanza appeared
in my hands I found not
the poem lying.*

*Breathing warmth to
the Entire Humanity
to stop the suffering...*

She graduated from the faculty of Theology in 1999 (Aristotle's University of Thessaloniki) and she started her master degree in ecumenical area.

She graduated with a master's ecumenism in Dogmatical studies (Chambesy - Switzerland, 2001 - 2003). Her Thesis dealt with Confessions of faith's literal typology.

She is writing a PhD in Theology about the relation between theology and poetry in writings of the Church Fathers.

She is working in secondary education (since 2005) as a teacher of Theology, History and Psychology.

She is a poet and a member of the literature group "Ale Amoroza". She is publishing poems (since 1996), theological and literature articles in journals, reviews and anthologies such as (Epi-Koinonia, Kath'Odon, Nea Poreia, Meteikasma)

She has published a number of articles dealing with the Greek poet T. Livaditis.

Her own poetry collection entitled : "I Know ! it's late..." was published in 2000 (ed. Paratrititis). She is translating articles on behalf of the "Academy of Theological Studies"

She was awarded with medals and prizes from many Greek and international Poetry and Literature associations such as : Griechischer Kunst und Literatur Verein, Union of European Writers, Intellectual Cultural center of Rafina, MusicHeaven, Literature Association Zalonis, Conservatory Foudoulis.