

# **Communique of the IVth Consultation of Theological Faculties in Europe (Graz process)**

**September 25-28 2013**

## **Introduction**

The participants of the IV<sup>th</sup> consultation of the theological faculties in Europe came together from September 25-28 2013 at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Karl-Franzens University of Graz. The meeting, within the frame of the Graz Process, was hosted by the Faculty and the Conference of European Churches (CEC). The former General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches Prof. Dr. Viorel Ionita representing Conference of European Churches and the dean of the faculty, Prof. Dr. Hans-Ferdinand Angel, welcomed the participants from 17 countries. A complete list of participant's speakers and guests is provided in the appendix.

## **The purposes of the consultation**

The purpose of the consultation was explained at the outset as twofold: first, to engage in a dialogue as theological educators on the theme "Human dignity in crisis?" and second, to reflect on how to further develop the cooperation between theological faculties in Europe through the Graz process.

## **A Dialogue on the theme of Human dignity in crisis**

### **I Keynote Speakers**

Six keynote speakers offered diverse and distinctive perspectives on the theme of human dignity:

1. Archbishop Simon Ntamwana of Gitega/Burundi of the Roman Catholic Church in Burundi gave the opening address. He highlighted the nature of the crisis that confronts humanity. Following thinkers such as Jacques Derrida he noted that society has pursued relativism and ego-centrism and this has resulted in a culture where everyone acts for him/herself and feels no responsibility for the other. This anthropocentric turn, which is also a rejection of God, constitutes the ultimate threat to human dignity. Quoting *Gaudium es Spes*<sup>1</sup> he warned that humanity cannot go it alone, we cannot save ourselves. The Human being needs to look towards God, to rediscover his/her God given dignity and freedom.

Archbishop Simon Ntamwana noted that the assault on human dignity in Burundi and generally in Africa is due in large measure to violence and exploitation. He highlighted in particular Burundi's orphans whose dignity has been threatened by civil war and AIDS. Likewise adults, who are not reconciled with their enemies, are also war orphans. Africa still lives under the shadow of European colonialism and exploitation and this will only change if and when European economic liberalism is replaced by a "communion economy".<sup>2</sup> Dignity in both the African continent and in Europe is also under assault because of ethnic struggles and violence. The experience of the people of Burundi is that restoring dignity involves a costly journey of forgiveness. Only when the love and light of God is recreated in people's lives when relationships are restored and memories healed can humans flourish.

2. In his key note address Metropolitan Estathius Matta Roham of Jazirah and Euphrates in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch focussed on the meaning of human dignity from an oriental perspective and drew out important lessons from the assault on human dignity that is unfolding in the current crisis in Syria, as well as in Tunisia i.e. Buazize. He highlighted the close relationship in oriental language and culture between dignity and honour and traced the roots of the troubles in Syria to the violating of honour and the demand for justice for all citizens in all aspects of life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* December 7, 1965 "Often refusing to acknowledge God as his beginning, man (sic) has disrupted also his proper relationship to his own ultimate goal as well as his whole relationship toward himself and others and all created things.

<sup>2</sup> The **Economy of Communion** (EoC) is a movement that involves entrepreneurs, workers, directors, consumers, savers, scholars, economic workers, poor and citizens, families, and was launched by Chiara Lubich in May of 1991 in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

The absence of reason and dialogue has opened the way for the population to become embroiled in a horrific bloodbath. He appealed to the tradition in Syria and in all civilised society to dialogue and denounced the manner in which reason had been abandoned by political forces within and outwith the country

3. The third keynote speaker was Ms Ana Villanueva, the World YWCA Executive Coordinator. Ms Villanueva defined dignity as inherent and unique in human beings. Things have an exchange value, they are replaceable. Human beings have unlimited value. They are subjects endowed by God with identity and an ability to choose, and therefore they are unique and irreplaceable. According to scripture, value is not something given to human persons by someone, it comes rather from God, through our participation in the community of the triune God: "human dignity is the trademark of God in us".

Drawing upon her work with the YWCA Ana Villanueva told many stories concerning the assault on women's dignity in many parts of the world. Through these stories she highlighted how the dignity of the survivors of violence is shown in their insistence upon asking for justice; their role is to remind the society that justice is indispensable for the healing of wounds inflicted by violence. She also stressed the need for followers of Jesus to dare to challenge unjust interpretations of the Scriptures oppress and condemn human beings, instead of highlighting their God given dignity.

4. Prof. Dr. Grigorios Larentzakis, head of the coordination office of the Graz Process in Graz dealt with the topic of „Working for peace as an originary mission for the Graz Process” and emphasised that ecumenical work is by its nature peace building, otherwise it cannot call itself truly ecumenical. It is therefore only right that theological faculties must include this topic as an integral part of any “structural cooperation in Europe”. This is what the Graz Process is about. The aim is to establish the Christian principles of equal status and dignity for all irrespective of gender, race, religion, language or nationality, as all people are created in God's image. The Trinitarian union built on the foundation of love serves as both a source and an example in this respect and leads to ecumenical desire to establish *katallagé*, reconciliation, equity and peace between the churches and all peoples as a continued desideratum which should also be the focus of a pan-European

theological project of our theological faculties in the framework of the Graz Process. With this concrete vision Prof. Larentzakis concluded his deliberations.

5. Prof. Dr. Ulrich Hemel, director of the Institute of social strategy (Berlin) and professor of Catholic religious Education at the University of Regensburg argued that the economy properly understood serves the interests of human dignity: “economic action in its normative core follows the leitmotiv of human dignity. It is aligned with the idea of a good life which includes not only material goods but also a richness of human relations in the social world”. The concept of “economia cooperative” was explored, whereby Human dignity is crucially sustained through maintaining a balance between creativity and fragility: this he argued is “the cornerstone of good anthropology”. The burden of his thesis is that theology and economics are critical allies in the search for human dignity and that faculties of theology – through the Graz process - need to seek out space for mutual dialogue to that end.

6. Finally Prof. Dr. Benedek, professor of International Law and International Relations, and Director of the Training and Research Centre at the University of Graz gave a presentation which located the discussion on the theme “human dignity in crisis?” in the context of the UN declaration of human Rights in Europe and the EU foundational document. He reminded participants of the close proximity between the first article of the UN declaration and the principles that are behind the Christian understanding of human dignity. The article reads that human dignity pertains to the inherent worth of every human being; it is an intrinsic irreplaceable quality which is not earned but is unconditional and already there. On the relationship between Human dignity and human rights he suggests that Human dignity precedes and presupposes that human beings have rights. He also noted the current interest amongst member states and others to emphasis duties alongside rights. The presentation attracted a robust discussion amongst the participants. Dr Benek stressed that human rights in the EU are not static but constantly evolving in response to changing social and cultural climate situation. He urged that the duty bearers for the interpretation and implementation of human rights are not just corporate companies and states but also civil society and that of course includes the churches.

In addition to these key note addresses many church and civic guests extended greetings to the participants of the consultation during a public meeting held in the main auditorium of Graz University: Vice Rector Univ. Prof. Dr. Martin Polaschek representing Graz University, Bishop Dr. Egon Kapellari of the Roman Catholic diocese of Graz-Seckau, Bishop Hon. Prof. Dr. Michael Bünker of the Protestant Church in Austria, Dr. Arsenios Kardamakis, Metropolitan of Austria for the Orthodox Church in Austria, and Prof. Dr. Viorel Ionita representing the Conference of European Churches.

## **II Consultation findings**

In addition to plenary discussions participants met in groups where their tasks were to try with the help of the key note addresses to tease out the meaning of human dignity, to evaluate the threats and challenges to human dignity in contemporary Europe and to discern in the discussion between theology, economy and law, where are the main points of agreement, compliment and divergence. The discussions in the groups and in plenary revealed that the theme of human dignity was much more complicated than participants had initially envisaged.

### **(a) Agreement**

Participants were in agreement that the Christian understanding of human dignity is based on the twin doctrines of creation and incarnation and is perfectly expressed in the life and mission of Jesus. According to scripture, the human being is made in the image of God and redeemed through the incarnation of Christ. Each person carries within them the mark or the imprint of the Creator and this mystery manifested in human creativity and fragility. Where creativity is stifled or fragility is ignored or abused human dignity is violated.

Human dignity presupposes human rights. It is deeper and more profound than any single human right, and is more than the sum of human rights. That said human rights are integral to human dignity, because they serve and support its cause. Human dignity- for the good order of society - needs to be translated into value-based actions and expressed through the mechanism of human rights and legal sanctions

Human dignity In its individual and corporate dimensions (family ethic and national). Is threatened by globalisation processes such as mass economic refugee movements The Gospel vision is for human beings to flourish in relationship, demonstrating at one and the same time love for God and neighbour.

There was clear agreement that It is important to be able to speak together as representatives of faculties and churches into the public arena in ways which are faithful to the Gospel, comprehensible and relevant to contemporary society. The mind of the meeting was that this will only happen if dialogue is fostered between churches and faculties and if critical dialogue is fostered between dialogue partners across academic disciplines.

### **(b) Complimentary views**

Whilst discussion was sometimes difficult the diverse views expressed served in a constructive way to highlight existing east-west and north south differences in perspective. Many important questions emerged about Human dignity (theological, anthropological, economic and social) which the participants believe deserve to be the subject of ongoing reflection within and between the theological faculties involved in the Graz process. In particular there was discussion concerning the relationships between human dignity and human rights. Care is needed to ensure that these terms are clearly distinguished and not treated as interchangeable. Most but not all in the consultation felt that human dignity precedes and presupposes human rights.

### **(c) Divergence**

Concerns about the potential clash between universal Human rights and specific religious or cultural values on the national level were clearly voiced by those participants who feel that the values and ethos of the Christian faith which historically had had a strong place in European history and identity have been displaced in the constitution of bodies such as the EU parliament by their adopting a secular value system. Their perception is that the EU constitution and the European Court of Human Rights do not respect national and religious values. Others felt, to the contrary and equally strongly, that the UN and EU conventions on Human rights offer broad and constructive principles for people of all faiths and none to come together and to find common ground for the good order of society. The divergence between participants on this question was not reconcilable. This needs to be addressed in a

good way because it is not only a potential stumbling block to unity between the churches in Europe but it is also a potential source of confusion in the political sphere when the message that is communicated by the churches into the EU institutions is contradictory. Theological faculties can and should play their part with the CEC and the Catholic Conference of Bishops in promoting constructive dialogue on this matter.

## **B. Reflection on how to develop further the cooperation through the Graz process**

The present consultation deliberately took a step on from previous consultations by choosing a theme as the focus for reflection rather than focussing on structures of cooperation. However the rationale for the Graz process is a technical one: namely to promote cooperation and good practice amongst the theological faculties and churches in Europe, so the consultation took time in groups and plenary to consider practical ways in which the cooperation could be taken forward.

### **1. Human Dignity within the work of the Graz Process**

How can this discussion on human dignity be brought back into our institutions?

The theme of human dignity deserves more attention in the work with students and expressed the hope that this could be facilitated by the Graz process

- a. Gather and disseminate materials amongst professors arising from this consultation for taking this theme into the faculties and into the class room
- b. Develop mechanism for correspondence between students to help them focus on the value of human dignity and to see contested human rights issues from the others perspective
- c. Share ideas (through social media and possible workshops with EU funding) on practical ways to equip professors, priests, ministers and lay people to develop innovative projects /social business ventures in the community with a

view to protecting and promoting human dignity amongst vulnerable and minority groups.

## **2. Continuation of the practical work of the Graz Process**

How can inter-disciplinary and mutual critical dialogue between theology and economics, theology and politics, and theology and law – reflected in this consultation – be furthered both in the universities represented in the network and in future meetings and activities of the Graz process? The dean of the Catholic Theological Faculty of Graz, Prof. Dr. Hans-Ferdinand Angel explained some practical possibilities and especially offered the new website of the Graz Process as platform which might be used for further and more intensified exchange and cooperation.

The website: <http://grazprocess.uni-graz.at/>

Finally, the participants of the 4<sup>th</sup> Consultation expressed their thanks for the realisation of this gathering. They specifically thanked the Dean, Prof. Dr. Hans-Ferdinand Angel, his team in Graz, the scientific board of the hosting faculty, the deans of the other faculties of the University of Graz, and the academic director Prof. Dr. Grigorius Larentzakis for their sound preparation and realisation of this event. A special thanks was also expressed to the leadership of the Conference of European Churches for their stable leadership and continuation of the Graz Process, this is particularly true in terms of the structural and personal contribution of Prof. Dr. Viorel Ionita.

The participants of the 4<sup>th</sup> Consultation were also especially thankful to the City of Graz and the State of Styria for their continued support of the Graz Process.

**4<sup>th</sup> Consultation of the Theological Faculties in Europe**  
**Graz, 25 - 28 September 2013**

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

---

<b>AKIMOV</b>	Vitalij	Belarus	<a href="mailto:akmvvv(at)tut.by">akmvvv(at)tut.by</a>
<b>ALBU</b>	Alin		<a href="mailto:almadeian(at)yahoo.com">almadeian(at)yahoo.com</a>
<b>ALEXANDROV</b>	Andrian		<a href="mailto:andr_bg(at)yahoo.com">andr_bg(at)yahoo.com</a>
<b>ANGEL</b>	Hans-Ferdinand	Austria	<a href="mailto:ferdinand.angel(at)uni-graz.at">ferdinand.angel(at)uni-graz.at</a>
<b>ARGARATE</b>	Pablo	Austria/Argentina	<a href="mailto:pablo.argarate@uni-graz.at">pablo.argarate@uni-graz.at</a>
<b>ARSENIOS</b>	Kardamakis	Austria	
<b>BASHKIROV</b>	Vladimir	Russia	<a href="mailto:bashkirovvl(at)mail.ru">bashkirovvl(at)mail.ru</a>
<b>BENEDEK</b>	Wolfgang	Austria	<a href="mailto:wolfgang.benedek(at)uni-graz.at">wolfgang.benedek(at)uni-graz.at</a>
<b>BLYTH</b>	Myra	United Kingdom	<a href="mailto:myra.blyth@regents.ox.ac.uk">myra.blyth@regents.ox.ac.uk</a>
<b>BÜNKER</b>	Michael	Austria	
<b>DIMITROV</b>	Ivan Zhelev	Bulgaria	<a href="mailto:ivand(at)theo.uni-sofia.bg">ivand(at)theo.uni-sofia.bg</a>
<b>VANCA</b>	Dumitru A.		<a href="mailto:dumitru.vanca(at)uab.ro">dumitru.vanca(at)uab.ro</a>
<b>GERJOLJ</b>	Stanko	Slovenia	<a href="mailto:stanko.gerjolj(at)teof.uni-lj.si">stanko.gerjolj(at)teof.uni-lj.si</a>
<b>GROEN</b>	Basilus	Austria/Netherlands	<a href="mailto:bert.groen@uni-graz.at">bert.groen@uni-graz.at</a>
<b>HAANES</b>	Vidar L.	Norway	<a href="mailto:Vidar.L.Haanes(at)mf.no">Vidar.L.Haanes(at)mf.no</a>
<b>HEMEL</b>	Ulrich	Germany	<a href="mailto:ulrich.hemel(at)t-online.de">ulrich.hemel(at)t-online.de</a>
<b>HODOSSY-TAKACS</b>	Habil Elod	Hungary	<a href="mailto:takacse(at)drhe.hu">takacse(at)drhe.hu</a>
<b>ILLERT</b>	Martin	Germany	<a href="mailto:martin.illert(at)ekd.de">martin.illert(at)ekd.de</a>

---

<b>IONITA</b>	Viorel	Switzerland/Rumania	<a href="mailto:vio(at)cec-kek.org">vio(at)cec-kek.org</a> <a href="mailto:vionita(at)yahoo.com">pr.vionita(at)yahoo.com</a>
<b>KALME</b>	Guntis		<a href="mailto:guntiskalme(at)hotmail.com">guntiskalme(at)hotmail.com</a>
<b>KAPELLARI</b>	Egon	Austria	
<b>KIROV</b>	Dimitar Marinov	Bulgaria	<a href="mailto:popmarinov(at)abv.bg">popmarinov(at)abv.bg</a>
<b>KISIC</b>	Rade	Serbia	<a href="mailto:rkisic(at)pbf.rs">rkisic(at)pbf.rs</a>
<b>KOVAC</b>	Edvard	Slovenia	<a href="mailto:edvard.kovac(at)guest.arnes.si">edvard.kovac(at)guest.arnes.si</a>
<b>KULL</b>	Anne	Estonia	<a href="mailto:anne.kull(at)ut.ee">anne.kull(at)ut.ee</a>
<b>LAH</b>	Avgustin	Slovenia	<a href="mailto:avgustin.lah(at)guest.arnes.si">avgustin.lah(at)guest.arnes.si</a>
<b>LARENTZAKIS</b>	Grigorios	Austria	<a href="mailto:grigorios.larentzakis(at)uni-graz.at">grigorios.larentzakis(at)uni-graz.at</a>
<b>LEB</b>	Ioan-Vasile		<a href="mailto:lebioan(at)yahoo.com">lebioan(at)yahoo.com</a>
<b>LEVAI</b>	Attila	Slovakia	<a href="mailto:levaia(at)ujv.sk">levaia(at)ujv.sk</a>
<b>MAESENEER</b>	Yves de	Belgium	<a href="mailto:Yves.Demaeseneer(at)theo.kuleuven.be">Yves.Demaeseneer(at)theo.kuleuven.be</a>
<b>MATJAZ</b>	Maksimilijan		
<b>MOGA</b>	Ioan	Germany	<a href="mailto:ioan_moga(at)yahoo.de">ioan_moga(at)yahoo.de</a>
<b>MOSHER</b>	Annette	Netherlands	<a href="mailto:ak.mosher(at)th.vu.nl">ak.mosher(at)th.vu.nl</a>
<b>NTAMWANA</b>	Simon	Burundi	<a href="mailto:ntamwansi12(at)yahoo.fr">ntamwansi12(at)yahoo.fr</a>
<b>OANCEA</b>	Dorin	Rumania	<a href="mailto:oancead(at)yahoo.com">oancead(at)yahoo.com</a>
<b>OCOLEANU</b>	Picu	Germany	<a href="mailto:ocoleanu(at)yahoo.de">ocoleanu(at)yahoo.de</a>
<b>PATULEANU</b>	Constantin		<a href="mailto:constantinpatuleanu(at)yahoo.com">constantinpatuleanu(at)yahoo.com</a>
<b>PODARU</b>	Adrian		<a href="mailto:apodaru2000(at)yahoo.com">apodaru2000(at)yahoo.com</a>
<b>POLASCHEK</b>	Martin	Austria	<a href="mailto:martin.polaschek@uni-graz.at">martin.polaschek@uni-graz.at</a>
<b>PRABITZ</b>	Benjamin	Austria	<a href="mailto:benjamin.prabitz@uni-graz.at">benjamin.prabitz@uni-graz.at</a>
<b>RABIEJ</b>	Habil Stanislaw	Poland	<a href="mailto:stanrab(at)uni.opole.pl">stanrab(at)uni.opole.pl</a>
<b>RÄSÄNEN</b>	Antti	Finland	<a href="mailto:antti.rasanen(at)helsinki.fi">antti.rasanen(at)helsinki.fi</a>

---

<b>ROHAM</b>	Matta		<a href="mailto:matta.roham(at)gmail.com">matta.roham(at)gmail.com</a>
<b>TULCAN</b>	Ioan		<a href="mailto:Tulcan_ioan@yahoo.com">Tulcan_ioan@yahoo.com</a>
<b>VICOVAN</b>	Ioan		<a href="mailto:ioan.vicovan@gmail.com">ioan.vicovan@gmail.com</a>
<b>VILLANUEVA</b>	Ana	Switzerland/Argentina	<a href="mailto:ana.villanueva(at)worldywca.org">ana.villanueva(at)worldywca.org</a>

---