Internat. Priester- und Reformgruppen

Uniting for a Positive Resistance in Support of Pope Francis

Aus Deutschland nahmen Max Stetter von der deutschen Pfarrer-Initiative und Christian Weisner vom *Wir sind Kirche*-Bundesteam daran teil.

Press Release of the "International Catholic Reform Network" (ICRN) > PDF

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Pezinok/Slovakia. Fifty Catholics from 18 countries and 4 continents gathered near Bratislava, Slovakia from June 11 – 15, 2018. Formed as the *International Catholic Reform Network* (icrn.info) in 2013, the participants of this year's conference learned from members of the former Czechoslovak Underground Church about positive resistance.

The group was inspired by the testimonials of the people who endured severe oppression under the communist regime of that time.

"We value the courageous acts of Bishop Davidek and others who recognized the pastoral need to bring the sacraments to communities of faith," said Peter Krizan of the group OK21 – Society for Open Christianity for the 21st Century. "We need to endure and be vigilant, so that we do not miss 21st Century's Pentecost.", Krizan added.

"Their courage, integrity, and willingness to take risks for freedom and the ongoing life of the Church is awe inspiring," said Deborah Rose-Milavec, executive director of FutureChurch, a reform organization in the United States.

"We are pained by the double oppression these people of conscience suffered at the hands of their government and the Church, particularly the women who were ordained during this time" said Kate McElwee, Executive Director of Women's Ordination Conference in the United States.

"By refusing to collaborate with the regime, these people found new ways to be church together and to live the works of the Gospel," said Martha Heizer, board member of We Are Church International. "We strive to follow in their footsteps."

Following the Revolution of 1989, as political freedom became a growing reality, the official Church regressed to its discriminatory practices and lrefused to recognize the faculties of several of those ordained in the Underground Church, particularly followers of Bishop Davidek.

"Inspired by the Underground Church movement we seek to realize a more radical, inclusive, synodal, ecumenical, and justice-seeking Church," said Markus Heil, Chair of the Pfarrei-Initiative in Switzerland and moderator of the conference. "In our discussions, some were still hoping that the church will change and others have given up on the current institution but are still engaged for the faith of the people.

"In a two-fold strategy, the reform movements will continue to support Pope Francis' reform approach and at the same time, foster new ways of leading Christian parishes as equals on a grass root level," said Christian Weisner, board member of We Are Church Germany. "We strongly support the substantial reforms Pope Francis is implementing against strong resistance within the church hierarchy.", he emphasized.

The ICRN members, in order to meet the needs of the People of God, commit to the work of women's equality in the Church, LGBTQI rights and inclusion, empowering Catholics to claim their fundamental rights and responsibilities, and support the creation of new models for parish and Christian community life.

"I am impressed and glad to see that the working groups will continue their work and cooperation across such great distances," said Fr. Helmut Schueller, Speaker of the Austrian Parish Priests Initiative.

Participants of the Conference came from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Great Britain, India, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, South Korea, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States. Italy and Kenia had to cancel their prearranged attendance at short notice.

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