



# Communicantes Newsletter 2015/1 Summer

Meeting of religious sisters from Eastern Europe and from the Netherlands at the Trappist abbey Koningsoord, 1-5 June 2015

**The test of the artist does not lie in the will with which he goes to work, but in the excellence of the work he produces**  
– Thomas Aquinas

Dear friend of Communicantes, the first six months of 2015 passed quickly. Summertime has arrived and our Dutch summer took off with a genuine heat wave. With temperatures above 35 Celsius, it vividly underlines the urgency and timeliness of Pope Francis' latest encyclical *Laudato si'*.

There seems less and less room for doubt. Climate change is here to stay and it will bear serious consequences, which will be felt intensively all over the globe. Drought will become a serious problem, also in the Low Countries. Temperatures will rise. And does it matter whether climate change is a natural phenomenon or not? We are still being challenged to act up and this on a local, regional and global scale.

Really, we have to start to think and act differently. We will have to adopt a different view of the world and of technological innovation but modify our spiritual, moral and philosophical outlook as well. Mankind needs to find the right balance between *anthropocentrism* and *biocentrism*, thus Pope Francis.

Stewardship seems an essential notion here. In paragraphs 116 and 236 of *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis applies it to the Eucharist and to the world as a sacrament of our communion with God and with our fellow men. Both should be preserved without

tainting them. We must become more aware of the fact that we are stewards of the world in which we live, not legal owners who can do as they please.

The same presupposition underlies the Saint Thomas quote at the top of this page. Wanting to achieve something lasting, we cannot merely rely on imposing our will. We must allow our will to be drawn into a specific direction, to a place outside of ourselves, which allows us to excel.

**Reconciliation and dialogue** are connected and equally relevant notions. If they are applied well, they can become, indeed, an expression of stewardship themselves.

We put our private and less private convictions and beliefs aside (at least temporarily), so that we can better understand what moves other people from different historical and cultural backgrounds and with other convictions and beliefs. Bringing Church and believers of Eastern Europe and the Netherlands together, Communicantes tries to put reconciliation and dialogue into practice. On a European level Communicantes contributes to a better understanding: intellectually, practically and inspirationally.

**In several ways** Communicantes has drawn attention to reconciliation and dialogue in the past six months:

- Together with the vu University Amsterdam, we organised the mini-conference *The Churches and the war in Ukraine. What do Churches contribute to peace and reconciliation?* On 4 April speakers from Ukraine and experts from the Netherlands discussed the peace potential of the local Churches.
- Frans Hoppenbrouwers of Communicantes was invited to deliver a lecture at a conference of the Netherlands Centre for the Social Teaching of the Church. On 29 May he discussed the impact of these teachings on the Church in Central and Eastern Europe. This lecture will be translated into English and become available on our website.
- Also, Communicantes looks back on an interesting and inspiring meeting of religious sisters from Eastern Europe and the Netherlands from different religious traditions: Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. It took place from 1-5 June at the abbey of Koningsoord.

**More information** you will find on page 2 and on the Internet: on [Facebook](#) and on our [website](#).



Dr Lidiya Lozova



Communicantes President Professor Nico Schreurs



Presentation by Protestant deaconess sister Anneke



Sister Emmanuela

**Ubuntu Ukrainian style?** Does there exist a “Ukrainian Ubuntu”, Dr Cyril Hovorun asked himself during our 4 April mini-conference *The Churches and the war in Ukraine*. Ubuntu is the Bantu word for human kindness, openness and benevolence towards others.

Obviously, Hovorun, a priest-monk of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, had mixed feelings. He drew a comparison between the South African Christian Churches during the days of apartheid and the attitude of the Churches towards the crisis in Ukraine. While Churches had been instrumental in maintaining an unjust status quo, they became a cause of change as well. Still, Father Cyril felt sorry that Ukraine is lacking someone like South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Communicantes President Nico Schreurs argued that talking about peace and reconciliation now is by no means premature. He referred to one of Europe’s founding fathers, Robert Schumann, who drew up a programme of reconciliation between archenemies France and Germany already in 1942. Professor Schreurs carefully distinguished reconciliation from forgiveness.

Similar to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the after-effects of communist repression still determine to a large extent how society and individuals function, Cinta Depondt of the Netherlands peace organisation PAX summarised. In a situation in which many people still do not believe that they can make an impact on society, PAX wants to lend a helping hand.

Dr Lidiya Lozova of the Saint Clement Centre for Cultural Interaction and Dialogue shared her experiences in the uoc-mp Paraskeva parish in Lishnya near Kyiv. They escape the black and white divide between a “Russian” Church on the one hand and a “Ukrainian” Church on the other.

The Euromaidan was a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-confessional event, Professor Heleen Zorgdrager of the Protestant Theological University Amsterdam explained. Zorgdrager discussed the role of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church at the Maidan square. She critically reviewed the way in which the over one hundred dead protesters of the Maidan are now being immortalised, especially in the ugcc.

For a full report of our mini-conference in PDF-file, please visit our [website](#).

**Know thyself! Box!** The path of a religious sister in the 21st century is not always an easy one. That much became clear during an interesting and inspiring meeting of religious sisters from Eastern Europe and from the Netherlands at the Trappist abbey Koningsoord from 1 to 5 June. During one of the workshops the sisters had to put on boxing gloves. It was a bit of a shocker but it all worked out well.

With participants from Lithuania, Ukraine, Romania, Hungary and the Netherlands, sisters from Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions took part in this meeting. The theme was: “Secluded Life in an Open, Ecumenical Perspective”.

Pastoral assistant Julia Hoppenbrouwers guided the sisters through the programme. Together they examined the intellectual resources, inspiration, issues, merits and future of the religious life. Because of the input from various parts of Europe and from different traditions this was a truly enriching exchange between East and West. Protestant deaconesses from Armerongen came for a long visit and shared their inspiration and experiences.

The sisters also took a look at known and hidden talents. Former karate champion Robin van Soelingen let the sisters box. Playfully, giving and taking but without hitting hard, the sisters examined their more introverted and extroverted impulses. Sisters Emmanuela from Ukraine and Pascale from Koningsoord displayed extraordinary boxing skills.

Also, the sisters deepened their knowledge of nonviolent communication with pastoral psychologist Anke Bisschops. Coach Marjon Bohré discussed the “power of vulnerability”, showing that examining vulnerability is more than just contemplating one’s weaknesses.

The participants of this meeting enjoyed the hospitality of the sisters of Koningsoord, who provided the necessary space for reflection and introspection. In this wonderful setting the sisters had a taste of typical native religious culture, for example a good glass of Trappist beer.

This meeting proved to be successful and worthwhile repeating. Perhaps this year’s participants will meet again in Lithuania.

For pictures of this ecumenical meeting, see [Facebook](#).

