



Annual Report 2018 of the Foundation Communicantes

From the Board Room

If we look at the world scene in our time, more and more voices are sowing division and confrontation and proclaiming that the only way to guarantee security and continued existence of a culture is to try to eliminate, cancel or expel others. Here you have a word of your own to contribute: 'welcoming differences'. Through dialogue, openness and understanding, you can become a bridge between Eastern and Western Europe, Pope Francis told representatives of authorities, civil society and diplomatic corps in Vilnius, Lithuania on September 22, 2018.

Referred to the totalitarian communist rule that countries like Lithuania had to endure for over 40 years, Pope Francis encouraged the Lithuanians to transform their experience of marginalisation, division and exclusion into its opposites. *You have suffered 'in the flesh' those efforts to impose a single model that would annul differences under the pretence of believing that the privileges of a few are more important than the dignity of others or the common good.*

Consequently, these contrast experiences of suffering and oppression will amplify the will to work towards the common good. Pope Francis quoted from his predecessor's encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*: *to desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity... The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them.* Thus, the search for the common good becomes an expression of Christian hospitality and love.

In Lithuania Pope Francis highlighted 'dialogue', 'openness' and becoming a 'bridge'. They are the inspiration, the incentive and the inner drive to create a space where there is 'room for growth' and 'active participation', the Roman Pontiff said referring to the youth.

How Communicantes tried to contribute to the common good and shall continue to do so in the future you can read in this *Annual Report 2018*.

Contents

From the Board Room	1	Activities Report 2018	5
Voices of Moderation		Projects 2018	6
– Church in 21st Century Europe	2	About Communicantes	8

Voices of Moderation

The Role of the Church in 21st Century Europe

The big players in the field of global business excepted, there exist few organisations that have a local, national and global reach at the same time. Gathering people of all ages, of all walks of life, from all continents and literally all countries of the world, the Roman Catholic Church is a rare exception to the rule. Nominally there are some 1.2 billion Catholic believers worldwide, who share to some extent a common belief and a common understanding of their human condition.

As such the Roman Catholic Church has a huge potential to influence not only its own membership, but also to take its message out into the world.

Fortunately, the Church has several toolboxes at its disposal that allows it to interact with the outside world, of which it is a part as well. The Catholic Social Teaching for example is an important toolkit that the Church can put to good use for communicating with the world in which the Church finds itself.

Since Catholic Social Teaching is positioned *geographically* on the edge between Church and world and *ideologically* between faith, ethics, philosophy and science, it can operate in a truly two directional dialogue: ethics, philosophy and science inform faith, while Church can add its inspirational, intellectual and practical resources to the world.

It comes therefore as no surprise that Catholic Social Teaching was greatly developed during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II in at least three directions: as a heuristic tool, a moral guide and an instrument of dialogue. Saint John Paul himself took a keen interest in the dialogue between faith on the one hand and science and philosophy on the other.

Overall it is not an easy thing to be Church today. This is already very much true whereas the inner operations of the Church are concerned, but it is so much more the case, when it comes to the way Church should position itself in the world of today.

Often, conversations in the outside world are rough and polarised, while more and more discussion becomes ridden with fake news. In this context the voice of the Church not only goes unnoticed, but lacks conviction and clarity as well. The reasons for this are manifold.

First of all, the Roman Catholic Church operates in a polyphonic, that is,



Saint John Paul II greatly contributed to the development of Catholic Social Teaching

a pluralistic context. Even if the Church is viewed as an important or even one of the most important voices, it still is one among many. Consequently participants in public discussions are competing for the attention from their audiences and try to attract new listeners.

Church maybe an important or even the most important voice, but it still is one of many

Secularisation is another aspect we have to take into consideration. It has thoroughly undermined the reach of the truth claims of the Church. While in the past Church could speak on behalf of a higher authority and was accepted as an authoritative voice, this is no more the case today. In many areas of life the Church had to give way to science and expert knowledge that it cannot produce or moderate itself.

Furthermore, science, theoretical and practical expertise have become democratised. They are readily available to a large and critical audience.

A third aspect is the way in which Church frames moral questions in society. For example, the refugee crisis of 2015 was met with an ethics of conviction, with an appeal to individual believers and nonbelievers to come into action. As such there is nothing objectionable there, but it does not address the underlying causes and problems of migration itself nor does it provide us with a convincing moral outlook on the long term.

Self-secularisation is a fourth reason why the voice of the Church is often feeble. By separating *core* Church business from what is *peripheral*, a distinction is made between what faith is about and what is merely a sideshow. Mass and sacraments then are the real thing. If it is not

an outright denial of the essence of faith itself, the concern that underlies Catholic Social Teaching — a vivid dialogue between Church and world — is viewed as a distraction. Or as something that mainly secularised Christians indulge in.

As if this was not enough, the current cultural climate in Europe is very much determined by individualism and liberalism. As such they are valuable: self-fulfilment, respect and individual choice for example need fostering. There does exist something like *good individualism* and *good liberalism*, but that can only be if they are balanced out by something that will take off the rough edges.

Where however individualism and liberalism prevail, discussions about options in life, moral dilemmas and religious convictions become a private matter. As a consequence, it is extremely difficult to discuss them in the public sphere or in public debates.

Hence, there are many challenges with respect to Catholic Social Teaching. How can we amplify the Church's voice without distorting it? How can we speak out adequately and thoughtfully? How can Church authoritatively claim its audiences without the use of street language or resentment? How do we escape the dangers of self-secularisation? How can we tie faith, world view and practical orientation together? And finally, how can we amend the defects of individualism and liberalism and keep what is positive?

In other words: how can Church be a voice of moderation? Loud enough to be heard and modest enough to play its role of moderator in society, so that it can add its inspirational, intellectual and practical resources to society.

Dialogue is a central notion of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine*

of the Church (2004) It refers, for example, to the relationship between God and man, to the role of the family and to the multidisciplinary character of Catholic Social Teaching, whose preferred dialogue partner is philosophy.

Someone who could help out here is Charles Taylor. This contemporary moral philosopher argues in favour of a dialogue about the good of society by applying ‘thick descriptions’ or ‘languages of qualitative contrast’. They can serve as means to elucidate and carry the themes of Catholic Social Teaching across.

Taylor argues that moral philosophy and therefore the reflection on the good of society cannot be restricted to the ethics of the private life. Nor can it be reduced to natural sentiments (pain and pleasure) as in classical utilitarianism.

The Canadian philosopher explains

how even the most liberal and private conceptions of the good life are actually founded on and the outcome of a discussion about contrasting moral values, some of them being more important than others. That many do not recognise this is a symptom of contemporary moral thinking that is unable to deal with conflicting values.

Taylor points out three value dimensions, where thick descriptions play an important constitutive role for the identity of modern man, and for society at large: respect, self-fulfilment and human dignity. This is where dialogue can start.

Political philosopher Martha Nussbaum can be of service to us as well. Her ‘capabilities theory’ could help to formulate a more precise and intelligible expressions of human dignity that can move across ideological borders.

Frans Hoppenbrouwers



Jean-François Millet, The Angelus (1859). In traditional society with little social mobility the need for a ‘Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church’ was not strongly felt

Communicantes in 2018

Activities Report

The foundation Communicantes has been readjusting its activities focusing on peace, reconciliation and dialogue. We started this process in 2016. Notably with Pax Christi International we engaged in a mutually enriching conversation.

By engaging in such conversations and dialogues ourselves and by promoting them across the continent, we hope to gain a better insight into our Christian mission in the plural societies of Europe, on an inspirational, theoretical and practical level. In the same time, we hope to understand better what it means to be a Christian and a European today.

In 2018 we have enlarged and intensified our investigation by teaming up with two Polish partners. They are the Polish Catholic organisation of lay intellectuals Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej and the Catholic editing house, review and network Więż. We first convened in April 2018.

Together we have developed a programme that will be implemented in 2019: 'Voices of moderation. Recognising Catholic Social Teaching as a way to engage in civil society dialogue in Central and Eastern Europe'.

Voices of moderation

The programme 'Voices of moderation' starts from the reality that the Roman Catholic Church is no longer a dominant voice in society. At best it is an influential minority. Hence, the question arises: 'how can Church best contribute to the good of society?' This is an important and delicate matter that ties together Church in Central and Eastern Europe and in Western Europe. It is an issue with a broad European dimension.

Strengthening faith-based civil society is one of the possible answers to the above question. If we move in that direction, we need to tackle at least three different issues. First of all, we must acknowledge that dialogue in Central and Eastern European civil society at large is weak. This weakness is present in faith-based civil society as well. Consequently, we need to examine how we can raise the dialogue potential.

Constructief en wederzijds Constructive Collaboration and Mutual Understanding Konstruktive und wechselseitige Verständigung

Two, Catholic Social Teaching, which was solidified by Saint John Paul II as a heuristic tool, a moral guide and an instrument of dialogue, is often neglected. Therefore we must increase the awareness of Catholic Social Teaching as a tool for dialogue.

Three, faith-based civil society (not unlike Church in general and the faithful themselves in particular) lacks a clear, consistent, realistic and relevant language that can convey the fundamental values and precepts of Catholic Social Teaching in a convincing, inspiring and appealing manner. This is something that is felt throughout Europe.

The middle ground

We believe that the middle ground is the natural environment of the Church *in rebus socialibus*. Therefore, we must clarify how Church can occupy this space in an

Projects 2018

Europe

- Scholarships for theologians and laymen from Central and Eastern Europe to participate in various exchanges and networks such as:
 - * the *Argau Summer University* of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU
 - * the European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations *Andante*
 - * the European Society of Women in Theological Research *ESWTR*
- A meeting of the Union of European conferences of Major Superiors *USCEM*.
- A Theology after the Gulag (*THAG*) conference in Amsterdam.

Belarus

- The Saint Nicholas ecumenical volunteers' programme of the Greek Catholic Church in Vitebsk.

Lithuania

- Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious: training and scholarships for sisters.

Poland

- School of Dialogue, Wroclaw.

Romania

- Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious: training.

Ukraine

- University Chaplaincy of the Greek Catholic Church in Drohobych, Dubliany and Kiev

The total amount of grants-in-aid was slightly less than € 40,000.

authentic and convincing way.

To start with, we want to explore how central concepts of the Catholic Social Teaching can be applied and discussed in practice, that is, at the *grass roots* level. By addressing dialogue and for example human dignity, good individualism (solidarity), equality and respect (justice), we want to heighten faith-based civil society's self-awareness and self-confidence in civil society dialogue.

We will do so by gathering together experts and practitioners of Catholic Social teaching from Central, Eastern and Western Europe.

A first workshop will take place in October 2019 in Warsaw. Ideally, this is the first meeting in a series of four. It will function as the cornerstone for three consecutive regional meetings, where first results and outcomes will be enhanced and improved: Visegrad countries (2020); former Soviet Union plus Poland (2021); Balkan (2022).

Other activities

Inviting speakers with a good knowledge of Central and Eastern Europe, *Communicantes* is investigating in 2018 and 2019 the inspirational resources of Europe.

We kicked off on October 10 in the Hague with the rather controversial Frank Furedi. The British-Hungarian professor of sociology argued for an unbiased political discussion about the future of Europe. Somewhat surprisingly he took Viktor Orban's Hungary as his cause célèbre.

Following our April 2015 workshop *The Churches and the war in Ukraine*, *Communicantes* and the Institute of Eastern Christianity organised the workshop *Reconciliation – What's in a Word?* with theologians and practitioners from Ukraine, South Africa and the Netherlands in 2017. A follow-up event *Peace?* took place in Kiev on July 4-6, 2018.

Cyril Hovorun and András Máté-Tóth Europe and the public role of religion



Publicity for the 2019 follow-up of our *Communicantes* investigation into the inspirational resources of Europe

Conferences and meetings

Frans Hoppenbrouwers of *Communicantes* attended or contributed to conferences and workshops at home and abroad:

- Conference *Civic Actors in Conflict IV* in Bratislava, Slovakia, April 26-27.
- 101. Deutschen Katholikentag *Suche Frieden* in Münster, Germany, May 11-12.
- International INASEC conference *Gulag Legacy: History, Memory and the Sacred in Post-Soviet Russia* in Amsterdam, June 8-9.
- *Peace?*, international workshop in Kiev, July 4-6.
- A European Society of Women in Theological Research regional conference *Empowering Women in Conflict* in L'viv, Ukraine, August 26-September 1.
- The 11th Gniezno Convention *Europe Land of the Free. The Inspi-*

rational Power of Christianity in Gniezno, Poland, September 21-23.

- The 22th International Renovabis Conference *Erinnerung und Aufbruch – Wege zur Versöhnung in Europa* in Berlin, Germany, September 25-27.

Publications

- 'De Oekraïense crisis en de kerken van Oekraïne', in *Pax Christi Vlaanderen* vzw *Koerier Dossier* (2018) 3, p. 9-11.
- with A. Brüning, 'De rooms-katholieke kerk in Oost-Europa in relatie met de orthodoxie', in *Handboek Oosters Christendom*, H. Teule and A. Brüning, Louvain 2018, p. 504-515.

Most of our publications are available on our website.

Goal of Communicantes

Since 1974 Κοινωνοῦντες/Communicantes has been active as a facilitator between Churches and individual believers in Central, Eastern and Western Europe. Its aim always was and still is to promote dialogues between partners in East and West that are mutually beneficial: intellectually, inspirationally and practically. Our network was and still is ecumenical, even multireligious. Our main activities are: engaging in dialogue, exchange of persons, public information, and funding projects. Communicantes is a Roman Catholic foundation.

Board Members

V.M. Scheffers, President
Father F. Kuster s.s.s., Secretary
H.A.A. van Bemmelen, Treasurer
G. van Dartel
Father B. Schols s.s.s.
J. Wortelboer

Staff

F. Hoppenbrouwers

Contact

A Stichting Communicantes
Gasthuisring 54
5041 DT Tilburg

T 013-5423782

E communicantes@xs4all.nl

W www.communicantes.nl

R 22.57.912

IBAN NL58INGB0002257912

BIC INGBNL2A

KVK 450.55.777

Donate

Κοινωνοῦντες/Communicantes is a Dutch charity. Our work greatly depends on your benevolence and generosity.

Algemeen Nut
Beogende Instelling
ANBI



*Saint Andrew
overlooking the city
of Kyiv*