

Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counselling

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Nr. 7 TOWARDS SOLIDARITY

Pastoral Challenges and Actions in the Context of Brazil

Documents of a SIPCC
study trip to Sao Paulo

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EDITORIAL REMARKS

Klaus Temme

Around Easter 1998, from April 3rd to April 18th a group of twelve SIPCC-members from Germany, England, Switzerland and the Czech Republic followed the invitation of the Theological Faculty of the Methodist University of Sao Paulo, as Prof. Ronaldo Sathler-Rosa and Prof. James Farris extended it earlier.

They had arranged an excellent program for their visitors, a mixture of intercultural experience of Brazilian life in the area of Sao Paulo and information on the political, social and religious situation of their country. The focus was to learn more about pastoral action in Brazil in this intercultural setting.

The hospitality of the hosts in Brazil has been an overwhelming experience for the group. For most of the members it has been the first visit to South America and they were very much impressed by the people, the landscapes and the cultural diversities. It is impossible to document all the impressions, to tell all the stories they brought with them.

Nevertheless some of the lectures and pictures are in this small volume.

Prof. Ronaldo Sathler-Rosa and Prof. James Farris had arranged for the lectures in the School of Theology. The lectures are printed in this volume, partly in the way they were actually held, partly in other texts representing the main statements of the lecturers. They had also arranged for quite a number of visits to projects and places, as we try to represent this in the pictures and in the article of Prof. Sathler-Rosa on multicultural ministries. The original theme for our trip (“Searching for ways of cooperation in church and society”) was based on the background of these projects.

We also visited a number of Congregations and had some informal meetings where we felt very welcome and appreciated. Among the many highlight experiences was a visit to the former Archbishop and Cardinal Arns in his home.

Our group shared the Easter week together, focusing each morning on biblical texts of the days, trying to relate our experiences of the trip with the spiritual experiences of the scripture.

In a setup like this, with gathering first hand information and impressions, with staying in touch with our common ground of the faith, and with experiencing the burden of crossing the distances (even traveling rather comfortably in air-planes) and the otherness of the southern-hemisphere continent and land, we found the study-trip to be another important tool and method in the line of SIPCC activities.

Interculturality when experienced in the culture of ‘the other’ is another ‘reality’ than when experienced with guests from another culture within one’s own culture.

There is still the issue of transferal into the own situation and into the own work of pastoral care and counseling:

- How do we see our pastoral role over here in Europe?
- How do we go on from individual pastoral care to ‘pastoral action’ and/ or ‘a pastoral of solidarity’?
- Why do we tend to almost shamefully hide the religious side of our existence so much when in public, compared to Brazilians?
- Which cooperation do we dare between church agencies and non-church agencies in order to help people in urgent needs?
- Do we realize and focus on the fact that there are “superfluous people” all around us, too?

On behalf of all the participants of this study trip, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to all who took care of us so warmheartedly and with their most friendly hospitality:

Jim and Ronaldo at first, the faculty of the theological school, the Methodist Congregations at the campus and in town,
the people in the projects who allowed us to share a little of their burden,
not to forget the staff of the campus
and especially the whole Sathler family, too!

Multo Gracias!!!

The documentation has three parts:

The poor and the families -

Reflections on the social situation in Brazil

On the religious market -

Theological reflections

Towards solidarity -

Pastoral challenges and pastoral actions

Almost all of the articles were presented by professors of the Methodist Faculty of Theology in San Bernardo do Campo. Professor Lothar Hoch, an old friend of some of the group members, came from the Lutheran Theological School in Sao Leopoldo to talk on Pastoral Care to the poor.

You will find a large range of issues and themes in this short volume - hopefully a reading for you which gives you new insights and some inspiration to go into an intercultural dialogue. And may be you will find even more: how God's spirit is moving people even on the other edges of the world.