

Grussworte

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Von den im Kongressbericht erwähnten Grussworten sind die folgenden für die Berichterstattung der Redaktion zugestellt worden:

Von Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, Generalsekretär des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen, vorgetragen von Dr Vasilios (Karagiannis), Metropolit von Constantia–Ammochostos (Zypern)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the name of the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is a joy for me to offer these greetings to the 30th International Congress of Old Catholic Churches on behalf of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The WCC is fellowship of 349 Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, United and Old Catholic churches in over 120 countries calling “one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.”

I am grateful that Metropolitan Dr Vasilios of Constantia–Ammochostos, the moderator of the Faith and Order Commission and a member of the WCC Executive Committee, is with you to share these words of encouragement and to accompany you in prayer and celebration.

The theme of this congress, “You shall go out in joy”, is Isaiah’s call to prepare for a new Exodus, a new beginning, filled with God’s purpose and renewed by grace. It is a call to go and to be transformed by the very word of God as an “everlasting sign” of God’s covenant with all creation. It is a theme that will greatly enrich the mission and witness of the Old Catholic Church.

The gospel of John continues the theme with Christ’s hope that, as his followers, the joy of Christ may be in us and our joy may be complete. Christ prayed that our joy may be complete in him and that his followers may be one, as Christ is with the Father, so that the world may believe in God’s saving love for all creation (John 17:21). To go out with joy is to be sent out as one in Christ, with the complete joy of salvation. We are called to go out together, making our unity visible, to serve God’s mission with a joy that is complete in Christ.

The family of Old Catholic churches plays a deeply valued role in the one ecumenical movement – both in nurturing Christian unity and in making it visible. Together with others, you look to the undivided church of the early centuries as a guide to the unity that we seek to recognize in Christ. The vision of being united in Christ by the one faith that is “believed everywhere, always and by all” (St Vincent Lérins) is an inspiration for all churches.

The Old Catholic commitment to dialogue and the longing to express unity through eucharistic fellowship are also sources of ecumenical encouragement. The Old Catholic Church has a history of dialogue with the Orthodox Church that pre-dates the modern ecumenical movement. And long before the Faith and

Order study on “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry”, the Old Catholic Church was forging unprecedented agreements of communion with Anglican churches.

As a community rooted in the ancient teachings of the faith, the Old Catholic family of churches seeks to remain faithful to the Holy Tradition. The commitment to convey the core teachings of the church, aware of the need to discern what tradition means for present and future generations, is a sign of the living tradition that is renewing the Old Catholic community of believers.

It is the prayer of the World Council of Churches that this congress may be a blessing to all who gather in Zurich for prayer and celebration; and also to the family of Old Catholic churches throughout the world. May the love of Christ, experienced in your midst through these days, unite you in faith and purpose. May the Holy Spirit renew and equip you for sharing the gospel with complete joy in Christ in new and creative ways.

Yours in Christ,

Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, World Council of Churches general secretary

Von Most Revd Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, vorgetragen von Rt Revd Mike Klusmeyer, Bishop of West Virginia (USA)

I greet the bishops, clergy, and laity in the name of the Triune God as you gather in Zurich for the XXXth Old Catholic Congress. We in the Episcopal Church are grateful for our oldest relationship of full communion, with the Old Catholic Churches, one that has enriched our spirituality, mission, and ministry.

I particularly welcome the theme of this Congress, themes of joy and of sending into the world: as stated in the prayer for the Congress, we ask God to “awake in us the joy that we belong to you; let us carry this joy into the world.” Our relationship of full communion with the Old Catholic Churches continues to bring joy to the Episcopal Church as we learn from one another as local expressions of the catholic faith.

We are also joyful because this is a relationship which we carry into the world: we give thanks for the common ministries between our two churches. Bishop Pierre Whalon of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches is licensed as an assisting bishop, and there is much ministry in the European context. In our increasingly globalized world, we also are particularly thankful for the developing areas of mission and ministry with our partners the Philippine Independent Church, Church of Sweden, Mar Thoma Church, and the role the Old Catholic Churches have played in invigorating these conversations.

Know of my prayers for you all this week as you celebrate, renew friendships, and gather in worship. During this octave of the Transfiguration, just as the disciples gained an insight into the nature of God and of God’s purposes for them in his transfigured body, may you go forth from here with a vision of where God is calling the Old Catholic Churches.

In Christ the Servant, Bishop Katharine

Von Bishop Dr Isaac Mar Philoxenos, Mar Thoma Syrian Church, India

Respected Archbishop Dr Joris Vercammen, Officers of the Congress in the presidium, Bishops, dignitaries, and brothers and sisters in Christ, I consider it a privilege to attend this congress and I am pleased to bring greetings on behalf of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church and the Metropolitan. We give thanks to God for guiding us in our search for common understanding and the initiatives towards unity between the Old Catholic Church and the Mar Thoma Church. I do appreciate the ecumenical spirit and openness of the Archbishop and the Bishops of the Old Catholic Church, which we experienced during the four days while we were together for the Bishops' meeting at Wislikofen and Zurich.

The team visits and interactions at various levels, during the last three years, especially in our study on the ecclesiology of these Churches helped both Churches to move forward to develop mutual co-operation and inter-church relation in a more visible form. The participation in this International Old Catholic Congress is an opportunity to feel and experience the spiritual life of the Church and its common vision and mission. Of course, the call to share the joy will have its impact in the process of participation and involvement that transcend all boundaries.

The Mar Thoma Church is an autonomous Church which goes back to A.D.52, with St. Thomas the disciple of Jesus Christ, who preached the Gospel in the southern part of India. This Church known as *St. Thomas Church* keeps its Eastern ecclesial heritage and also carries some good traits of the Protestant ecclesial tradition and theological insights. The Mar Thoma Church keeps ecumenical relationship for its self-understanding and involvement in the wider community. It maintains its affinity to the Oriental Orthodox family and hold on the Biblical truth as its foundation. It entered into communion relation with the Anglican Church and has been a regular fraternal participant in the Lambeth Conference. The Church through its mission outreach continues its *diakonia* ministry in India and now spreads in many countries with a sizable number in North America, Middle East and other parts of the world.

I thank God for guiding us thus far, and wish all success to this International Congress. May God grant new vision to carry on the mission mandate of our Lord and continue to strengthen the community to prosper and flourish through its life and witness in this part of the world.

Von Erzpriester Draško Todorović, Zürich

Ich habe die Ehre, Ihnen die Grüsse Seiner Heiligkeit Patriarch Irinej von Serbien zu übermitteln. Seine Heiligkeit Patriarch Irinej wünscht dem 30. Internationalen Altkatholikenkongress in Zürich vom Herzen eine gesegnete und erfolgreiche Arbeit.

Die serbisch-orthodoxe Kirche ist mit der Christkatholischen Kirche der Schweiz seit über 100 Jahren in besonderer Weise verbunden.