

## REFLECTIONS ON LEAVING LVIV

*Fr René Beaupère OP of the Centre Saint-Irénée, Lyon, organised an International Seminar on Mixed Marriages together with Professor Antoine Arjakovsky, the Orthodox Director of the Ecumenical Institute of the Catholic University of the Ukraine. This took place in Lviv 17-21 July 2008, and local participants were joined by two interchurch couples from France, one from England, and a whole family of five from Switzerland. They stayed at the Greek Catholic Seminary of the Holy Spirit, while the conference sessions took place at the Ecumenical Institute. Speakers included the two organisers, Pastor Jean-Baptiste Lipp of the Swiss interchurch family association, the Rector of a Greek Orthodox parish in Lyon, and a number of clergy from the Ukraine, Latin Catholic, Orthodox, and two Greek Catholics. We give here an English translation of the 'Envoi' pronounced by René Beaupère at the close of the meeting.*

Thanks to their 'ecumenism of life', interchurch families and their activity within the churches often present a challenge to 'academic' theologies. Indeed, not only to the theologies, but to some of those institutions themselves. I want to suggest four points for reflection on this subject.

### **Theology of marriage and pastoral care of the divorced**

*First*, ecumenical families oblige the churches to revise their theologies of marriage, and their pastoral attitudes towards those who are divorced. In this particularly delicate area, today, it is probably that the positions taken by the three big confessional families are less different than would appear at first sight. Does it not seem that each of the traditions holds principally to one element of the Gospel heritage? In a world in which marriages often fail, one church is firm in holding on to 'marriage for life'. Others practise better – each in its own way – evangelical mercy in the face of irreparable breakdown in some marriages.

Cannot the existence of mixed marriages call all these confessional families to a mutual 'conversion' that will allow them to rediscover the fullness of the Gospel message in this area? That presupposes a study together – hardly even begun yet – of the theology of marriage and the pastoral care of the divorced.

### **The practical recognition of ministries**

*Secondly*, interconfessional families show the churches that they are further advanced than they realise or say in the recognition – at least partial – of their ministries. Half a century ago, in France and in Switzerland, pastors and priests committed themselves to journey together with interconfessional couples. But no church thought it had to verify, from one side or the other, their 'letters of authorisation' and ask whether such and such a minister could legitimately exercise pastoral care of sheep which did not belong to his own 'fold'. Of course we did not speak about theological recognition of ministries, but there was a practical

recognition of ministries, at least to a certain extent. Have the churches yet drawn out the ecumenical consequences of this practical recognition?

### **Orthodox and Greek Catholic live together within one tradition**

*Thirdly*, along the same lines, have not we who come here from Western Europe learned that in the Ukraine marriages that we would spontaneously call interconfessional – I refer to those between an Orthodox and a Greek Catholic – are lived by the two spouses as though they are yoked together within the same confessional tradition? And even some theologians are inclined to see things in the same way. What consequences should we draw out from this for the reconciliation of the churches?

### **Sacramental sharing: baptism and eucharist**

*Fourthly*, the existence of interchurch families should lead the churches to question themselves more seriously than they have yet done on the obvious contradiction between a mutually recognised baptism and a eucharist that bars sacramental sharing. Does this really give due weight to all the consequences of baptism? And why not admit that some differences may well disappear in the fire of a eucharist where mutual hospitality is practised?

We could make a longer list. But it seems to me that for now these four questions for reflection, roused in me or revived by an attentive listening to our speakers and our discussions, are enough.

It only remains for us all to commit ourselves, from the Atlantic to the Urals, to work for the increase of that little evangelical mustard seed that we have received here, in the Seminary of the Holy Spirit, in the monastery of Ouniv and in the Catholic University of this beautiful city of Lviv.

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