

COMMUNIQUÉ

on the Fourteenth Theological Discussion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, with the title "Freedom as Gift and Responsibility. Human Rights and Religious Education from the Christian Perspective"

The fourteenth theological discussion meeting between the delegations of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland was held September 18th through 24th, 2008 in the building of the metropolitan of Alexander Nevsky Lavra.

The first theological discussion meeting was held in 1970 in Sinappi, Turku (Finland), the second in 1971 in Zagorsk (Russia/USSR), the third in 1974 in Järvenpää (Finland), the fourth in 1977 in Kiev (Ukraine/USSR), the fifth in 1980 in Turku (Finland), the sixth in 1983 in Leningrad (Russia/USSR), the seventh in 1986 in Mikkeli (Finland), the eighth in 1989 in Pyhtitsa (Piukhtitsa, Estonia/USSR) and Leningrad, the ninth in 1992 in Järvenpää (Finland), the tenth in 1995 in Kiev (Ukraine), the eleventh in 1998 in Lappeenranta (Finland), the twelfth in 2002 in Moscow (Russia) and the thirteenth in 2005 in Sinappi, Turku (Finland).

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The delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church included permanent member of the Holy Synod, His Eminence Metropolitan **VLADIMIR** of St. Petersburg and Ladoga (head of the delegation); His Eminence Bishop **HILARION** of Vienna and Austria; Vice Chairman of Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, Archpriest Vsevolod **CHAPLIN**, Archimandrite **YANNUARY**, Vicar of Prince Vladimir's Cathedral, Dean Vladimir **SOROKIN**, professor in the St. Petersburg Theological Academy; Kiev Theological Academy teacher Igumeni **KIRILL**, employee of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's Department for External Church Relations; Pastor Igor **VYSHANOV**, secretary of inter-Christian relations of Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Pastor Vladimir **HULAP**, priest of the Pavlovsky Holy Apostle-like Mary Magdalene congregation of St. Petersburg Diocese; teacher at the Moscow and St. Petersburg Theological Academy, Pastor Dmitry **YUREVITCH** and employee of Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, Moscow Theological Academy teacher Yelena S. **SPERANSKAYA**.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church delegation consisted of The Most Rev. Jukka **PAARMA**, Archbishop of Turku and Finland (head of the delegation); the Right Rev. Dr. Voitto **HUOTARI**, Bishop of Mikkeli; the Right Rev. Dr. Matti **REPO**, Bishop of Tampere; Professor Gunnar af **HÄLLSTRÖM** of the Faculty of Theology in the Åbo Akademi; Professor Jaana **HALLAMAA** of the Faculty of Theology in the University of Helsinki; Docent Jyri **KOMULAINEN** of the University of Helsinki; Pastor Heta **HURSKAINEN** and, as an advisor, Professor Antti **LAATO** of the Faculty of Theology of Åbo Akademi.

Invited by Russian Orthodox Church and participating in the meeting as observers were Bishop Aarre **KUUKAUPPI**; Dean, General Secretary Alexander **PRILUTSKY** and Dean Olav **PANCHU** representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia.

As advisors of the Russian Orthodox Church were Dean Alexander **Sorokin**, chairman of the Publications Department of the Diocese of St. Petersburg; Dean Georgy **Schmid**, teacher of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy; Dean Vyacheslav **Harinov**, Vicar of the congregation dedicated to the Icon of Our Lady the Joy of All Sorrowing; Dean Georgy **Joffe**, employee of the Mission Department of the Diocese of St. Petersburg and Communications Officer Anastasya **Koskelo** of the Zivaja Voda magazine of the diocese.

As ex-officio members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, there were Director of the Church Government Department for International Relations, Church Councillor Risto **Cantell**; Dr. Kimmo **Kääriäinen**, director of the Church Research Centre; Communications Director Tuomo **Pesonen** of the Church's Communications Centre; Dean Heikki **Jääskeläinen**, secretary of the Archbishop; Dr. Kaisamari **Hintikka**, acting secretary of Theology of the Department for International Relations, and Rev. Timo **Rosqvist**, secretary of the Archbishop's chancellery.

Interpreters in the discussions were Margarita *Kyllesten*, Marina *Latschinoff*, Tarja *Leppäaho* and Ekaterina *Vlasova*. The secretariat of the discussions consisted of the Chief of Protocol Ivan *Sudosa* of the Diocese of St. Petersburg and Pastor Igor *Katayev* and Tamara *Dontsova*, employees of the St. Petersburg office Department for International Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, and correspondence secretary Minna *Väliäho* of the Church Government Department for International Relations.

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The opening ceremonies of the discussions were held on Thursday, September 18th, 2008. When opening the discussions, Metropolitan Vladimir read out loud the greeting sent by Patriarch Aleksy II of Moscow and all of Russia, in which His Holiness presented the following:

"The freedom of man, the theme of our freedom to choose between good and evil has been one of the central issues of Christian theology ever since the ancient church fathers' era. Today, this theme has become especially topical. The standards of world views and the individual models of behaviour dictated by the secularised world are often in conflict with the Christian view of man, the Christian view of society and moral values.

"With the help of proper education and training, the young generation will become the foundation of the kind of society that can orientate in its life according to truth and ideals of good. That kind of society will be able to show its faith, mercy and ability for compassion along with striving for worldly success. It is called to show tolerance toward different opinions, and an ability to defend its own crucial principles and ideals. In this connection, I would like to remind us of the words of a Russian contender, Saint Theophan the Recluse: "Education is the holiest of all deeds"."

Concerning the discussions that were about to begin, Metropolitan Vladimir noted among other things:

"The topic of the present discussion on doctrine contains a group of issues, which we are handling for the first time and which have an extremely great significance to the modern Christianity that is facing the challenges of the secularised society. The freedom, donated by God often gets distorted to egoism serving the satisfaction of man's sinful tendencies. By appealing to human rights, the modern world is cultivating viewpoints whose content differs completely from Christian teaching. All this cannot but have an impact on the education of the growing generation. Its spiritual health will mould the future of our world."

Archbishop Jukka Paarma reminded us that 30 years had lapsed from the death of Metropolitan Nikodim on September 5th, and on September 17th one hundred years from the birth of Archbishop Martti Simojoki, both of whom had a crucial impact on initiating the discussions nearly 40 years ago.

"In their time, Archbishop Martti Simojoki and Metropolitan Nikodim were bold church leaders, who looked and saw into the future and wanted to build it on apostolic faith and the common tradition of the church. Their example encourages us also today to follow the road of truth and love shown by our Lord Jesus Christ.

"When the will of both our churches is to build on the basis of apostolic faith and the Church's common tradition, and when we want to consider the word of God given in the Holy Bible our supreme authority, there is a common ground for our discussions", said Archbishop Jukka Paarma.

In the opening ceremony, greetings were also presented by Russian Federation's Consul General of Turku A.V. Safronov, Finland's St. Petersburg Consul Leena Liski, and Chief of Religious Affairs L.S. Musienko read the greeting of St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Ivanovna Matvienko.

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During the discussions, the members of the delegations took turns in delivering morning prayers according to the Lutheran and Orthodox tradition.

On Friday, September 19th, the delegations had a moment of prayer together in the Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg church at the cemetery of the Church of the Icon of Our Lady of Smolensk. Vicar Victor Moscovsky hosted the dinner of the delegations.

On Saturday September 20th, Metropolitan Vladimir delivered the Eve of the Birth of the Mother of God evening service in the Holy Trinity church of the Lavra. Lavra's Vice Director, Archimandrite Nazari hosted a dinner of the delegations.

On Sunday, September 21st, the members of the delegations prayed in the liturgy of the celebration of the Birth of the Mother of God in the cathedral of Kazan and in the Lutheran mass celebrated in St. Mary church. The heads of the delegation gave sermons. Vice Director of the cathedral of Kazan, Vicar Pavel Krasnotzvetov hosted a lunch in honour of the delegations. In the evening, the delegations got acquainted with the church and activities of Pushkino Lutheran congregation with Vicar Fyodor Tulyny and the Sofia Orthodox church with Vicar Gennady Zverev, who also hosted a dinner at the congregation centre of his church.

On Monday, September 22nd, Finland's Consul General Olli Perheentupa received the delegations at his residence, after which the delegations got acquainted with the church of the Icon of Our Lady of Vladimir and enjoyed a dinner hosted by Vicar Vladimir Fomenko.

On Tuesday, September 23rd, St Petersburg Governor V.I. Matvienko's representative M.E. Oseyevsky organised a reception for the delegation in Smolna administrative centre, and afterward, there was an official reception of the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg and Ladoga Vladimir in the Golden Room of the Lavra.

On the day that we received news of the tragic shooting incident in Kauhajoki, Finland, those participating in the discussions honoured the memory of the shooting victims with a moment of silence and prayed for those that had been affected by the event.

On Wednesday, September 24th, the discussion documents were signed in a festive ceremony in the Blue Room of the building of the Metropolitan of St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra, with Metropolitan Vladimir and Archbishop Jukka Paarma both giving a speech.

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During the discussions, the following presentations connected with the general theme "Freedom as Gift and Responsibility, Human Rights and Religious Education from Christian Perspective" were held:

Archimandrite Yannuary (Ivlyev) and Professor Antti Laato: "Freedom as Gift and Responsibility in the Bible"
 Dean Vsevolod Chaplin: "Russian Orthodox Church and Human Rights"
 Professor Jaana Hallamaa: "Human Rights in Light of Christianity"
 Pastor Vladimir Hulap: "Religious Education from Christian Perspective"
 Docent Jyri Komulainen: "Religion Education from Christian Perspective"

The results of the discussions have been presented in the attached summary.

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The Fourteenth Theological Discussions of the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland were held in cordial Christian spirit of openness and mutual respect. At the conclusion of their work, the delegations thanked God and expressed their unanimous view that the discussions have been fruitful and the mutual understanding of the churches has further increased. That is why the Theological Discussions need to continue.

St. Petersburg, September 24th, 2008

Vladimir
 Metropolitan of St. Petersburg and Ladoga

Jukka Paarma
Archbishop of Turku and Finland