



French-speaking participants' quire.

The participants were also received by the Metropolitan Augustinos (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and Seraphim (Patriarchate of Romania) in Bonn. A very open discussion took place, in the course of which Metropolitan Augustinos said that translation and also the expression of our faith in an appropriate language is absolutely necessary, but it should go with the enculturation and not be forced; it also should happen under coordination of all the Orthodox present in Germany.

In the end of the meeting during an exchange about local experience, Fr. Timothy Dewedi from Benin spoke about his experience in his country and other countries in Africa. There was an orthodox mission there during the last decades, and naturally the languages used were local languages, mainly French and Swahili, but also many others, like Fon for Benin. The offices are held in these languages as a matter of fact, as no one would think to found a mission in Greek or Slavonic. This should make us reflect on our own situation in Western Europe and the implications of language use for our witness here.

One important outcome of this seminar was the founding of a contact group for translators. It became clear that some translation issues surpass the language barrier and that translators in different languages can help each other to find principles of translation and to surpass special difficulties. A publication containing the talks of the conferences will be published this year.

What we could ask ourselves after such a seminar is: what immediate results could it have on the language situation our Church is living in at the moment? Perhaps we could hope for more of openness to the idea that we are not simply being “modernists” when promoting translation, but that we are acting in the true spirit of our Tradition. It must also be said that few would propose to give up entirely the old liturgical languages; but each language spoken by members of the Church should also be a language of their prayer - if not, we will speak in Church “ten thousand words in an unknown tongue instead of five words with our understanding” (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:19).

Alexandra Popescu

“Unity in diversity: being different, being together” Youth Encounter between the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox *Vanadzor, Armenia,* 22 - 27 September 2005

We can with regret remember the battles over participation of youth organisation from the Oriental Orthodox Churches in Syndesmos at the XVI Syndesmos General Assembly in New Valamo (Finland) and the reaction to those of an Indian sister, which was published in the Assembly Bulletin: “In India I’m proud to be an Orthodox Christian, but here I found out that I’m just an Oriental”. Without going into depth regarding the theological aspects of the dialogue between Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches, it is with deep shame that we should consider the situation of someone feeling excluded or undervalued in the family of Churches that claims to have retained the tradition of the Apostolic Church.

Syndesmos Constitution declares our Fellowship “an instrument for furthering cooperation and deeper communion between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches”. This commitment was reaffirmed in September 2005, when 25 young people from the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox traditions gathered to reflect upon the theme “Unity in diversity: being different, being together” 22 - 27 September 2005 at Gyumri, Armenia. This project was supported by the European Youth Foundation, to which we express our gratitude.

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In the monastery of Haghpat.



A moment of rest after a long walk.

The catalyst to organise such a meeting in Armenia arose from the fact that at Syndesmos XVII General Assembly we welcomed our first member organisation from this country - the Youth of Jrvezh, represented by its chairperson, Lilit Sargsyan.

This trip to Armenia had the following characteristics. Firstly, for quite a long time Syndesmos haven't had an event with the majority of participants from the Oriental tradition and, therefore, it was important to choose content for the meeting that would inspire positive and fruitful discussions. The theme of the exchange itself - "Being different, being together"- ensured that there would be no topics that could bring about opposition. Therefore, the preparatory committee decided to focus on the issues of general importance - history, nation, culture, etc. It is also worth noting that in general very few young people from Oriental Orthodox Churches apply for participation in Syndesmos meetings. While there can be a variety of reasons for this, we need to



Anna Rogozhina reads the Gospel during the liturgy.

reconfirm that Federated members of the Fellowship carry as much responsibility for their full participation in Syndesmos life as everyone else. Secondly, we have never had an event held in Caucasus, a region with history rich in glorious and also tragic events, the most recent of them connected to the Soviet totalitarian regime.

The choice of the preparatory committee, led by Spyros Tsimouris, vice-president of Syndesmos, was to give the youth encounter a twofold focus - to invite the participants to discover their unity as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and to try to discern the issues that may lead away from it, for example, wrong interpretation of our denominational and national identity and responsibility towards it. The programme offered a wide, but coherent range of activities in order to promote common thinking and dialogue on these issues - common prayer organised according to both Oriental and Eastern Orthodox traditions but not mixing them up, inputs, discussions, presentations and trips.

Mr. Pekka Metso, lecturer of systematic theology at the University of Joensuu (Finland) started the discussion with his input "Witnessing Christ Today", in which he proposed to meditate on the basic elements of Christianity. Fr. Dajad A. Davidian (Armenia) explained in his talk the relation between the Eucharist and community, but also led the participants through similarities and distinctions of Armenian and Byzantine liturgical traditions. Sister Theoktisti (Emsley) from the monastery of St. John the Forerunner

(Agia, Greece) spoke on the theme "Nationalism as a Christian Disease". She encouraged the group to reflect on the meaning of nationality for Christians provoking hot debates on diversity and identity, on national and/or personal identity, and on how youth can contribute to peaceful and positive cooperation of their churches and growth of mutual understanding. The participants agreed that it is of immense importance to be able to distinguish between faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and local church traditions, which vary from place to place and often do not directly relate to the essence of Christian faith. The issue of so called "diaspora" was touched upon during these discussions; it was noted that both Oriental and Eastern Orthodox communities abroad being formed on national principle often appear to be more like "ethnic clubs" rather than Christian churches.

Spyros Tsimouris addressed the participants and the students of the Sevan Vazkenian Theological Seminary with a talk on the service of the laity and clergy in the Church. While it should be noted that our communities often suffer from clericalism, in many cases the laity themselves choose a passive role and are reluctant to take any responsibility in the church life. The speaker also underlined that it is vital for the dialogue between Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, as well as for healthy theological self-awareness of the Churches, to distinguish the word about God (theology) from confessional ideologies, which lead to fundamentalism and fanaticism. In the end of the meeting Anna Rogozhina made a brief presentation of Syndesmos.

Regarding the outcome of the meeting, we



Outi Vasko presents Syndesmos publications at Sevan seminary.



The discussion at Etchmiadzin.

should mention above all the true brotherly and sisterly friendship which appeared among the participants; it also became clear that by having this friendship in Christ as a foundation for communication, we can discuss difficult issues of our faith, religion, and culture without placing ourselves in opposition to one another. Common solutions can be found with humility and repentance. We have a long way to go before we can remove the obstacles erected by previous mistakes and conflicts.

We are grateful to all local organisers - members, Youth of Jrvezh, and personally to Lilit Sargsyan, who did a wonderful job for preparation and implementation of this meeting, Fr. Dajad A. Davidian and the staff of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin - Fr. Hovakim Manukyan and Eliza Manukyan. For them, being new to Syndesmos this meeting was a perfect introduction to the life of the Fellowship and a real test on trustful and effective cooperation.

During the last day of the encounter the group went on an excursion to Etchmiadzin. There the international participants had the honour of meeting his holiness Catholicos Karekin II, who expressed his joy over this first encounter and his wish for an even stronger cooperation with Syndesmos in the future.

*Olga Oleinik,
Spyros Tsimouris, Outi Vasko*



The international participants and Catholicos Karekin II.

Syndesmos members activities

*Common work, fun
and prayer*

25 years of the Fellowship
of Orthodox Youth in Poland

Year 2005 marked the 25th anniversary of the Fellowship of Orthodox Youth in Poland. This splendid event was celebrated in various ways during almost the entire year. The first part started with the film show describing the history and present life of the fellowship, which took place in March in Bia_ystok, the town where the headquarters of the fellowship are located, with about 300 people in attendance.

“Day of Open Doors” was another event to introduce more people to the work of the fellowship. Young people visited the main office in Bia_ystok and observed the work of the managing board. There were talks and discussion about the aims and the work of the fellowship.

The biggest common event was organised in one of the fellowship's center in a small village in the east of Poland, with a river and beautiful landscapes around. It was called “Summer Festival”. People gathered together for three days to pray, discuss, and have fun, celebrating the anniversary of their organization. The program consisted of the championships of small parish groups, where the people could show their creativity or sportsmanship. There was also a film show, common volleyball match, and a special event - an auction of the historical fellowship's gadgets - T-shirts, posters from the pilgrimages, balls with logo etc. Saturday's lunch was prepared from the ingredients brought by the participants and the common soup was cooked. There was also a short discussion about the fellowship's history, prepared by the founders of the organization, its first workers, and volunteers.

During the whole event there was also place for the common prayer. On Saturday and Sunday, liturgies were celebrated, where the people took part in the Eucharist and gave thanks to God for the common years of work and entertainment within the Fellowship of Orthodox Youth.

The last part of celebrating the anniversary was the photo exhibition “25 years of the fellowship in Poland” connected with the show of the film about the organization. All of the events were visited by the hierarchy of the Church, who participated together with parish priests and the youth.

The Fellowship of the Orthodox Youth in Poland was established in 1980. During the difficult political situation (years of communism in Poland) a group of people tried to create the organization, which