

1. International Conference 'Philadelphia: The Challenge of Fraternity', Strasbourg.

The European Society for Catholic Theology, together with the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Strasbourg, has held its biennial conference. Under the banner of 'Philadelphia: the Challenge of Fraternity' over two hundred participants from thirty-two different nationalities gathered in Strasbourg from August 30th to September 2nd. The conference was presided over by prof. Marie-Jo Thiel, current president of the ESCT, and organized under the auspices of Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland (Secretary General of the Council of Europe) and Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

The conference started on Wednesday, August 30th with a junior conference for emerging scholars (doctoral candidates and postdoctoral scholars). The day was introduced by plenary speeches from Pierre Van Hecke and Marie-Jo Thiel, followed by papers from twenty-six emerging scholars who spoke in eight separate sessions. The overall quality of these sessions should be highlighted, and many of them were retained for publication. Parallel to the junior conference the Association catholique française pour l'étude de la Bible held a discussion on the conference's central theme.

On Wednesday the incoming and outgoing presidents, Marie-Jo Thiel and Pierre van Hecke opened a session with papers by Mrs Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni (Joint Secretary General of the Council of Europe), Mgr. Paulo Rudelli (Permanent observer of the Holy See to the Council of Europe), M. Paolo Pinto di Albuquerque (Judge to the European Court for Human Rights) and Mr. Henrik Kristensen (who spoke on behalf of Mr. Régis Brillat, Head of the Department of the European Charter). The opening talks were followed by a plenary discussion on the importance of fraternity and its relation to solidarity in both European texts and practices.

On Thursday, Friday and Saturday, five plenary sessions and sixteen parallel sessions were held. During the plenary sessions ten scholars discussed the theme of fraternity, focusing on five of its aspects, respectively its present-day significance (Bruno Demoures and Michelle Becka), its historical and biblical meaning (André Wénin and Tom Wright), its theological significance (Michel Dujarier and Janet Soskice), its social and ecological implications (Corina Mieth and Jürgen Moltmann), and finally the anthropological challenges and gender approaches (Gustave Kovacs and Teresa I Vila). In the sixteen parallel sessions over the course of Thursday and Friday, around three speakers per session presented papers on several aspects of the central theme. Given the high quality and the originality of many of the papers, the presidium of the ESCT intends to publish the proceedings of this conference, and the contributors will be contacted on this in due course.

2. European Book Prize

During our biennial conference at Strasbourg, the ESCT book prizes were awarded. An international jury, presided over by professor Sigrid Müller of the University of Vienna decided to grant the following works with an award:

Scholar award for the Theological Book of the Year:

Prof. Dr. Ulrich Engel, *Politische Theologie 'nach' der Postmoderne.*

Geistergespräche mit Derrida & Co. Mathias Grunewald Verlag, Ostfildern, 2017.

The junior scholar award for the Theological Book of the Year was granted to two ex-aequo laureats:

Dr. Xavier Gué, *La christologie de Wolfhart Pannenberg. De la modernité à la*

postmodernité, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2016.

Dr. Alexander Merkl, *'Si vis pacem, para virtutes'. Ein tugendethischer Beiträge zu einem Ethos der Friedfertigkeit.* Aschendorff, Münster, 2015.

3. The new composition of the Presidium and International Curatorium

During the General Assembly at our meeting in Strasbourg, the following decisions were made regarding the organization of our society:

Prof. Marie-Jo Thiel was welcomed as the incoming ESCT President and was warmly congratulated by the Curatorium members for the excellent organization of the Congress in Strasbourg. She succeeds Pierre van Hecke, who has rendered wonderful service to our Society the several years. Prof. Milos Lichner (Bratislava, Slovakia) was appointed by the meeting as vice-president and president-elect. He will take charge of the next international conference, to be held in 2019 at Bratislava. Apart from the ex-officio members of the Presidium (President, Vice-President, ET Studies Editor-in-chief and General Secretary) the following changes were made, according to the current statutes. Prof. Dr. Katica Knezovic has finished her second two-year term and therefore could not be reelected. Prof. Roman Zaviyskyy has completed his first term and has kindly agreed to continue for the next two years as a Presidium member. Accordingly the Curatorium has re-elected Roman Zaviyskyy for a second term of two years. In order to respect regional and gender balances on the presidential board, two new candidates were proposed by the President, namely professors Maureen Junker-Kenny from Ireland and John Berry from Malta. Both were elected as Presidium members. The presidential board henceforth is as follows: Marie-Jo Thiel (pres.), Milos Lichner (vice-pres.), Dries Bosschaert (sec. gen. as of 2018), Gerhard Kruip (ET-Studies), Maureen-Junker Kenny, Roman Zaviyskyy, John Berry.

The new president Marie-Jo Thiel gave a warm vote of thanks to the two outgoing members, Pierre van Hecke and Katica Knezovic for all the work they have done over the last few years.

On the Curatorium, two changes were made: the Hungarian section has elected a new President, namely Prof. Gustav Kovacs. Prof. Laszlo Perendy has finished his mandate and was thanked by the Curatorium members for his service. Prof. Wojciech Surmiak was elected as Poland's section President, and succeeds Prof. Elzbieta Osewska in this capacity.

4. New Secretary General

The mandate of Prof. Karim Schelkens (the General Secretary), in accordance with the ESCT statutes, will end in February 2018. After due consideration, a new candidate, Dr. Dries Bosschaert, was accepted by the Curatorium. Dries Bosschaert was unanimously elected as the ESCT General Secretary for a period of five years. He will be in charge of the general secretariat, will coordinate the membership, curatorium meetings and, as of December 2017, he will take over the ex officio position of Prof. Schelkens on the Hünemann Foundation as of December 2017. The Society warmly welcomes Dries in its ranks and thanks Prof Schelkens for all his work throughout the past five years.

5. Forthcoming meetings

Presidium - The ESCT presidium will gather in Stuttgart, from 16 to 17 December 2017. The meeting will deal with regular business, as well as an extraordinary meeting – organized by the Hünemann Foundation – to plan the financial future of the Society.

Curatorium – On 16 and 17 February 2018, the international Curatorium board will have its annual meeting. The venue is at the city of Mechelen, and will focus on a

debate regarding contemporary issues in the Catholic Church. Prof. Karlijn Demasure has been invited as guest for a discussion on sexual abuse in the Church. Furthermore, a discussion will focus on the issue of women deacons, based on contributions by Roman Siebenrock, Michael Howlett and Roman Zaviyskyy.

6. Call for papers

The first Annual Conference of the European Academy of Religion (EuARE) will be held in March 2018: the meeting is set for the second week of the month, from Monday 5 to Thursday 8, in Bologna. A call for papers has been recently published on the EuARE website: <https://www.europeanacademyofreligion.org/>. The deadline is set on Wednesday, 20 December 2017.