

Report from ARGE-Ökumene, Austria

The October 2007 annual ARGE conference took place in Salzburg, on the theme of 'Enjoying the Bible: working creatively with the Word of God'. At the beginning of the conference, Wolfgang Hinker reported on the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, where he was an official delegate of the Austrian (RC) Bishops' Conference. There followed a discussion with representative leaders of the RC, Methodist and Old Catholic churches. The remaining time was dedicated to the Bible theme. In workshops devoted to 'Bible Drama', 'Creative work with Bible', 'Sacred Dance' and 'Bible Study', participants tried to approach the sacred text in a creative way. An outing (Bible and Art) took us to different modern churches in Salzburg. The final session contained reports from different Austrian states, and an ecumenical act of worship.

In May 2008 our group went on a trip to visit monasteries on the Moselle in Romania. For the 31 travellers this was a wonderful experience. Klemens and Elisabeth Betz also very much enjoyed the AIF Conference in Swanwick in August.

In October 2008 the annual conference took place in Bad Ischl on the theme 'The image of God and Man in our churches'. RC and Lutheran speakers gave an address. At the centre of the conference was as usual the ecumenical Sunday worship, this year held in the Bad Ischl RC parish church. Reports from the different states made it clear that ecumenical activity in individual dioceses covers a wide spectrum. There are dioceses where a great deal is possible, but in others this is not possible. Ecumenism clearly depends strongly on specific church or parish leaders.

The theme of the 2009 conference will be 'The Domestic Church', and it was unanimously decided to contribute our experiences and reflections to Thomas Knieps IFIN project.

Klemens and Elisabeth Betz

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