



NEWS RELEASE at the end of the ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN
VOCATIONS SERVICE, Warsaw 2-6 July 2003

“The integration of the New Vocations Ministry into the broader structures of pastoral life”

“Europe needs not just a Constitution, but also a soul”: this oft-repeated statement does not represent the specific result of the Annual Conference of the *European Vocations Service* (EVS) which took place at Warsaw from 2-6 July; however, this desire for a united Europe, firmly rooted in Christianity, is the major context and framework for questions about the vocations ministry.

At the start of the five-day Conference, Archbishop Alois Kothgasser (EVS President, and CCEE Bishop Delegate for vocations ministry) greeted about 65 participants, including 12 Bishops, emphasising that the integration of the vocations ministry into the broader structures of pastoral life is not something artificial; vocations ministry “is born and grows naturally alongside ordinary pastoral structures”.

Bishop Stefan Regmunt (Legnica, Poland) also spoke about the unity between vocations ministry and the broader structures of pastoral life. Referring to vocations in Poland, he noted the positive fact of the continued growth in the number of priests. However, the Polish Bishops are concerned about demographic developments which will certainly affect future numbers of priests and religious. In order to maintain a sufficient number of priests and religious, Bishop Regmunt said it is important that vocations ministry be closely linked to the programme of the *new evangelisation*. The Rector of the Warsaw diocesan seminary, Professor Krzysztof Pawlina, gave a detailed and surprising analysis of the faith, values and ideas of Polish seminary students today.

On the third day of the Conference, participants discussed 2 Talks given by Professor Amedeo Cencini (Rome) (I. Essential elements of a renewed vocations ministry, II. Practical application to the broader structures of pastoral life). He spoke of the essential elements of a renewed vocations ministry, stressing that a pastoral strategy that is not vocational is not really pastoral and will not be effective. Every member of the Church has his or her own calling, and part of that is to help others to discover their place in the Church. It is worth noting that the participants in the Congress work to foster ecclesial vocations of all types.

At the celebration of Mass, the Polish primate and Archbishop of Warsaw, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, said there were various factors which lead to new vocations, but the basic motive is a mystery: “The mystery, it seems to us, is hidden in individual and family prayer, as well as in the life style of priests”.

On the last day of the Conference there was a pilgrimage to the shrine so dear to the people of Poland, the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, where Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski (Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome) presided at the celebration of Mass. Referring to Pope John Paul II’s recent encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, the Cardinal affirmed that the Eucharist is “the summit and source of source vocations ministry.”

Administrative matters were dealt with on Sunday morning. Fr Kevin Doran (Dublin, Ireland) was unanimously elected to succeed Mgr. (...) Rainer Birkenmaier (Fribourg, Germany) as EVS Co-ordinator. At the concluding Mass, Bishop Stefan Regmunt thanked the participants for their active participation in the work and highlighted the significance of the EVS for the Catholic Church in Europe. The next meeting will be in Strasbourg at the beginning of July 2004.

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