

Ecumenical days in Valencia and meeting with the cardinal Kurt Koch

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On 3rd and 4th of March 2015, in the frame of the “*Permanent training for priests*” and at the initiative of Andres Valencia, the *Ecumenical and Inter denomination Centre of Valencia*, together with the *Ecumenical Centre of documentation “Father Congar”* and the *Faculty of Theology “San Vicente Ferrer”* and in collaboration with *IEF*, the *Ecumenical Association of Chritions from Valencia* and the *Oratory of “San Felipe de Neri de Valencia”*, have organized two ecumenical days.

These ecumenical days were entitled: “GOD of LIFE, CONVERT US and LEAD US TOWARDS the UNITY”. For this purpose they invited the Cardinal **Kurt Koch**, President of *the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the Christian Unity from Vatican*.

The first day (3rd of March) Ecumenical Vespers were organized in the basilica “San Vicente Ferrer” and presided by the **Cardinal Kurt Koch** with the presence of the **Archbishop of Valencia, D. Antonio Canizares**. Many Christian Churches of Valencia and Spain, Anglican, Catholic latine, Reformed, German Evangelic, Baptist, Lutheran Evangelic from Spain, Greek-Catholic from Ukrania, Romanian Orthodox and Russian Orthodox, were participating. During the Vespers, the cardinal Kurt Koch gave us a homily entitled: “*To pray with Jesus for the Unity of His Church*”. Here are some points of this homily: “The authentic Ecumenism cannot be practiced without an internal conversion”, “Jesus did not prescribe the Unity but asked us to pray for Unity”, “knowing the seriousness of the counter-witness of the christians division, to search the way for unity is very urgent”...

During the intercessions, all Priests and pastors of the different Churches represented, gave a prayer:

- “For all christian Churches”, from Romanian Orthodox Church
- “For Christian Unity”, from German Evangelic Church
- “For the persecuted Christians”, from Baptist Church
- “For the Jewish people”, from traditional Anglican Church
- “For the leaders of all Nations”, from Greek-Catholic Church of Ukrania
- “For the justice and peace”, from Catholic latine Church
- “For people who are suffering”, from Lutheran Evangelic Church of Spain
- “For the preservation of the Creation”, from Catholic latine Church

Then Priests and Pastors overlayed a chalice and a paten empty to show the pain of the separation.



Vespers in “San Vicente Ferrer”

”After the Vespers, we met around a buffet where we exchanged with many people.



Cordial buffet with many personalities around the Cardinal K. Koch

The second day (4th of March), we attended a lecture given by the Cardinal Kurt Koch: the lecture was entitled: “*Ut unum sint: Ecumenism, as an ecclesial duty of the Council Vatican II*”. The Lecture was followed by a lot of questions asked to the Cardinal.



Andres Valencia is introducing the lecture of the cardinal K. Koch

The lecture was divided into 4 main parts: I mention here some main topics but it is impossible to give a complete view of the lecture in so few lines; this text (14 pages) will be translated into French and then if our British friends are willing to translate it, it will be nice.

- 1) Renewal of the Church and Christian Unity
- 2) Ecumenism as a juridical duty of the ecclesiology

“The way towards Ecumenism is the way of the Church and is organically part of her life and action; it is an irrevocable decision; in that way, the bishop, in his diocese has an ecumenical responsibility. It is not an arbitrary option but a task to be developed, a holy task which must serve as an example for all the Church.”

- 3) The permanence actual of the decree on the Ecumenism

“To maintain awakened the question of the Unity; The Unity of the Church must be the final objective of the Ecumenism; the profession of the Church, one and united in an open spirit to the Ecumenism; conversion, prayer and theology in the Ecumenism;

- 4) Future plans

“Since Vatican II, the world geography of the Christianity has changed so that the Ecumenical situation became more more complicated and difficult. In other words, the restoration of the Unity of Church will take more time than expected after Vatican II.

But there is no alternative to the Ecumenism because it corresponds to the will of Jesus Christ and to His prayer for the Unity.

One of the most important event, **for IEF**, was, before the Vespers, (thanks to Andres Valencia), to discuss, Andres Valencia, Inmaculada Gonzalez, Carmen del Sarmiento and me, with Kurt Koch, during one hour, in the library of the “Father Congar Documentation Centre”.

First, I presented IEF to K. Koch (He did not know it) and then we took time for questions and discussion. Kurt Koch was interested by the international aspect of IEF and its extension to Africa. We ask him if it could be possible to have somebody of Pontifical Council in our international conference; not this year because it is too late and generally they are very occupied at the end of August; may be for Wittenberg, but we have to write him very quickly.

Inmaculada suggested to organize a pilgrimage in Rome as a Mini-conference in 2016. K. Koch said that he could help us (we have to define how with him); during this pilgrimage, it could be possible to have a meeting with the Pope François. Finally, it was agreed with the cardinal to keep close contact with him.

The cardinal Kurt Koch is a very opened, humble and attentive man; he is convinced that Ecumenism is the only right way towards Unity of Christians and encourages all ecumenical initiatives.



Thanks to Andres Valencia for the nice photos included in this text

