

Turning the page in ecumenical relations

6. Februar 2017

Herausgegeben von der
Pressestelle der
Evangelischen Kirche in
Deutschland (EKD)

Herrenhäuser Str. 12
30419 Hannover

T. +49(511) 2796-264/268
F. +49(511) 2796-777

pressestelle@ekd.de
www.ekd.de

EKD delegation visits Pope Francis. Churches agree to move closer. Baptism and Eucharist areas for theological study. Bedford-Strohm and Marx together invite Pope Francis to Germany.

After meeting with Waldensians on Sunday at their church and faculty, the delegation of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) was today received in the Vatican by Pope Francis for a private audience. Reinhard Cardinal Marx, chair of the German Bishops' Conference, also attended the meeting, which lasted a good hour.

Speaking on behalf of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, chair of the EKD Council, stated:

“In 2017 the world needs the joint witness of Christian churches. Where mercy and compassion are denied, the ‘social sin’ threatens human life together. Some now aspire to wall in our humanity. A new populism in different countries glorifies its supporters’ own nation and excludes large groups of people.”

Bedford-Strohm continued: “Our world must aim for ‘a new heart and a new spirit’ of penitence and repentance. As Martin Luther wrote in his first thesis 500 years ago: Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying ‘Do penance...,’ wanted the entire life of the faithful to be one of penitence.”

Referring to the many different ecumenical activities planned by the two churches for 2017, Bedford-Strohm said afterwards that Pope Francis had welcomed them, as ways of moving towards visible unity. In this respect, the EKD Council chair had also explained to the Pope:

“Our churches feel a special responsibility to enhance ecumenical ties, since the divisions started with us in Germany. And we are convinced that we are called to turn the page and find new paths to understanding.”

The EKD and the German Bishops' Conference are gratified at the Pope's support for intensifying theological study on baptism and the Eucharist.

On the occasion of their visit to the Vatican, Cardinal Marx and Bedford-Strohm extended a joint invitation to Pope Francis to visit Germany. After the meeting with the Pope they told media representatives in Rome: "Pope Francis wants to visit Germany. We are delighted at his personal support for our ecumenical journey in Germany. That is also extremely encouraging for the many millions of Christians who cooperate in providing assistance for refugees or participate in ecumenical dialogue groups."

Please note

The addresses given by Pope Francis and EKD Council chair Bedford-Strohm can be downloaded from www.ekd.de. News about the EKD delegation in Rome can be followed on social media at #ROM2017.

For other information about the Reformation anniversary go to www.ekd.de/reformationstag/

Rome/Hanover, 6 February 2017

EKD Press Office

Carsten Splitt