

2nd Partner's Consultation
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria
São Paulo, Brazil, September 6-12, 2013

Evening Devotion

OKR ELKB Michael Martin

Friday 6th of September 2013

Greetings

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

At the end of the first day of our consultation we come together to hear the word of God, who unites us. Although we are coming from different parts of the world, although we are speaking different languages; although we are living in different cultures – we belong together. We are one communion. Because we have one God, who brings us together from the north and from the south, from the east and from the west. Because we have one God, who unites us. Because we have one God, who is with us and accompanies us on our way.

We want to share our experiences, we want to share our gifts, we want to share our challenges during these days we have together here in Sao Paulo.

In doing so we hear, what God tells us through his word. We pray for each other and for our communion. And we sing and praise our Lord.

And all this we do in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn

Bible Reading 1 Corinthians 13

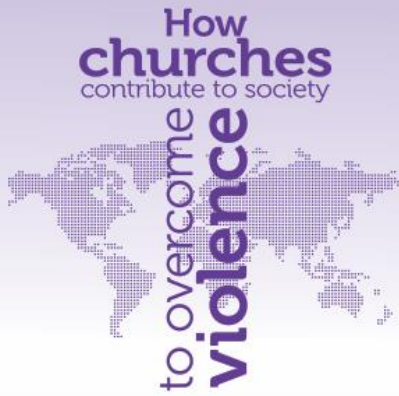
1 If I speak in human or angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body [to hardship] that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.



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6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.

11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Sermon

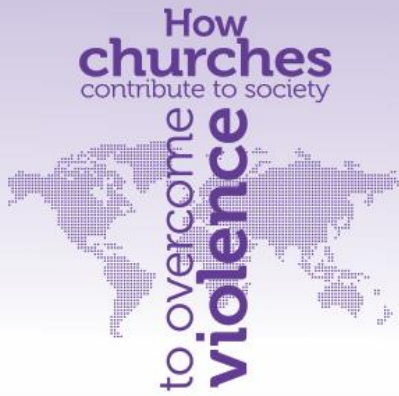
Grace be with you and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Brothers and sisters,
you are here coming from different continents, from different countries, from different churches. You are here coming with different languages, with different cultures, with different knowledge. You are here as delegates of many churches from all parts of the world. We are so different. What do we have in common? What connects us? What unites us?

It is the same faith. It is the same hope. It is the same love – which unites us besides all our differences in languages, colours or cultures. This would be the answer of Paul: Love unites us.

We just heard a chapter of his letter to the Corinthians. It is a very famous and very well known chapter of his letter. It is the chapter, where he describes the connecting line of all christians. Yes, we are connected together, although we are very different. We are connected by our common faith, by our common hope, but in front of all, we are connected by our common love.

Paul knows very well, that this is not very easy to understand. There were many differences, many quarrels in the christian congregation of Corinth. There were



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divisions between several groups. One group wants to belong to Paul. The other to Appollon. The third to Peter. And an other group calls themself christians – in opposite to the other groups of the congregation. But there were not only different groups inside the christian congregation of Korinth. There was also a huge gap between the rich and the poor in the congregation. The rich christians eat and drink, Paul tells us. And later, when the poor members of the congegation – the workers from the harbor – are comming, there is no food, no drink for them, because the rich ones consumed everything, bevor the poors come.

Paul tells us about a kind of violence inside the congregation. We know this violence very well also in our nowadays global village. We know about the rich people, living mostly at the north part of the world, having many goods und many possibilities to live. And we know about many people in the south, who often do not have more than one Dollar a day; who are suffering, because they have no medical treatments; who don't have the possiblities to attend good schools or universities, because they can not pay the school fees.

Yes, we are aware of the huge gap between us in the north and the others in the south, between the rich and the poor. And this is also a kind of violence between us – quite similar to the situation in the old city of Corinth, which Paul mentions.

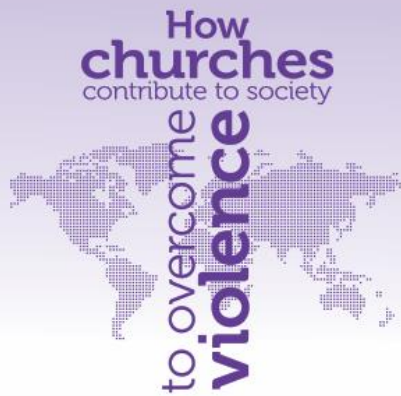
What is he doing, when he sees all the quarrels and divisions, which also divides the christian congregation? If we get an answer from him to this problem – may be we also can learn to overcome our problems of divisions and separations in our situation.

Let's have a look to Paul's letter. He writes to the christians in Corinth about the basics of a congegation. He writes about the foundation of christian life. He writes about the unity of all christians, doesn't matter if they are rich or poor, doesn't matter if they are Jews or Greeks, doesn't matter if they are normal workers or well educated.

We read in Paul's letter, what keeps the diversity in Corinth, the diversity in a christian congregation, the diversity of the world together: "These three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

Love connects all the christians. Love is the reason for unity although there are many diversities. And love is the greatest together with hope and faith.

This love, Paul is talking about, is not a feeling, which you can compare with the feeling of a young boy and a young girl falling in love. This love is more. It is a love which overcomes separations. Love, which connects people with different



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opinions, different ideas of living and different options. It is a love, which overcomes gaps and unites us as the people of God, as brothers and sisters even if we are separated by languages, cultures and the colour of our skin. And this “love is not only a word. Love means both words and actions”, as we sing often in our congregations in Bavaria. Love means words and actions. The “and” is very important. Because love brings us together. Love leads us to use our hands with phantasie to help our neighbor. Love leads us to act, to build bridges between our countries and churches, where we come from. Love leads us to change the world; to call the evil what it is and to overcome the evil – even violence – with the good.

Therefore only the love counts. Only the love counts, if we are here together from different countries and different churches – to learn together, to sing together, to pray together. Only the love counts, if we come back to our churches and tell about our experiences during this consultation.

Only the love counts, if you take responsibility in your country in your church, for other people, for your friends at home, for needy and unhealthy. Only the love counts, because it connects us as brothers and sisters.

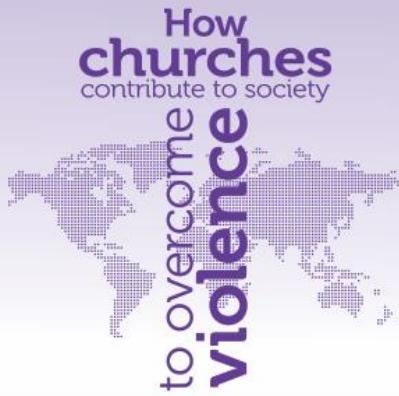
I want to share with you a saying: “Love is the only one, which grows, if we waste it.” We can say: Only if we waste it, love can grow. Only if we give love to others, we will see that love grows. It will grow like a church in Bavaria, which was built by young people. It is a church surrounding not by walls, but by willow trees.

First of all these were very little plants. The church grows from small beginnings. From little plants to big trees. From an unspectacular startingpoint to a huge building, where we now can join us, where we can sing and pray together, where we can here the good news of the gospel, which encourages us to overcome our differences and waste love, that love can grow.

We should remember the love, we got from our God and we can share with one another, that love can grow.

With this love differences between us no longer separate us. Differences – if you see them with love – no longer remain as gaps between us, but can enrich us.

May our Lord be with us, during this partners consultation, when we share our experiences, our faith, our hope and our love. And when we recognize: We belong together as christians with many differences. But love will keep us together. The love, Paul is talking about to the christians in Corinth in the same way as to us:



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Love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

And the peace of our God which is higher than every power preserves our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Hymn

Prayer

Let us pray! (We answer "Hear us, good Lord")

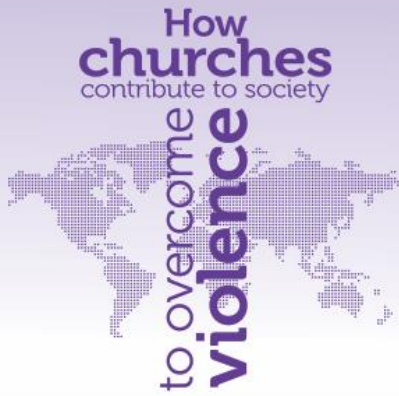
Almighty God, giver of all things, with gladness we give thanks for all your goodness. We bless you for the love which has created and which sustains us from day to day. We praise you for the gift of your Son, our Savior, through whom you have made known your will and grace. And we thank you for the Holy Spirit, who renews us and gives us hope for our everyday live. Help us to treasure in our hearts all that you have done for us, and enable us to show our thankfulness by lives that are wholly given to your service.
Together we speak: "Hear us, good Lord."

Save and defend your whole Church, in all nations, cultures and every part of the world. Sanctify and unite your people in all the world, that one holy Church may bear witness to you, the creator and redeemer of all.
Together we speak: "Hear us, good Lord."

Take from us all hatred and prejudice, give us the spirit of love, and dispose our days in your peace. Prosper the labors of those who take counsel for the nations of the world, that mutual understanding and common endeavor may be increased among all peoples.
Together we speak: "Hear us, good Lord."

Especially we pray for our partnership efforts. Bless all who are engaged in bulding bridges between our churches and give us mutual understanding for our live and work.
Together we speak: "Hear us, good Lord."

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of him who died and rose again, and now lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever.
Amen.



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Lord's Prayer

Together we pray the Lord's Prayer. Everybody can pray in his mother tongue.

"Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

Go in peace and with the blessing of our Lord:
"The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor
and ↑ give you peace." Amen.