

**The Scandinavian Bishops' Conference Autumn Session,
Paderborn (Germany) 16 - 21 September 2011**

The pastoral challenges and realities of the Catholic Church in Northern Europe differ noticeably from those of most other European churches. Due to a high number of baptisms, immigrants and refugees, the Church is growing fast in the Nordic countries. There is a shortage of churches and other localities in most of the dioceses, and the bishops work hard to find pastors, especially for the Lithuanians, Spanish speaking and Catholics of Oriental rites. At a conservative estimate, there are now 430.000 Latin and Oriental Rite Catholics living in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

Paderborn and Scandinavia

The Nordic bishops made these observations as they held their Autumn Session in Paderborn (Germany). There is a long-standing connexion between the *Bonifatiuswerk der deutschen Katholiken*, the Archdiocese of Paderborn and the Church in Northern Europe. The generosity and solidarity of the Church in Germany has been a constant encouragement for Catholics living in small and often isolated communities. The bishops were invited to Paderborn by Archbishop Hans Josef Becker and the *Bonifatiuswerk*.

A new Cathedral in Trondheim

The Catholic Cathedral in Trondheim (Norway) is in a very poor state and will have to be demolished within ten years. The bishops as well as their German benefactors expressed their concern and will support and encourage the small but fast-growing Catholic community in this city to carry out their plan to build a new cathedral and pastoral centre. The hope is to finish this project in 2014 to coincide with the 1000th anniversary of the baptism of St. Olav to whom the church is dedicated. Another major pastoral project is planned in Södertelje (Sweden) where several thousand Catholics of Chaldean, Syrian and Armenian rite are living.

Pilgrimages

Ancient pilgrimages have been revived in many parts of Scandinavia. Trondheim and Vadstena (Sweden) have recently received more pilgrims than any time since the Reformation. For those who receive and guide the pilgrims, the Catholic Newman-Institute in Uppsala (Sweden) offers an academic programme in co-operation with the *Bonifatiuswerk*.

Among the other main topics the bishops discussed were the education of the students for the priesthood and the preparation for the General Synod of the Bishops of the Catholic Church in Rome in October 2012. Bishop Berislav Grgic of Tromsø (Norway) will represent the Conference.

Talks with Lutheran bishops

The Conference's Spring Session will take place in Copenhagen in March 2012. The President of the Pontifical Counsel for Promoting Christian Unity, Kurt Cardinal Koch, and the leading Lutheran bishops in the Nordic Countries will meet with the Conference this time.