

THE NORDIC BISHOPS MEET IN ESTONIA

Invited by the Roman-Catholic Bishop of Estonia, Mgr. Philippe Jourdan, the Nordic Bishops' Conference met in Tallinn 18 to 23 September. The bishops celebrated mass in the city's Cathedral, met the faithful and the country's two Lutheran bishops. The diaspora-situation of the Estonian Church has many recognizable similarities to the Nordic dioceses, but the suffering brought upon it and all churches by the Soviet regime over 50 years still makes itself felt.

The Bishops agreed about two Pastoral Letters to the Catholics in the Nordic countries: About the holiness of the Sunday and the Catechumenate of adults. A day of rest, peace and prayer is necessary, but is increasingly under threat from secular influence and commercial interests. - A period of instruction in the matters of religion and Church is necessary for the many unbaptized and Christians of other denominations who embrace the Catholic faith when they have grown up. These letters are to be published and read in all Roman-Catholic churches in the Nordic countries.

After many years of preparation, the Icelandic Missal was ready for the Bishops' vote of recommendation. This is an impressive achievement for such a small Catholic community. The text will now go to the Holy See for its final approval. The Bishops also voted unanimously in favour of the new Danish translation of the Funeral Rites, which will be presented to the competent authorities in Rome. New statutes for the education and spiritual formation of permanent deacons were agreed. All Bishops are looking forward to the Family Congress prepared by the Diocese of Stockholm in Jönköping, Sweden, in May next year. The Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Scola, is to be the main speaker.

The Conference of Bishops will meet again 19 to 27 March 2010 for its *ad limina*-visit in Rome. This combines a pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles with meetings with Pope Benedict, the Cardinal Prefects and other officials at the Holy See.

Sister Anna Mirijam Kaschner CPS was elected Secretary General of the Nordic Bishops' Conference, and bishop Bernt Eidsvig (Oslo and Trondheim) new member of the Permanent Council.