

ICBE

The International Commission on Benedictine Education

**First International Benedictine Youth Congress
from 10 - 15th July 2001 in Münster-
schwarzach, Germany:
All together - ONE**

Dear Abbot Primate Notker, dear abbots, headmasters and headmistresses, dear colleagues,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to present you one of the consequences of our meeting ICBE 1 in Worth Abbey. When I remarked there that I might imagine to host such a Youth Congress with regard to our 100th anniversary of our school and our abbey, I could not imagine which consequences this remark would have. Today I am very glad to have done so, because from the very first moment on the Abbot Fidelis Ruppert OSB as well as the headmaster Fr Cornelius Hoernig OSB supported this idea very intensively.

Of course, it is impossible to present all the impressions and results of this first meeting in ten minutes. I would like to give you a short insight in the preparation, the organization and the timetable of the Youth Congress and ask for its future.

May I quote Abbot Primate Notker in his foreword to the Youth Congress: I myself was a very keen Benedictine Student. The monastery of St. Ottilien became a second home to me... At St. Ottilien I also learned that the world is bigger than our massive church tower there.

His presence in Muensterschwarzach and the celebration of the Holy Service even underlined the importance of this meeting and we are very grateful that you attended the Benedictine Youth last year, dear Abbot Primate.

The preparation united four German schools and brought teachers and pupils of those schools closer together: Fr Paulus and Fr Klaus-Ludger from the Abbey of Koenigsmuenster, Meschede, Br Joseph from St. Ottilien, Mrs Dannbeck from Kloster Wald and Fr Jonathan and me from Muensterschwarzach. More than thirty pupils became very enthusiastic about this idea and joined in the preparation process right from the beginning and met at some weekends to work out the motto, the programme, the invitation letters and to pray together. Thus a tight net started to develop which carried us through the week of the Congress.

As far as the date is concerned, St. Benedict gave us the reason to meet in July, since he is celebrated as the Patron of Europe at July 11th. It would not have been possible without the help of the ICBE database and the assistance of Mr Heinz Plugge. We are very sorry that we did not reach all the

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Benedictine schools and are aware of the fact that not all the schools could send participants. Nevertheless, the days in Muensterschwarzach showed us that it was really worth bringing young people from Benedictine schools from different continents together to get to know each other, to play, to do some sports, to celebrate and to pray.

Every day had a different motto. After the arrival and a first common evening the students had the chance to contact monks of the Abbey of Muensterschwarzach and contributed to the celebration of the Vespers in which pupils from the Philippines acted a short scene from the life of St. Benedict and his sister St. Scholastica. The following day was dominated by the presentation of the different schools. In the afternoons and evenings workshops were offered for musical, dramatic, and sports activities. All the days were structured by prayers in the morning, at noon and in the evening. Fr Michael from Meschede had collected songs and hymns for these occasions and always motivated the participants to a joyful singing.

The Friday led us on a pilgrimage to Wuerzburg, which is the origin of Christianity in Franconia, and to a Protestant Community on the Schwanberg which live according to the Rule of St. Benedict. We chose this destination to give our meeting an oecumenical impact. After Vespers with the sisters we took a boat back to Muensterschwarzach.

The school festival of the Egbert-Gymnasium, the working out of a resolution (see extra paper on the CD) and a very enthusiastic and moving show of the highlights of this week put the Congress to an end.

I would like to thank everybody who helped with the preparation and organization, everybody who joined the Congress and also those who prayed for us. Our young students will not forget these days!

Unfortunately we did not have contact with the schools from Manila which could perhaps host the next meeting, but we hope that there will be the chance to talk about that here. We would really be grateful and wish that the Benedictine Youth will come together again on regional, national and international levels. We will deliver our experiences and knowledge to continue the Youth Congresses with one aim: that in everything we do, especially in our work with our pupils, God may be glorified.

Hubert Hering, P. Jonathan Düring OSB

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