BIBLIODRAMA MAKES PEACE

In March I was able to go to Vilnius, Lithuania to join the course ”What about Mary+”.

I travelled abroad again! We were finally able to execute the plans after two years on hold – although quite many things had changed.

The mother of the idea, Anja Stieghorst was not able to join Agnes Bouwen anymore as the co-trainer. She was replaced by Dave Tatem – who brought the idea of Mary+ - other Marys in the Bible. The course site was changed from Kaunas city to Vilnius – and then the war in Ukraine transported us from the course center to the Catholic seminar, so that children of an Ukranian orphanage could stay there instead of us. Some of the course participants were changed as well. At least I was not supposed to take part in the first round at all!

There we were, 11 participants, five from Finland, all Lutheran church workers (four pastors and one family therapist) with the six Lithuanian participants, who were Catholic laypeople, family cousellors, therapists or religion teachers. Our trainers were a Catholic religion teacher from Belgium and a Protestant pastor from UK (or Holland). Some of our exercises were amazed by the future Catholic priests – and we were admiring their dedication and beautiful singing in the daily prayers. Moreover, we noticed that young men are the same regardless of nationality or profession…

It was important to come together, pray together, eat together – to experience and to live together. We were making connections beyond languages and beliefs.

Virgin Mary is a character of controversies – and on the other had, we found other Marys in the Bible as well as in the history of Christianity. And in the present.

It was wonderful to join a group after so many years as a participant. On top of that we got to lead ”real people”, learned again to lead with someone else – ”IRL”. Others and the trainers gave us feedback on our leading, so that we could learn from it. To me the Holy Spirit worked in the process so that it came together nicely.

What I actually learned will reveal itself to me gradually in different situations in the future. At least I was able to share some ideas to my colleagues at home soon after the week; and moreover, I got ideas for my sermon in Rememberance Service of Mary on March 27.

And again, we were taken to a lovely field trip in the center of Vilnius, where we visited a home theater with an excellent insight to Lithuanian historical handicraft and slow lifestyle. We were taken to see two special chapels in the Old Town of Vilnius, that are both dedicated to Virgin Mary.

As a protestant it was good to see the Marys of our Catholic participants. Their images were more of the Heaven’s Queen and Majestic. We Finnish participants tended to empasize the poverty and youth of Mary… I realised that most of our Mariology deals with the nativity story/scene, we don’t think or talk about her as a grown woman, older mother of adult Jesus. Nor the Mother of Christ in the first congregation. These aspects can bring more colour to her image and give more possibilities to identify oneself as a Christian.

After the course, before flying home, I got a chance to visit the Vilnius Museum of Genocide (”KGB Museum”). It was another reminder of ”never again”, and very touching in the present European situation. Outside the whole nation was praying and making peace in different ways. Equality and communication are tools for peace – we strengthen those in bibliodrama every time.

Personally, the course took place in a good spot of my life. I had started to question my calling and had started considering moving to non-church-related worklife. The course brought back my spiritual and vocational calling: Mary Magdalene is my namesake and she was (one of) the first at Jesus’ empty tomb to meet the angel and the risen Christ. It also gave me more ideas how to work with the young people in the confirmation school with the Biblical stories.

Mary Magdalene’s message to me was: ”Witness, preach, hurry up to tell! Renew yourself, be brave! The Lord is with you.”

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