



Old Catholic Church of Austria

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## Christian people in dialog for an open society.

### 32<sup>nd</sup> International Old Catholic Congress

From 20 to 23 September 2018 in Vienna

***An open society on the basis of the Declaration of Human Rights is an archetype of a united community. All Christians in ecumenical solidarity together with members of other religious affiliations or people without any religious background should be able to stand up for it.***

1. Human rights are binding for us.
2. Living together in freedom, equality of worth, and acceptance continues to be a challenge about which we must reflect.
3. Ecumenical bonds can only be a shoulder-to-shoulder stance of Christians, who are building and open society not only with other faith communities, but also with nonbelievers.
4. Religious freedom does not make one's religious affiliation into an arbitrary choice, but rather it calls one out to seek one's own identity, and to engage with other world views. In this, one is betraying neither one's own principles nor that of Christianity!
5. Engagement for an open society is done out of various motivations. For spokespersons from numerically larger religious communities it is a loss of power, at least at first glance, and for numerically smaller ones the fear arises that they will be absorbed by the larger. For all it is a challenge.  
The result is clear: if they have the courage for it, all can be winners, if they understand their own boundaries not as exclusionary, but rather as boundaries that can be traversed. Open society is not a society without boundaries, but rather a society that leaves its boundaries open. A boundary is not scandalous, rather the imagined barbed wire is the scandal. A boundary does not have to be thought of as protective wall. A boundary also does not mean that everything makes sense on my side and is strange on the other side.

***“Living an open society”– this poses questions about the responsibility of religion within the processes of societal change. At a minimum, religions bring intellectual, ethical, and spiritual impulses into the society, and thus stand in a give-and-take with their social, political, and economic realities and communities of interest.***

1. Religious pluralism in Austria is quite far advanced, the interaction of religious communities with each other is respectful and good. It is to be emphasized that there is positive coexistence, particularly at the level of the State recognized religious communities. Nonetheless one needs to ask the question, whether the religious communities in and of themselves really are open societies, or whether or not they want to be open societies, or if they are self-sufficient.
2. If we speak about visions for a livable world, then we must ask ourselves:  
 What could be different or even better after the Congress?  
 In which way could religious communities do their part within society?  
 In which way do religious communities see themselves interwoven with social, ethical and human realities within our societies?  
 Which social themes and which political interventions are used at this time by religious communities?  
 In other words: How does society notice that religious communities are a living and responsible part of society?
3. What would society have to do in regard to religious communities, so that they feel incorporated, affirmed and integrated?
4. Questions regarding social responsibility toward the hardships of people. Regarding the changing of structures which cause hardship and misery. Questions regarding models, which place the common welfare in the foreground.
5. Questions regarding a religious community's own spirituality and mysticism, which are not removed from reality, but rather support the search for justice, mercy, and freedom
6. Questions regarding a well-thought-out ethic of science, which prevents science becoming a "new religion."
7. As the Old Catholic Church we strive at the level of church parishes and as a church in Austria to participate in the life of society. We do this in richly diverse social engagement, not the least, at the moment, with the care of war refugees and asylum seekers. We speak to social issues through official statements. As a founding member of the Alliance for free Sundays, we have strived for 20 years that people, and human communities are assured that Sundays can continue to be an important means of gathering and relaxation. We have participated in the "Social word of the Christian Churches" and seek dialogue with various religious communities in forums and panels, to which we belong.

***Which vision do we share for a world worth living in? Which do we not? How do we want to concretely implement our responsibility to be co-creators of the future?***

1. Visions in this area would be the mutual coexistence of religious communities and churches, particularly in the social and humanitarian area, without betraying their own religious positions, but also in the knowledge that we who think differently should not proselytize one another, that is positioning ourselves together without missionizing.
2. We have the vision of a church, which emmeshes itself in societal processes because it does not see itself as standing above such things, but rather as a part of society. We know that we are framers of society, whether we remove ourselves from it or emmesh ourselves in it. A church which posts a sign "private party" on the church doors can certainly prevent someone from entering the church, but it cannot lock out the fact that the church is inescapably a "facet" of this society.

**On behalf of the Congress Team, Vicar General Pfr. Mag. Martin Eisenbraun**