



Difficult questions require clear answers

Zurich. A heartfelt prayer for God's protection and assistance made clear from the start which priorities Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider wanted to set in the District Apostle Meeting: "Lord, help us human beings whom You have created!" The effects of the corona crisis were front and centre.

Biannual international District Apostle Meetings normally bring all the Church leaders of the world together in one place for several days. This year, however, it was only possible to convene the meeting virtually. Last Friday, the participants assembled by way of a video conference to discuss a much abridged agenda.

One of the burning questions the Chief Apostle had for the District Apostles was: "How are things going in your countries?" The unanimous opinion: "Things could be better!" Many congregations are still closed, or have been closed down again. In many cases, divine services cannot take place. Travel is extremely limited, and internet transmissions are not possible everywhere.

How are you all doing?

"In the South East Asian countries, we are pretty well set up in terms of technology, but that only applies to the larger cities. In the rural areas, things look quite different," noted District Apostle Edy Isnugroho from Indonesia. "In New York we have had some rough months," said District Apostle Helper John Fendt with sadness. His tone reflected even more sadness as he recalled the situation of the Central American countries: "The people of Nicaragua and Honduras are not only

plagued with the corona virus, but were also hit by two severe cyclones within a short period of time.” Hundreds of people lost their lives as a result.

The situation is also worrying in Argentina. At least the first congregations are slowly beginning to open up again, remarked District Apostle Enrique Minio with some reassurance. Whether the international District Apostle Meeting will still be able to take place in Buenos Aires on Pentecost 2021 is still unclear, however, as the Chief Apostle related to the District Apostles. Only time will tell how the pandemic will have developed by then. In all parts of the world there are considerable restrictions on the normal operations of the Church.

And no matter where you look, the experiences from the months of the corona pandemic speak a clear language. The District Apostles reported in detail on congregational life in their countries. There are many who are deeply grateful that online offers are available to replace the cancelled divine services. However, there is no topping the in-person offers that incorporate the celebration of Holy Communion –all the Church leaders were agreed on that point.

Man in the image of God

The main item on the agenda of the virtual conference was the issue of equality between man and woman as the image of God. Concerning this, the New Apostolic Catechism states the following: “Man and woman are both created in the image of God and therefore of the same nature. They were not only created with one another but also for one another, and have the same commission to have ‘dominion’ over the earth, in other words, to shape and protect it. This authority granted to mankind does not entitle them to deal with creation in a reckless way, however. Rather, because they have been created in the image of God, it is their duty to treat creation in a manner befitting divine nature: with wisdom, kindness, and love” (CNAC 3.3.2). The extensive discussions on this subject resulted in a paper that will first be circulated among the Apostles, and then be published in a Special Edition of the Divine Service Guide.

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