



# BEYOND BOUNDARIES

The newsletter of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey

[www.bossey.ch](http://www.bossey.ch)



November 2018



Editorial

## A historical visit: Pope Francis came to Bossey



Photo: Servizio Fotografico - Vatican Media

On the occasion of the annual visit to the Vatican with the Bossey students, I often said when we visited the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity that the Bossey students have come to the Vatican for almost 40 years and it is time that the Pope return the visit to the Ecumenical Institute. Always such remarks made people smile as such a possibility was almost unthinkable, an utopic dream.

Yet, that dream became a reality. On 21 June 2018, Pope Francis came to Geneva to mark the 70th anniversary of the WCC. After a short prayer in the WCC chapel, the Pope, high-ranking Vatican officials and the WCC leadership came for a two-hour visit to Bossey. We had lunch in the salon blanc, prepared by our kitchen and served by our own staff. It looked like a family reunion. The Pope, with a radiant face, seemed to have enjoyed every single moment in Bossey. Immediately after lunch we went in the garden to a table where we prepared in advance the gifts which were to be offered to the Holy Father.

From Bossey, we thought of offering him a painted copy of the icon in the lobby, which expresses the vision and goal of Bossey: Christ which recapitulates the whole humanity and creation and brings it in unity. The Pope read with much attention what we wrote as a dedication on the back and admired the painting. In turn, Bossey was offered the medal which the Vatican prepared to mark the visit of the Pope on the 70th anniversary of the WCC. Surprise: On one side, it had the Papal coat of arms, but on the other side, it had the Château de Bossey. We understood then how much he values Bossey and its formation for the Vatican.



Photo: Peter Williams/WCC

An emotional moment followed immediately after: the Holy Father came to meet personally the professors, the students and all the staff in Bossey who were gathered few meters away from the table with gifts. It was a real moving moment. The Pope blessed the groups and shook hands with everybody.

He went to rest for about an hour in one of the rooms of the Château. Before departure to Geneva, he asked to meet the staff of the kitchen and those working in the rooms. Another moving encounter. As he left he told them: "For me, all of you are very important and I value your work; please, pray for me".

Later in the afternoon, during his public lecture in the Geneva Visser 't Hooft Hall, the Pope concluded and affirmed again the role and vocation of Bossey: "I also value the essential role played by the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in the training of future pastoral and academic leaders in many Christian churches and confessions worldwide. The Catholic church has long participated in this educational project through the presence of a Catholic professor on the faculty, and each year I have the joy of greeting the group of students who visit Rome".

This visit filled our hearts with joy and hope and motivated us further to continue our work of ecumenical formation. And as Bossey alumni, such visits and statements made us understand even more why Bossey remains so close to our hearts and make us so proud and happy to have studied and spent some time there.

*Fr Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca  
Director of the Ecumenical Institute  
Deputy General Secretary of the WCC*

## Graduation ceremony celebrates open-mindedness

Through a ceremony on 26 January 2018, the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey saw 21 students from 20 countries and 10 denominations embark on a future of ecumenical work in their respective home countries and contexts.

Having completed six months of studies at the Institute, the students were awarded their Certificates of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies and Complementary Certificates in Ecumenical Studies.

As courses at the Ecumenical Institute are accredited by the University of Geneva, the students were greeted specifically by Prof. Ghislain Waterlot, dean of the university's Faculty of Theology. "The Bossey Institute is extremely important to the faculty of Geneva, and we have sustained invaluable ties for a long time. Bossey brings the world to us," said Waterlot. "You have come from all over the world, from almost every continent, to participate in a unique experience at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute. Far from home, you have not joined



Photo: Luc Hegetschweiler/WCC

an isolated and particularist environment, but quite the opposite: a place of open-mindedness that boasts a wealth of exceptional diversity," Waterlot added. In his address, Rev. Fr Dr Lawrence Iwuamadi, academic dean of the Ecumenical Institute, accentuated that "Bossey is a place to be experienced," and he added, "As we've seen this year, like so many years before, studies here offer

students a chance not only to immerse themselves in academic study, but also to see, feel and experience what it can mean to share a lifetime together with people from diverse cultures and Christian traditions." The faculty wishes all graduates the knowledge and inspiration to employ their theological training in building bridges among people of faith around the world.

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## Church leaders interact with Bossey students

The 70th anniversary of the World Council of Churches became a very special occasion for our students in Bossey: In addition to the visit of Pope Francis (see editorial), the students were blessed by the visit of two other church leaders: Former Ecumenical Institute student His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew joined with students in the chapel at Bossey during WCC 70th anniversary celebrations on 17 June 2018. Also as part of the celebrations of WCC's 70th anniversary year, we welcomed an official visit and public lecture by The Most



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury on 16 February 2018.

We were pleased that both church leaders took time to listen to the students and interact with them.

## Interreligious Summer School breaks down prejudices

Students at the 2018 Interreligious Summer School at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey said learning to break down prejudices about the other was a lasting impression from the course.

The planting of three trees formed part of the graduation ceremony on 9 August to "care for creation" and reflected the UN 2030 Agenda, to which the course was related this year.

Ecumenical Institute director Fr Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca said the course was first given in 2006 when Islamic, Jewish, and Christian foundations came together. "People are afraid that will dilute identity and there is a hidden agenda to change people's minds," said Sauca, but he added: "The course makes people better - Muslims, Jews, and Christians."

Pyy Paulasaari, a Christian student from Finland, read a peace statement on behalf of the 12 students representing the three Abrahamic faiths and 11 nations: "The opportunity to live in such close proximity enabled a deepening of relationships that surpassed differing cultural and religious contexts. Whether in the classroom or outside of it, the course cultivated among participants a fundamentally deeper understanding of one another as well as a respect



for the various contexts within which they strive to improve through faith driven change."

Shimon Weinbach, a US-born Orthodox Jew living in Jerusalem said he calls himself an independent theologian. As the son of a rabbi, Weinbach said it was special to have a "closer scope on global issues and see how dialogue is necessary".

Shia Muslim Zahraalsadat Rooholamin from Iran said: "It was a perfect experience. I was able to give other people a good introduction to Islam and formed many friendships. It was fantastic for conversation and dialogue."

## Applications open for academic year of 2019/2020

For the Ecumenical Study program, which starts every year in September, the deadline for

application for the academic year 2019/20 is 30 November 2018. For more information, please visit:

[www.bossey.ch](http://www.bossey.ch) or contact: [Bossey\\_Admissions@wcc-coe.org](mailto:Bossey_Admissions@wcc-coe.org)

## Eight master students graduate from Bossey

The students, coming to Bossey from a variety of countries and church traditions, spent the study year exploring a range of topics - from aspects of historic common spirituality between Eastern and Western Christian traditions, to studying ecumenical responses to post-election violence in Kenya.

This year the graduates were pleased to receive on 14 June their provisional certificates from Dr Agnes Abuom, moderator of the WCC Central Committee, and vice moderator Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, who were present at the graduation with other members of the WCC Executive Committee.

One of the students, Rev. James Miriago from the Pentecostal Church in Kenya, reflected during the prayer: "It is a day of great joy, because almost a year ago we came with questions within ourselves - 'how will it be?' - but now we are leaving with knowledge acquired, and skills to promote a common witness, to engage in Christian service by serving human need, breaking down barriers between people and seeking justice and peace, to foster renewal in unity in Christ Jesus."

Rev. Fr Dr Lawrence Iwuamadi, dean of the Ecumenical Institute, in his laudation stated that "One



Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

of the inspiring aspects of this generation of master students is the breadth of topics they have explored," and reflected "We can see that the students have studied almost every part of the WCC's call for a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, from a theological perspective, from care for creation to church relations, ecumenism and diakonia," Iwuamadi added.

"But we also see the deep value of the Ecumenical Institute inviting students both from WCC member churches and from churches who are not currently WCC member churches. By doing this intentionally, we can continue to

walk together on the pilgrimage, where the focus is not just on WCC member churches, but on a movement of all people of good will," Iwuamadi concluded.

"Bossey is the place of spirituality and diversity, where lives are changed," said Fr Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, WCC deputy general secretary and director of the Ecumenical Institute. "I am especially glad that in this group we have had three students from non-WCC member churches. Bossey does not dilute the different identities of those who come here to study, but helps you to understand yourself better."

## Doctoral defence explores bilateral dialogue

After three doctoral defences in 2017, the Ecumenical Institute saw Christos-Filotheos Kolliopoulos, a monk-priest of the Orthodox Church of Greece defend a thesis on "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Chrismation-Confirmation. A Study

in the Perspective of the Bilateral Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church" on 5 July 2018. Professors Hans-Christoph Askani (Geneva) and Dagmar Heller

(Bossey) supervised the thesis. Prof. Elisabeth Gangloff-Parmentier presided the jury and the professors Bert Groen (Graz) and Archbishop Job Getcha (Chambésy) were the external supervisors.



## Celebrating Dagmar Heller's ecumenical ministry



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Dagmar Heller embraced the cause of reconciliation among Christians and churches (with a particular interest in Orthodoxy) during her years of theological study in the University of Heidelberg, Germany, which led her to a doctorate in church history.

Towards the mid-1990s the young pastor of the United Protestant

Church in Baden joins the Secretariat of the Commission of Faith and Order (F&O) of the World Council of Churches, a theological "think-tank" focused on issues of division and unity among Christian churches.

At Faith and Order until 2000, Dagmar will bring her historical and theological expertise to staffing several studies and sharing with the American ecumenist Tom Best the co-edition of several F&O publications on ecumenical issues related to worship, baptism, hermeneutics, etc.

Dagmar's comeback to the WCC in 2007 brings her not only to F&O but also to the Bossey Ecumenical Institute. Between 2007 and 2017 the two of us would share the teaching of ecumenical theology in Bossey and the service to the Secretariat of Faith and Order.

Our synergy has made the F&O agenda more visible to Bossey

students and helped to make the ecumenical challenge of global Christianity more visible to F&O. The Bossey-F&O tandem is also the background of her book on the ecumenical challenges and promises of convergence in the understanding of baptism (Baptized into Christ - A Guide to the Ecumenical Discussion on Baptism). In more recent years Dagmar became my boss in Bossey and I became her boss in Geneva. It worked very well.

I mentioned above Dagmar's "particular" ecumenical interest in Orthodoxy. Since January 2018 Dagmar has joined the the German Protestant Church's Bensheim Institute for Inter-Confessional Research, near her Heidelberg alma mater, where she is now in charge of ecumenical issues related to Orthodoxy. We celebrate Dagmar's ecumenical ministry.

*Odair Pedrosa Mateus*

## Dies Academicus 2017: Who do we say that we are?

A moment to disrupt the habitual schedule, to pause and reflect... the entire student and teaching staff community of the Ecumenical Institute joined hands and brains, for the first dies academicus in the life of Bossey, to work together for a full day on a selected theme: "Who do we say that we are?"

Inspired by the WCC document with the same title, Bossey became a real ecumenical laboratory on 8 November 2017: students, accompanied by faculty members, read the document over several weeks leading up to the event and presented the results of their reflective process in different engaging manners in plenary. The faculty joined in this exercise and presented comments from their respective disciplinary perspectives. In the afternoon students had the opportunity

to sharpen their awareness for selected competencies. Five stations ranging from writing, reading, presenting, drawing and contemplating invited students to also engage methodologically with the text. They represented ways in which a text can be discovered and brought to life. In the evening Prof. Hans-Christoph Askani of the Autonomous Faculty of Protestant Theology in Geneva, brought the dies academicus to a closure with a thought-provoking lecture on "Christian Identity in a Multi-Religious Context". Both students and faculty valued this extracurricular time spent together. The day was like an additional thread to the tapestry of ecumenical learning the Institute seeks to weave throughout the academic year. Students experienced one another and their

professors outside the regular framework of their study modules, which strengthened the ability to listen to one another, to learn more about different approaches to one and the same topic and to grow together, realising that this conversation can only be the beginning of an ongoing journey. While the contextual situations and interpretations may differ, as per recurrent comments heard after this inspiring day, the recognition remains that there is no alternative to continuous dialogue to build peaceful societies. In the words of one participating student: "Violence creates violence. Dialogue creates peace."

*Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué*

*\*Who Do We say That We Are? Christian Identity in a Multi-Religious World. Edited by WCC-Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2016.*

## First Roman Catholic appointed as academic dean in Bossey

As the contract of Prof. Dagmar Heller came to an end, the Bossey faculty proceeded to the election of a new academic dean from 1 January 2018. After profound reflection, we found the most suitable among us to hold this position is Fr Lawrence Iwuamadi. We were all aware that it was the first time a Roman Catholic was called to this important and demanding position, although the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC. Yet, it was also time to show our partner in ecumenical formation, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which for almost 40 years has sent and seconded a permanent professor to Bossey, that we value this cooperation.

Fr Lawrence is a Roman Catholic priest from Nigeria. He obtained his licentiate degree in Sacred



Photo: Peter Williams/WCC

Scriptures from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and his Ph.D. in Biblical Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University also in Rome. He has taught Bible, Greek and New Testament Theology at the Theological Seminary in Owerri, and was appointed as professor to the chair of Ecumenical Biblical

Hermeneutics in Bossey in 2012.

Over the years, Fr Lawrence has come to be known and appreciated as an excellent teacher, father, brother and friend.

Congratulations, dear Fr Lawrence and may God give you strength and courage to fulfil your work!

*Fr Ioan Sauca*

## Ecumenical Institute welcomes new professor of Ecumenical Theology, Rev. Dr Simone Sinn

The academic year 2018-2019 began by welcoming Rev. Dr Simone Sinn as new professor of Ecumenical Theology 2018. Sinn combines her teaching in Bossey with programme executive responsibility of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission.

Before joining the WCC, Sinn worked as study secretary for public theology and interreligious relations at the Lutheran World Federation. On appointment to the chair of Ecumenical Theology Sinn said, "I am quite excited to teach at Bossey. This constant contact with international students coming from different backgrounds is unique. I am ready."

Sinn did her doctoral research at the Cluster of Excellence on Religion and Politics at the University of Münster (Germany), focused on contemporary



Photo: Camille Vianin/WCC

challenges of religious pluralism. She studied Protestant theology in Bethel, Heidelberg and Tübingen, with a focus on studies in diakonia in Heidelberg and took the Master program in Ecumenical Studies at the Irish School of Ecumenics (ISE) in Dublin.

Sinn is involved in ecumenical and interreligious networks on local and international levels. Joining the faculty of the Ecumenical Institute, she concretely reinforces the Institute as a centre of ecumenical formation and intercultural encounter.

*Fr Lawrence Iwuamadi*



**BEYOND BOUNDARIES**

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