

Report from Budapest

47 participants joined this meeting in Hungary from the 22th to 26th of February 2007 for the 8th annual meeting



Our reporter this time:
Teresa Jezl
from Finland



Our very first contact with our Hungarian hosts was the welcoming smile of **Krisztian Brinklach**, when he came to fetch us from the airport or railroad station. During the days of our meeting in Budapest, that smile never wavered no matter what was asked of its owner. It came to represent the warm-hearted hospitality of our Hungarian counterparts.



The SVD retreat house was tastefully furnished and comfortable. The chapel and meeting rooms proved to be ideal for our days together. Some of us, who arrived on Thursday early enough to enjoy the fine weather were walking in the afternoon. Marjatta Malmberg and I intended to pay a visit to the local shopping centre, but went by mistake in the opposite direction. We didn't find the shopping centre, but we did find spring.



Crocuses and other spring flowers, a blossoming plum tree, a budding weeping willow brought joy to the hearts of those who had left a country, where the temperature had been -21 C. The significance of this magical walk came much later.



Our opening worship Thursday evening was simple and prayerful. It enabled us to introduce ourselves, our country and our language. We then each wrote our names directly onto the altarcloth, where the eucharist would be celebrated, a symbol bringing us into intimate contact with one another and with Christ.



As the days progressed and we were privileged to pray together led by groups or individuals from the participating countries, we were given glimpses into the mystery of the Church and many-faceted reflections of its teachings. By chance the evening prayers always seemed to reflect what we had done and the morning prayers always gave us a unique springboard from which to begin the day.
Did I really say it happened by chance?



On Friday the opening session and the first business meeting brought us directly into the heart of why we were gathered. The events of the afternoon, on the other hand, placed us into the very heart of the local culture.



Gyöngyi Komióssy presented a superbly compact history and report about Hungary's people in a way that told us who they are and why.



Then we were delighted by the **Benyus Chamber Ensemble**.

It would have been enough to entertain us with good music well-played. But this ensemble of ten (three were ill), comprised of siblings, did more

This family communicated a joy in their music and with each other that made an impact on all of us.

Èva Zorkóczy showed us the folk dolls she had created, showing carefully researched details into the dress and customs of each area of Hungary. The color and diversity were fascinating.



Mária Maczkó sang a short concert of beautiful Hungarian folk songs. The lovely voice of the artist, her peace and joy, communicated to us non-Hungarians that which the words could not.

On Friday night we saw a documentary about the water-polo team of the 1956 Olympics. The Olympics happened after the revolution in Hungary and just as the Russians had come with tanks to repress the people. It was a very effective and exciting way to show that part of Hungary's history.



On Saturday we were offered three input sessions. I, personally, was impressed with the variety and quality of the sessions. We had a choice of one out of four possibilities for each session. That meant there were twelve good-quality workshop presentations offered during this time.



I was benefited by the ones I attended and heard good reports about the others. Choosing a session was complicated business!



Sunday morning we had a triad session, which gives us spiritual care-givers a chance to serve other care-givers, but also to be cared for ourselves. It also serves to bind us in prayer in a special way. Then we had time to discuss and celebrate our fine website. We were also told more about its features, and this better understanding on our part will encourage us to use it more.



Pirkko Lehtiö, who has served us well as treasurer up to this time, was stepping back. So we had an election to choose from two really good "candidates". **Raili Heikinheimo** was elected. Pirkko was thanked and presented with a lovely example of Hungarian embroidery done in Finnish colors.



[**Raili Heikinheimo**, our new elected treasurer.]

The helpful spirit of our group endured to the end. Even late on Sunday evening, a slide show was organized showing pictures that had been taken during our days together.

Sometime during our days together it was discovered that our Hungarian hosts had a deep concern about the immediate future of their country because of recent happenings and the resulting political situation. Henry led a simple, but very moving prayer service that enabled us to join with them in prayer for their country and show our solidarity in a moving way. And it was for that reason that the sleet and cold on Monday as we left Budapest prompted more prayers on my part. Would those beautiful flowers and fruit tree blossoms, those wonderful willow buds I had seen on my walk on Thursday growing from Hungarian soil, be harmed by the repressive ice and cold?

And what of the beautiful people...?

