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February 2016 | NEWS FROM KOLPING INTERNATIONAL

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International News

Dear Kolping Sisters and Brothers,
Dear Friends of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL!

These International News of the still young year of 2016 were put together by me during a trip to Latin America. I was impressed by what I have experienced at Kolping Uruguay and Paraguay. While Uruguay is the Latin American country where secularization is most advanced, Kolping still manages to attract young people to the Kolping spirit. In youth groups they find spaces of faith and community – a community that teaches values and creates joy. An active youth is the basis for a good future of our Association and there are many active youth groups in Uruguay.

In Paraguay I was particularly impressed with the Kolping Occupational Training Centre. Within a few years, the number of young people receiving training there has increased enormously. This was remarkably accompanied by an additional increase in quality. The highly motivated leadership team even convinced a number of businesses to not only send their staff to the centre for training and up-grading but to also support the infra-structure. The particular quality that is specific to Kolping Paraguay's dual training courses is only one reason that the country's Labour Minister insists on personally presenting the certificates during the graduation ceremonies in April.

These examples give pleasure and inspire courage and therefore fit extremely well into the Easter Season that lies ahead of us, since they show the many ways in which the tradition of our Association is being developed further in so many countries of the world. The additional examples below are intended to bring joy and inspire people to continue participating in our common commitment for justice and development. Thus the resurrection can be experienced and Christ's message comes alive.

Best wishes for a Blessed Easter,
also on behalf of General Praeses Msgr. Ottmar Dillenburg and Managing Director Bernhard
Burger, and Treu Kolping

Your Markus Demele.

International

New documents at KOLPING INTERNATIONAL

A new order form is available on KOLPING INTERNATIONAL's website, www.kolping.net, with which various known but also many new materials can be ordered. In addition to a variety of informational material on the work of the Kolping Society, flyers and hand-outs can be ordered with which donations for the international work of the Kolping Society can be collected at birthdays or other celebrations. Movies, books, and brochures provide many opportunities to learn about the work of the International Kolping Society and campaign for it among friends and acquaintances.

All these documents can, of course, also be ordered any time by phone: 0049-221-7788022.

Europe

Medal of Honour of the Council of Europe for Anton Salesny

Anton Salesny, long-time representative of the International Kolping Society at the Council of Europe, has received the Medal of Honour "Pro Merito". It is the highest award that the Council of Europe bestows on non-parliamentarians. The presentation was carried out by the Council of Europe's Secretary General, Mr. Thorbjorn Jagland, in Strasbourg. Between 1979 and 2011, Anton Salesny conducted the International Kolping Society's European Seminars, which were attended by more than 2.500 multipliers. Particularly in these difficult times for Europe, Anton Salesny's enthusiastic work for the future of Europe is a strong signal of unity. The International Kolping Society thanks Anton Salesny for his dedication and congratulates him on this praiseworthy recognition by the Council of Europe.

Germany

Kolping Youth again wins a prize for creative involvement

The Kolping Youth in the Diocesan Kolping Society of Augsburg participated in the competition for the Bishop-Simpert-Prize with a campaign in which they called on adolescents to leave their comfort zone. So the young people committed themselves to collect garbage at the road-side, to distribute ice cream to church-goers, or to visit seniors in a nursing home. A pilgrimage was also organized, as well as many other activities. The basic idea was to get young people involved in an area of life, to which they would otherwise have no contact or where they would not dare to spend some of their time. The awarding of the Bishop-Simpert-Prize was a wonderful recognition of the innovative work of the Kolping Youth in the Diocesan Kolping Society of Augsburg and a creative example for many other initiatives in the international Kolping world.

Germany

Kolping Germany supports Alliance for Cosmopolitanism

The "Alliance for Cosmopolitanism, Solidarity, Democracy, and Rule of Law – Against Intolerance, Inhumanity, and Violence" is supported by 22 Catholic organizations. In view of the current challenges in Germany, the objective of the Alliance is to uphold democratic core values and social cohesion. Hatred and intolerance are to be confronted emphatically. The many hundreds of thousands refugees, the sometimes aggressively negative attitude of some citizens to the integration of the asylum seekers, as well as the increase of new right-wing populist parties give rise to social tensions in Germany.

On February 11, 2016, the broad social alliance was presented to the public in Berlin. Among the carriers are, along with the Conference of German Bishops and the Lutheran Church of Germany, also the Confederation of German Employer' Associations, the German Trade Union, the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the German Cultural Council, the Co-ordination Council of Muslims, the German Nature Conservation Ring, the German Olympic Sports Confederation, and the Federal Consortium for Public Welfare Services – and naturally Kolping.

The participating organizations are calling for "the refugee and immigration debate to be held objectively and on a solution-oriented basis". Misanthropic statements and actions are to be confronted emphatically on all levels of society. The Alliance is committed to a refugee policy which is consistent with our humanitarian and human rights obligations." At the same time it is emphasized that "we absolutely need a common European solution, in order to effectively combat causes of flight and to do justice to the concerns of the many people who are seeking protection."

Hungary**Flash-mob for Love**

With an unusual campaign, the Kolping Society of Hungary drew attention to the significance of Christian marriage. Together with Kolping Families from Pecs, the National Praeses, Fr. Ferenc Kövesi, organized a flash-mob in one of the largest supermarkets on the occasion of Valentine's Day. A flash-mob is a creative campaign, in which people use public places to raise awareness of certain topics in an extraordinary manner.

In consultation with the management of the supermarket, various couples started at an appointed time to dance in the aisles between the shelves to music from the loudspeakers. Following the dancing, they gave an affirmation over the public address system as to how grateful they are to have been married for many years. There were various Kolping couples, from newly-weds to those who could look back on 50 years of marriage. A film on the Facebook page of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL shows the joy and surprise with which visitors responded to this campaign. In view of disintegrating family ties, the topic of Marriage and Family is a particularly urgent one. A creative campaign which has made Kolping known to many!

Switzerland**Tradition on the slopes**

From February 18-21, the 21st International Ski Days took place in Wolfenschiessen-Engelberg. This tournament takes place regularly every two years. The venues are either Switzerland, Austria, Germany, or South Tyrol. This year, over 250 people, including 50 cheering guests, took part in the championships. The participants competed against each other in the disciplines of cross-country skiing, snowboarding, and giant slalom. These Ski-tournaments are traditionally accompanied by a colourful support program and, of course, a church service, which was held this year by Bavaria's Praeses, Fr. Christoph Huber. Kolping is well known for cheerful leisure time activities and the "Ski Days" every two years are a highlight for all regional Kolping people who are winter sports enthusiasts. At the end of this gathering, one was looking towards the year 2018, when South Tyrol will invite Kolping skiers to Bruneck-Kronplatz.

Bolivia**Health for the poor**

Since the 1980s, Kolping Bolivia is working for the poor of the country. There are close to 4,000 members in the country's around 100 Kolping Families. There, like in so many Kolping Families around the world, various self-help activities are taking place, as well as cultural and leisure time projects.

However, some social challenges in this Latin American country are so large that they cannot be handled by the Kolping Families alone. This includes the lack of adequate health care across the country. A key task of the Kolping Foundation has therefore been for many years to provide health care services. At Kolping, however, this does not happen like in many other private clinics, which serve only those who have enough money to afford a good treatment. Kolping is there for everyone - and particularly for the poor and vulnerable. Over a quarter million patients were treated or counselled in the various clinics and medical centres. This is documented in the latest report, which was presented in February. An impressive success!

Vietnam**Repression – even for the President of the Conference of German Bishops**

After Secretary General, Dr. Markus Demele, had visited the Kolping sisters and brothers in Vietnam last year, the opportunity came up for the President of the Conference of German Bishops, Reinhard Cardinal Marx, to also meet with Kolping Families in the Diocese of Vinh during his visit to the People's Republic of Vietnam. While no obstacles appeared in the planning stages of the Cardinal's trip, the meeting with the Bishop of Vinh was prohibited on short notice. The Bishop of Vinh, Most Rev. Paul Nguyen Thai Hop, is considered one of the most courageous critics of the Communist regime, and an encounter with him was therefore to be prevented.

Kolping members also suffer repression by the state time and time again. The about 7,000 Kolping members in Vietnam are grateful for the support and the community in prayer, so that they can continue courageously with their many activities around the country.

India – Peru

Learning from each other – sharing success

Good projects and successful programs should become known in the over 60 National Kolping Societies around the world and thereby help the international Kolping work as a whole. In India the Kolping micro-finance systems are a success story. Thousands of people benefit from small loans and the activities of the savings-and-credit groups. This model is also interesting for Peru. At the beginning of the year, a delegation of Kolping Peru with its managing director Charo Dueñas therefore went on a trip in order to learn from the Indian friends how a professional financial management for micro-loans can be established. They were not only impressed by the digital infra-structure, which allows access to the information of the members at any time and from any place, but they also had the opportunity to get to know the culture of the country.

With a lot of new information, the delegation returned to Latin America. For the International Kolping Society such south-south learning collaborations are important building blocks for a sustainable and self-sustaining development.

Togo

Productivity in agriculture

Productivity is a pressing problem for many smallholders in African countries. Their fields are small, and for optimal utilization of the arable land the big agri-businesses promise miracles through the use of special seed goods and the chemical fertilizer to go with it. However, the seeds of these plants can, as a rule, not be used for sowing in the following year, so that the farmers would have to buy the expensive products from the large enterprises year after year.

Sponsored by the German Government, Togo is also taking a different approach. Through the use of small livestock a natural fertilizer is produced which, by means of a simple composting process, can be further developed into a high-efficiency organic fertilizer. Kolping Togo runs training courses, where the smallholders also learn to make the optimal growing conditions cost-effective and thereby increase productivity. This is the beginning of spiral of growth for the smallholders, which benefits the whole family and especially the children.