

# **Ecumenical cooperation, essential in confronting the challenges of Globalization**

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*"(Make) every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:3-6)*

*"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35)*

## **Let us speak...**

My presentation could be very short. The title "Ecumenical cooperation is essential" already reveals the heart of the matter. "Confronting the challenges of Globalization" covers such a wide range of issues that I cannot finish my speech quite yet, even though we know my closing words even before I have started speaking.

As both the opening and closing sentences of my speech are known, it will be interesting to see whether the contents will be logical and meaningful, or whether the title will be among the several sentences so common in the theological discussion that could be placed in the category of "pia desideria", a kind of wishful thinking. In other words, were I given the task to talk about real issues, or am I just taking up your time in vain. So, first I will talk about Church, then about globalization and finally about cooperation. And I will finish by the sentence: ecumenical cooperation is essential.

## **1)...of Church**

***Church is basically multinational and international.***

The Church of Christ on earth is universal and general, i.e. catholic. Even a national church like my own Evangelic-Lutheran Church of Finland is general and catholic according to its own concept, and it is within this Church that I have been brought up, I have been ordained to ministry according to apostolic succession and I have been assigned to different posts. My Church is part of the universal Church of Jesus Christ. In their confession of faith the Christian churches express their belief that the Church of Jesus Christ is one, holy catholic and apostolic. Even when a church is deeply anchored in one specific country and the destiny of its people, its message surpasses the national and political boundaries.

As such the name of my church, the Evangelic Lutheran Church of Finland, is not very well chosen as it does not describe the self-understanding of the Church in the correct way. The name must be read and interpreted in a theological way from the end till the beginning. First of all we are a Church, secondly we are part of the universal Church of Christ whose confession is Evangelic Lutheran, and thirdly this Church represents universal Church in a specific geographic area. My Church was born out of the necessity of the state to take control over the national church. It was torn apart from the Church of Rome at the same time that most of protestant churches came into being. The concept of the responsibilities of a state has changed a lot from those days, and thus the connection of my Church to the state is nowadays quite loose.

My Church does not regard itself as the only correct church in Finland and the world, but it sees itself as part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, and together with other churches it is seeking the visible unity and strives to fulfill the mission of witness and service in the world.

This universal character of the Church and the base of the common creed is uniting different Christian churches to each other in a special way, despite their versatility and issues of dispute emerging from time to time.

Church is depending on other members of the Church of Christ because of its universal nature. It means unity with churches of different countries where the societies and daily life can be very different from each other. On the basis of our common creed we are united with all Christian churches, not only those with which we have had successful discussions or signed important ecumenical documents (as for instance Charta Oecumenica, The Porvoo Common Statement, The joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification), which our generation has had the opportunity to witness. We are trying to search for visible unity of the Church of Christ, and we are aiming at common witness and service in the world. It is part of the very nature of Church to search for ecumenical unity.

What I have said here represents the views of my own Church, I cannot speak on behalf of other churches.

### ***Called Together to Unity in Faith***

With the Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to the witness of Holy Scripture and as expressed in the ecumenical Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, we believe in the Triune God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Because we here confess "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church" our paramount ecumenical task is to show forth this unity, which is always a gift of God.

Fundamental differences in faith are still barriers to visible unity. There are different views of the church and its oneness, of the sacraments and ministries. We must not be satisfied with this situation. Jesus Christ revealed to us on the cross his love and the mystery of reconciliation; as his followers, we intend to do our utmost to overcome the problems and obstacles that still divide the churches. We shall, in the power of the Holy Spirit, work towards the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in the one faith, expressed in the mutual recognition of baptism and in eucharistic fellowship, as well as in common witness and service.

### ***ICMA is one implementation of ecumenical movement.***

As churches cannot leave any group of people without notice, and especially not people who live separated from the everyday life of their societies, it is self-evident that churches work among seafarers and fishermen. That's why it would be necessary to found a cooperative organ like ICMA (International Christian Maritime Association, *Annex 1*) if it did not already exist. There is no doubt that by acting through ICMA Seamen's Mission Societies save a lot of time, effort and money while searching to fulfill their individual goals. The ecumenical cooperation within the maritime world does not exist only for practical reasons. ICMA is needed and it exists for reasons of principle which I have been clarifying while talking about the nature of Church. This is not always easy to see, as Seamen's Missions are doing very practical work often very locally. It is good to remember an old theological slogan: "The sacred is present in everyday life". The positive slogan of globalization: "act locally, think globally" is also true when talking about Seamen's Missions.

### **3) ...of acting ecumenically together**

We in the world of Seamen's Missions see ourselves clearly in the group that would like to see globalization under control. Positive globalization and ecumenical unity are heading into the same direction. How could we distribute the profits of globalization more evenly, how to bring about values that respect local matters and individual people? Can the Church be beneficial in controlling of globalization?

Ecumenical interaction has increased a lot compared to the time when ICMA was founded, more than 30 years ago. Most forms of our shared activity are already ecumenical. Christians from different churches on board ship and in Seafarer's Centers live side by side and interact in friendships at work and in their free time.

***The Church is (but not only) an organization of common good.***

When simplified the most important ethic teachings of Christianity are: do not respond to evil by evil, and do not look for your own interest. Although in practice this policy is not often followed till the end, the common basis of morality of Christian churches is significant for anybody who wants that the society around him is working properly, and who wants that he is surrounded by people he can trust. If there is no morality or set of values to be shared there are no common rules according to which to act. One important goal for all of us is to abolish corruption. It is important to recognize everybody's right to education, a way out of poverty. It means education for all. A director of an enterprise once said: "the best guarantee for development is Christian faith, market economy and democracy".

Within the Church we have experienced several times in the course of history that "we were slandered, we were praised, but we spoke the truth". Speaking the truth must not be acting like a master, not boasting with our wisdom, but we must have courage to make our knowledge and values known to others. Our actions must also be in accordance with our teaching. We do not have access alone to the forums where speaking the truth can influence decision making, but united we can get there. For instance, a Seamen's Mission Society alone could hardly have a say in the organs of the United Nations, but by means of our united voice through ICMA we have a right to be present in the meetings of the ILO (International Labor Organization) and the IMO (International Maritime Organization) and express our views, even though ICMA with its observer status does not have the right to vote.

***New communication culture***

The information technology has proceeded very rapidly. The development of electronics has made it possible to give and receive the same ethic challenge at the same time in different parts of the world. To survive in our world is more and more up to all of us.

Global village is largely based upon fully shared information so that all residents can make their own decisions. But this benefits only those who have access to the latest technology and who can make use of it. Even here the key words are money and know how. The importance of ethic values is emphasized, which means that the role of Churches as institutions maintaining and conveying the ethic values is becoming more important.

New possibilities to make money are in the background of this development, but so are also some basic human needs, and responding to these needs is what Seamen's Missions do, and that is why they become interesting to us in connection with globalization.

1. First of all people have a need of connecting to other people. Telephone services have a central role in many Seafarer's Centers. Conceptually this falls into the category of family work of the Church and helps to maintain forces seeking to preserve the positive values of life and its meaningfulness. The new technology has made it possible that inter-active communication has become part of everyday life in many countries.
2. When radio was introduced almost one century ago it became easier for man to fulfill his need to be part of something greater. By switching on the radio one can choose a human

voice and stories by other people, their feelings and thoughts to be present at any chosen time. It does not offer a chance for interaction, but makes it still possible to feel that one is part of something humanly significant, which reaches beyond one's actual being and is not limited to time and place.

3. At the same time it strengthens our image of not being alone and isolated with our thoughts and feelings. I exist because I feel that there are others who think, feel and experience in the same way as I do. This feeling of similarity is vitally important to our morality and ethics.

### ***Encountering new values***

It seems to me that inter-active connections to other people has become a central value in the affluent countries. It is a new value. This value can be reached via electric mail. E-mail makes it possible for me to convey my message to the recipient whenever I want. I can be present in his/her reality at any time. E-mail gives me also the feeling that some other person is constantly seeking access to me. Only one press of a button, and there s/he is, with all his/her thoughts, and most importantly, his/her feelings. A cellular phone creates almost the same perception. The signal announcing that I have a message is something more than just to inform me of a new message. It is an announcement of the fact that somebody has approached me personally. Only few people react to the signal with complete indifference. It is urging us to see who is seeking me, to whom do I exist, who is thinking about me right now.

Why the inter-active connections have become such an important value? Why people are ready to pay large sums of money so that on the spur of a moment they can send messages to each other, messages the most important idea which is: I am still existing in your world, or that I want you to still exist in my world. The new technology appeals to the playing man. New words and signs appear in our languages. In the background there could also be a strong desire to avoid unwanted loneliness. Something in our time makes us uncertain about our ability to create lasting relationships or connections to other people.

The contents of the messages are not essential in the communication. The point is to express the need and the desire of communication. I exist if I exist to somebody else. This existence does not exist without a connection to another human being. That is why a connection alone is so significant.

As far as information technology is concerned making it accessible to seafarers has for a long time been on the schedule of the Seamen's Missions. Unnecessary to say what is self-evident: discussing and developing the working methods in this field can be successful only if we cooperate internationally. The most important thing is to provide the necessary equipment so that seafarers can have access to it and to give them sufficient training so that they can make use of it independently.

### ***Communicating with oneself is a difficult task***

We should teach achieving and learn to achieve a balance between our inner and outer life, between our feminine and masculine sides, and between our loyalty to our place and community and our sense of internationalism. My place, my community is important but not against the rest of the world because I honour the place and other peoples and their commitment to their own culture as well. I will fight to help them protect the integrity of their own culture and place but I expect them to fight to help protect the integrity of my place. That also relates to the spiritual dimension. We see the face of God in every person and being. This essentially means recognising the unity of the spirit of life and the consciousness. The whole idea of competition then becomes ridiculous because we are competing against ourselves.

### ***Church can make use of an “early warning” system***

Often when I have spoken with representatives of governments, trade unions or shipping companies they have appreciated Church because of the direct contact it has to people and their lives on grass root level. Church is present and is ready to listen to what people have to say. Church can also take notice when people change their behavior or way of speaking. For instance when they start talking about each other in terms of stereo types, i.e. by classifying each other by nationality. The crew member is no longer Jim or Rachel, instead s/he is American, a Muslim or one of those with long hair. It is a symptom that can show a serious change in the attitudes of people.

We should be early out if we want to be able to get crises under control. Any potential crisis, no matter how small it may seem, should not pass without notice, whether the crisis in question is an armed conflict, violation of human rights, an ethnic conflict, a state breaking up or an environmental or humanitarian catastrophe. Not interfering is not caring, and means at the same time that we accept human suffering. Moreover, we take the risk that crises may spread to such an extent that they become a threat to global security.

The freedom of speech, assembly and religion are still being violated in many countries. Organized crime is becoming more powerful: people are sold as sex slaves, children sold to adoption, labor force sold to poor ships. Armies are still defending with guns, killing is going on: how are the civilians protected? How does the international help reach the victims in the gray area between war and peace? Churches have knowledge about these things thanks to their local connections, they can identify changes and draw conclusions of them through their ecumenical network.

### ***Not interfering means not caring.***

Our common endeavours are devoted to evaluating, and helping to resolve, political and social issues in the spirit of the Gospel. Because we value the person and dignity of every individual as made in the image of God, we defend the absolutely equal value of all human beings. Reconciliation involves promoting social justice within and among all peoples; above all, this means closing the gap between rich and poor. Poverty is still the worst violation of human rights.

### ***Proclaiming the Gospel together***

The most important task of the churches is the common proclamation of the Gospel, in both word and deed, for the salvation of all. The widespread lack of corporate and individual orientation and falling away from Christian values challenge Christians to testify to their faith, particularly in response to the quest for meaning which is being pursued in so many forms. This witness will require increased dedication to pastoral care with a sharing of experiences in these fields. This means that we shall discuss our plans for activities in Seafarer’s Ministry with other churches, entering into agreements with them and thus avoiding harmful competition and the risk of fresh divisions. An important tool for us is the ICMA Code of Conduct (*Annex 2*), where ICMA Members commit themselves among others to recognise that every person can freely choose his or her religious and church affiliation as a matter of conscience, which means not inducing anyone to convert through moral pressure or material incentive, but also not hindering anyone from entering into conversion of his or her own free will.

### ***Praying together***

The ecumenical movement lives from our hearing God’s word and letting the Holy Spirit work in us and through us. In the power of this grace, many different initiatives now seek, through services of prayer and worship, to deepen the spiritual fellowship among the churches and to pray for the visible unity of Christ’s Church. A particularly painful sign of the divisions among many Christian churches is the lack of eucharistic fellowship. In some churches reservations subsist

regarding praying together in an ecumenical context. But we have many hymns and liturgical prayers in common, notably the Lord's Prayer, and ecumenical services have become a widespread practice: all of these are features of our Christian spirituality.

Without common values, unity cannot endure. It is easy to be convinced that the spiritual heritage of Christianity constitutes an empowering source of inspiration and enrichment for our acting together. On the basis of our Christian faith, we want to work towards a humane, socially conscious world, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail.

### ***Encountering other religions and world views***

Non-governmental organizations and other free interest groups of citizens have a central role when developing the mechanisms in order to get globalization under control. During the past few years this third sector of society has had such an important role while common issues have been discussed on international level that its additional value is already taken for granted. Secretary General of the United Nations has described this versatile international activity with the term “new diplomacy”. Churches have an important role to play in the practical development cooperation and in promoting peace. Churches promote dialogue between different religions on grass roots level. This can be seen as something very important in a world where many make the mistake of interpreting disagreements being a result of continuous cultural and religious conflicts, even though the reasons behind those conflicts would lie elsewhere.

The world is made up of more than 200 languages and nearly 100 religions. The plurality of religious and non-confessional beliefs and ways of life is a feature of the world. Eastern religions and new religious communities are spreading and also attracting the interest of many Christians. In addition, growing numbers of people reject the Christian faith, are indifferent to it or have other philosophies of life.

The freedom of religion is one of the human rights. We do not have choice, we have to take seriously the critical questions of others, and try together to conduct fair discussions with them. We shall be open to dialogue with all persons of good will, to pursue with them matters of common concern, and to bring a witness of our Christian faith to them. In order to do this successfully it is important that we who carry forward the different traditions of Christian faith can put aside our disputes and speak in one voice when discussing with representatives of other religions.

### ***“Besserwisser”?***

Generally speaking Churches have an important role in this world and they are in the key role in promoting dialogue on equal basis. Development aid of churches and other international activities have for a long time functioned in the spirit of “ecumenical sharing of resources” so that southern Churches can have as many representatives and as much influence in international meetings as they are entitled to according to their size. They have been given space and their voice has been heard. ICMA, our own instrument of ecumenical work has one serious problem. ICMA is also willing to listen to the voices of South and East, to encourage many-sided democratic discussion and create constructions that overcome barriers between cultures, organizations and congregations. However, ICMA has such a structure that voices from different areas are not adequately represented on an equal basis. This will hopefully be put right when the already started “ICMA development project” is proceeding.

This is an example showing that our own yard is not as clean as it could be. That is why the Church should not claim itself as the prophet who can tell others how things should be done. It is more important to speak the truth, have self-criticism and classical modesty, to have a sensitive

consciousness so that egoism and seeking our own profit would not make us numb. The mission of Church is to act as a companion to people who have a good will. And they are many, as the Church sees every human being as a unique creation of God.

If we want to be in the role of a prophet, if we want to convey sustainable Christian values we must work together. There is no Church or a Seamen's Mission that can go forward or proceed to new areas without cooperation with local Churches and authorities.

Thus we have reached the closing statement: Ecumenical cooperation is essential.

## **Annex 1.**

### ***WHAT IS ICMA?***

**The International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA)**, in accordance with its Constitution, is a free association of Christian organisations engaged in welfare work for seafarers who include those working on merchant, fishing and passenger vessels. The objects of the Association are the promotion of the spiritual, social and material welfare and the religious education of all seafarers, and the relief of need, hardship or distress among seafarers.

**Main Activities** are in the field of Ecumenism, Networking, Publications, Conferences, Training, and Support to local and regional development, Co-operation and Projects: Sailing Chaplains Project Crisis Preparedness Project ICMA Seafarers Ministry Training (SMT).

*Ecumenical co-operation:* ICMA was founded in 1969 to encourage ecumenical collaboration and mutual assistance on the local port level, on the national and international level. In a fragmented and divided society, it is ICMA's mission to promote unity, peace and tolerance. Any ICMA chaplain or volunteer, in selflessness and without hidden agenda, is obliged to serve seafarers, fishermen and their dependants regardless their nationality, religion, culture, language, sex or race. Co-operation includes 1) respect the loyalty of those engaged in maritime ministry to their particular ecclesiastical discipline and tradition and 2) willingness for co-operation with persons, organizations and institutions, Christian or non-Christian, that work for the welfare of seafarers.

*Networking:* ICMA has 25 member organizations, who represent different and various Christian Churches and Christian communities, like the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, many different Protestant Churches (Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist etc) and even in some ports the Orthodox (Russian, Greek) Church. ICMA represents 565 seafarers' centers and 270 Chaplaincies in 126 countries. Elections of coordinators are finalized in Regions of Asia, Mediterranean, Baltic Sea and Western Europe.

*Publications:* ICMA Directory is listing Christian centers, chaplaincies and other seamen's welfare agencies giving detailed information on facilities throughout the world. Further publications are ICMA News, [www.icma.as](http://www.icma.as) and a Communiqué for ICMA members after each Executive Committee meeting.

*Conferences:* Today there are seven ICMA Regions with their regular conferences: North America (NAMMC), ICMA United Kingdom & Ireland, ICMA Western Europe, ICMA Asia, ICMA Mediterranean, ICMA West Africa and ICMA Baltic Sea. 8<sup>th</sup> ICMA World Conference was held year 2000 in Durban/Drakensberg, South Africa, next one, the 9<sup>th</sup>, is planned to be September 2004 in New Orleans, U.S.A.

*Training:* To newly-appointed ministers ICMA offers the Seafarers Ministry Training. A new offer of training is ICMA Crisis Preparedness course making chaplains aware of their role in disasters and crisis situations. Advanced training course and local training support for newly started missions are in preparation.

*Support to local and regional development:* Consultation in framework of ICMA has been delivered locally for instance in Russia, Baltic countries, Indonesia and South America.

*Co-operation:* Working together with seafarers welfare organizations is an essential part of ICMA's policy. ICMA representatives have attended regularly meetings of the ICSW Presidium and

Committee in London. ICMA is also represented as observer in the International Labor Organization (ILO) and in spe in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) , in the Management of the Seafarers' International Research Center of Cardiff University (SIRC) and ISAN and is a member of IMHA.

*Sailing Chaplains Project:* Objectives are (1) to undertake a detailed study of Sailing Chaplains and other broadly comparable schemes and assess their contribution to seafarers welfare, and (2) to produce a detailed study of the traditional services provided by ship-visiting and seafarers clubs and assess their contributions to seafarers welfare. The Finnish Seamen's Church in Helsinki is holding the project accounts. The Sailing Chaplains Project Committee consists of representatives of ITF Seafarers Trust, German Seamen's Mission, Finnish Seamen's Mission, Apostleship of the Sea, Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC, Cardiff University, UK) and the ICMA General Secretary.

*Crisis Preparedness Training:* Disasters and crisis cannot only be classified as such if there is loss of life. Any number of situations that cause serious concern or injury can include suffering of major trauma (e.g. pirate attacks). To prepare seafarers ministry workers for an efficient and effective major incident response, ICMA launched a Crisis Preparedness project. Before 2005 the training will be completed in most regions.

*ICMA Seafarers Ministry Training (SMT):* The SMT, a training course for newly-appointed professional workers in seafarers ministry, lay or ordained, will have twenty participants. The course subjects are related to the shipping industry, seafarers' live, seafarers ministry and welfare and communication. 4<sup>th</sup> ICMA SMT took place in Hong Kong 2001. Next one will be in Rotterdam 2003.

*ISAN:* ICMA has participated in preparing of an International Seafarers Assistance Network (ISAN). The heart of this project will be a free telephone help line that refers seafarers from all over the world to resources that can give them the help they need (social, spiritual, etc). In this project ICMA works together with the International Committee on Seafarers Welfare (ICSW), ITF, SIRC and others.

*Organization:* *Annual General Meetings* are decision making forums for the members of ICMA. *The Executive Committee* consists of representatives of the seven founding members of ICMA. *The ICMA Secretariat* is responsible for the daily management and representation of ICMA. Rev Berend van Dijken acts as ICMA General Secretary based in Rotterdam. Official address of ICMA is in London, UK.

## **Annex 2.**

### ***ICMA CODE OF CONDUCT***

Membership of ICMA carries an obligation to abide by the Constitution of the Association and of this Code of Conduct.

#### **The Mission of ICMA :**

*The seafarers of the world remind us of the ultimate purpose of all God's plans: "the end will not come until the Gospel of God's Kingdom has reached to the borders of the whole inhabited world [oikumene]" (Matthew 24,14). In a fragmented and divided society, it is ICMA 's mission to promote unity, peace and tolerance. ICMA was founded for promoting and co-ordinating Christian ecumenical co-operation in maritime ministry.*

Chaplains and staff of all ICMA Member Societies at local, national and international level are therefore to :

- a) Show an unconditional love to the seafarer as a human being, created in the image of God, and a sincere respect for her/his personal values and beliefs ;
- b) Serve seafarers and their dependants of all nationalities, religions, cultures, language, sex or race ;
- c) Fight prejudice, intolerance and injustice of any kind ;
- d) Respect the diversity of ICMA Members and Churches and to develop that which unites them ;
- e) Respect the loyalty of those engaged in maritime ministry to their particular ecclesiastical discipline and tradition ;
- f) Co-operate with persons, organizations and institutions, Christian or non-Christian, that work for the welfare of seafarers.