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Talitha Cum: The Promise of Life

Since 1908, Student World has been a voice and forum to ecumenically-minded students, creating a network of concerns and ideas. Last year, after a 33-year hiatus, publication of the world's first ecumenical journal began again with the issue 247 on Power and Principalities (Poderes y Principados; Pouvoir et Principautés). Each issue gathers articles and essays around a specific topic, being published in the three official languages of the Federation: English, French and Spanish.

Resurrection of a Tradition

The topic of Student World 2004/1 is *Fullness of Life – Life in Abundance (Plenitud de Vida – Vida en Abundancia; Plénitude de la Vie – Vie en Abondance)*. It is closely connected to the theme of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) General Assembly (GA) in Chiang Mai, Thailand (August 5–14, 2004), which is entitled *Talitha Cum: Arise to Life in Abundance (Mark 5,41)*.

Contributions arrived from nearly all regions of WSCF (Africa, Asia–Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America) and all three main branches of Christianity: the Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions.

Gathering students from all over the world is not only important for the future of the Federation, but at this significant time in the history of the ecumenical movement it becomes a statement of hope and faith, as is given to us in the story of Jesus raising Jairus' daughter from death to life, *Talitha cum: Arise to Life in Abundance!*

Biblical Perspectives on Renewed Life

Mark 5,21–43, the source of the General Assembly theme, serves as the inspiration for our title as well. It is the story of two miracles: the hæmorrhaging woman and the little girl restored to life.

Both Jairus, acting on his daughter's behalf, and the bleeding woman sought the same thing from Jesus: healing from pain and illness. They had faith that Jesus would honour their requests fully, restoring life to wholeness in its natural capacity.

But Jesus chose to go beyond mere healing to give to them abun-

dantly spiritual salvation and new life. “Abundance” is fullness to overflowing, as God’s power exceeds the bounds of natural life and the human capacity for understanding.

Talitha cum! – Child, arise! – is a call to come to God, rather than requiring God to come to us; to set aside our limited conceptions of self-fulfilment in favour of the chance to partake of God’s abundance.

Beams of Human Perspectives

The sections of the ecumenical review are structured according to the main thematic foci of the Chiang Mai General Assembly. The first section, on *Dialogue and Ecumenical Vision*, contains the articles of three former ecumenical leaders of the Federation and of the World Council of Churches (WCC), who submitted historical contributions to this issue: Philip POTTER, Risto LEHTONEN and Martin CONWAY.

The article of Martin CONWAY shows that in the universities, SCM members have struggled to explore, test out and witness to the singularity of all truth as the heart of the intellectual struggle, along with a balance between the inherent universality of truth and the proper diversity of cultures and situations, and to the promise of growing into citizens of the one human family committed to discovering the paths of justice and friendship.

In his interview, Philip POTTER, chairperson of the Federation from 1960–1968, reminisces with us about the lives of many people who are responsible for shaping the present condition of ecumenism, and he puts forth a vision for the rising generation of young people.

The events of the sixties in world affairs, in the analysis of Risto LEHTONEN, the general secretary of WSCF between 1968 and 1972, invariably affected the life of WSCF by inspiring students to demand a socially conscious organisational response, creating a serious rift between their focus on political action and the more traditional focus on the Church as a sacramental body.

After the historical overviews, two current editors of Student World share their vision about the ecumenical student movement. *Knowledge and Education*, the second part of our review, is centred on Africa, a continent, which is facing today a difficult situation at many levels. One of the causes of Africa’s problems might well be found in the territory of higher education: thus, the reconstruction of Africa will be contributed to by renewing the way of thinking of the African people.

Clement of Alexandria was the first Church father to do serious work in the area of philosophy of religion. His attempt resulted in axiomatic statements and a methodological framework which roots itself in a solely faith-based perspective of Christianity that lays emphasis on the individual’s plight to act upon an ever-increasing understanding of God’s call in this world.

Spiritual Abundance is the title of our third section, focusing on the nature of the Spirit and Her manifestations in our lives. Forgiveness is praised by our Lord

as the virtue which likens humans to God. It must blossom out of the notion of communion, the one and common nature of humanity. Resentment or hostility towards our fellow humans caused by a failure to forgive separates us from God as well. Thus, forgiveness sets a high standard for the Christian, but it is only by striving towards this lofty goal that we can achieve true fullness of life.

Passion takes on the form of a conflict between its own anger for truth and the falsity of the outside world. But the bravery and zeal of passion must be yoked by a spiritual way and tempered by the inescapable drama of life. The final stage of passion, holiness of heart, is attainable only with God's help and presence. It wholeheartedly serves and pursues love, even unto identification with the Passion of the Christ, taking on God's Suffering Love in order to save and redeem, and finally transfigure the world.

The articles on *States, Globalisation and Economic Justice*, in our next section, attempt to reflect theologically on the impact of globalisation(s) through issues that are of particular importance in the regions. The market ethic, with its principles of selfishness and elitism, draws human beings to their self-destruction by imposing the rule of survival of the fittest. The perspective of life and theological-economic alternative become crucial, because they are the language through which this system of aggressive and totalising discourse is confronted with the marginalized and oppressed peoples.

By Constantine the Great, Christianity became the common denominator of the Roman Empire, which brought the idea of unity and common belonging. Church and state played a new score together: the Byzantine symphony, ruled by the two-headed eagle. The new head of the Roman eagle had the duty to educate exemplary citizens who were faithful to the new Christian caesar and to gain the obedience of barbarians through mission.

Finally, we gathered articles on *Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS* in our last section. Historically the Christian Church has had an uneasy relationship with sexuality. There is, however, a linguistic link between contemporary understandings of Christian sexuality and the ancient Hebrew way of 'knowing' found in Genesis. Sexuality is a good gift of God; but also the failure to share our sexuality with our beloved constitutes a failure to live up to our potential as justice-makers and justice-seekers.

Another uncomfortable topic is HIV and AIDS, especially in the faith community, where talk of sex and drugs carries immediate social judgement. Yet the silence hinders people with HIV from seeking the help and support they need, and crushes efforts to educate communities to prevent the spread of the disease. People and governments around the globe must be forced to confront the issue of HIV and AIDS not just superficially, but boldly and openly: silence is not a solution and ignoring the issue only serves to perpetuate it.