



# In the Spotlight

THE UNION OF CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE

in

GERMANY

## Members, groups and communities.



There is a long history of the Union in Germany. The Pallottine Fathers and Brothers came to Germany in 1892 and the Pallottine Sisters in 1895, following on from this several other communities were formed. In 1921 the Sisters of St. Hildegard and in 1928 the Theresian Sisters were founded by the Pallottine Fathers. In the 1960s the Laienverband (Lay Association) came into being and was approved as a member community of the Union in 1971. The Ancilla-Kreis, founded in 1965, was accepted into the Union in 1983, the Bekennende Gemeinschaft (UAC Rheinbach) in 1995. The Community "Gloria Dei" became part of the Union in 1996 through affiliation to the Congregation of the Theresian Sisters. The first members of the Union group Hochaltingen were accepted into the Union also in 1996. The Pallotti group in Schwabisch Gmund came into being in 1997. The Apostolate group in Reckendorf, founded in 1998, developed from a prayer group; as did the Apostolate group in Hofstetten, which was accepted into the Union of Catholic Apostolate in 2000. The community Movimento Pallotti Berlin was admitted into the Union in 2003 and the Vincent-Pallotti-Community Augsburg in 2004, following approval of the request for admission by the Plenary Assembly of the German National Coordination Council in 2003.

This overview allows us to see the history and indeed the variety of the communities that form part of the Union in Germany. Each community has its own 'face' and identity. There are religious orders, groups whose members live in close proximity to one another thus allowing them to meet weekly; there are other groups whose members are spread throughout the country and therefore they can only meet occasionally. There are groups whose main apostolate is involvement in their parishes, in others the members offer up their prayers and the limitations of age and infirmity for the Union. The membership is varied, those who are married, single, religious sisters, brothers and priests. In all there are over 750 members of the Union in Germany, about 500 of these members belong to the Society of the Priests and Brothers or to one of the Congregations of Sisters.

## National Coordination Council

While the communities are very varied there exists a long tradition of a common identity among them. The first major meeting of representatives of German speaking leaders took place in 1982. From then on the Major Superiors as well as the leaders of the various groups from Germany, Austria and Switzerland meet once a year. The German Coordination Council emerged from these meetings, the Statute of the NCC was passed and the Presidency elected in 2000. The NCC Statute was approved by the General Coordination Council on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2000. The Presidency is made up of Fr. Norbert Lauinger, SAC, President, Sr. Adelheid Scheloske, SAC, Vice-President and Beate Weis, Treasurer, this presidency team was re-elected for a second period in 2003.

## Different Forms of Union-Meetings

There have been opportunities for all members of the Union to meet since the 1980s. The first of such meetings were organized regionally by the local communities in Vallendar. Meetings for all of the German speaking members of the Union were organized, in 1988 in Vallendar, 1990 in Freising, 1991 in Limburg, 1993 in Stuttgart, up to a hundred participants from the three countries took part in these meetings. The Theological Faculty of the Pallottines in Vallendar has been organizing international symposiums on

Pallottine themes and subjects, in fact there is a symposium planned for October of this year on the theme of “Christ has many Faces: Pallottine perspectives for an inculturated church.” The symposium aims at deepening Pallotti’s image of Christ and its consequences for the Church faced with the complex multi-cultural and multi-religious realities that exist today.

In 1996 the first Coordination Centres, later called Coordination Councils, were established in the Northern and Southern German areas; following on the creation of the German National Coordination Council these are now known as ‘regional gatherings’ and continue to meet regularly. One of their functions is to facilitate increased contact and exchange between the communities and the individual members. In 2003 the German Coordination Council organized a Congress of the Union in Freising. It is planned to hold a Congress every two years. The Congress was an opportunity to discuss the situation of the German Church and to see the challenges facing the Union as part of the Church, it also afforded the opportunity to meet and to get to know one another.

The Union in Germany has also been represented in national meetings of Catholics in Germany in what are known as “German Catholics Day”, these are held every second or fourth year. Members of various groups have been present at such gatherings and have presented the vision of Pallotti and the Union as a response to the Church of today.

The German Coordination Council has planned a trip to Rome this year for members of the Union. It is an opportunity to walk in the footsteps of Pallotti and deepen our understanding of his spirituality.

## **Formation**

While meetings and encounters among members of the Union have been taking place for over 20 years, there is still a lack of consciousness among members that they are members of their own communities and also of the Union. This is especially true of members of the Congregations who were formed in a time when awareness of belonging to the Union was not as clear as it is today.

There is, therefore, the need for both initial and on-going formation. The on-going formation of the members of the communities rests with the communities themselves, however since the German Coordination Council was founded there have been initiatives to offer different kinds of on-going formation to all Union members. The Presidency publishes twice yearly a general list of some of the courses being offered by the different Pallottine houses and communities. All Pallottine novices in the German speaking area meet in each two year cycle for five weeks of seminars, these have been held since 1996. This year the important elements of these seminars are offered in a condensed form by the German Coordination Council as part of the preparatory formation for those who wish to be admitted to the UAC. This is a course of introduction to Pallottine Spirituality on six weekends over a two year period. This course is part of the formation of those who wish to be accepted into the Union as individual members but is also open to all other members of the Union who wish to deepen their spirituality and as part of on-going formation.

The Presidency of the German Coordination Council publishes 3 or 4 times a year the Union Newsletter. The usual format is a central topic or theme that is developed and shorter articles of news from within the Union.

## **Further Steps of Growth for the UAC in Germany**

Over the last few years one of the main tasks undertaken by the Presidency has been that of organization within the Union to establish contact and to maintain links among the members. Another essential task has been to look outside the Union and for this the medium of publicity has been used. A catalogue of all the members of the Union in Germany has been drawn up. A brochure of 34 pages has been printed, this gives an introduction to Vincent Pallotti, his spirituality, his foundation, the Union today and a list of the member communities in Germany. The content of this brochure has been posted on a website in the internet. And last but not least a pamphlet has been published recently that presents the Union in an attractive manner and invites readers to establish contact.

Sr. Adelheid Scheloske, SAC.