Jubilee-Worship-Service "50 Years Ausbildunsghilfe – Christian Education Fund" in the Chapel of the Haus der Kirche Kassel on Aug 28th, 2010

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The watchword for the forthcoming week, dear sisters and brothers, seems to be just meant for the jubilee we celebrate today. It is not only to be commemorated during this one particular week, but could rather be the motto for 50 years of existence of the Education Fund:

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Matthew. 25, 40

With that we touch the core question of solidarity and responsibility of the Christian congregation.

Whether the parable of the final judgement stood behind the people in Kassel to found the "Ausbildungshilfe – Christian Education Fund"? – I doubt it. Rev. Wilhelm Jung can report much more adequate about the beginnings some 50 years back, than I can.

However: the hint to the final judgement at the end of times shows with all its significance the severity the discipleship of Jesus asks for. But it would of course be too much calculating to base on an institution of love for one's neighbor. Those, whom Jesus praises in the parable, on the contrary are those who acted without any calculation, just in an immediate reaction born out of a dire need.

To realize the need is the most decisive. That lead to early beginnings of the Education Fund. Let us try to remember the year 1960: it was the times of final decolonization. Regions, partly for centuries under colonial rule and exploited, achieved liberty. India was already liberated in 1947. In the early 60-ties the African Continent gained liberty. I can recall the pictures in the newspapers of that time, how people saluted independence in Kenya, Tanganjika, Cameroon. But colonial heritage was still a heavy burden on the new republics – partly till today. Namely in the very beginnings well educated personnel in administrations, in artisanry and schools were missing. Julius Nyerere when founding his party in 1954 was one of the two Tanganjicans with a University degree. A support for education upgrading was the demand of the hour more than ever before.

Of course there were other agencies to be founded these days, such as "Bread for the World" a year earlier – one of the most renowned brands of protestant churches nowadays. Ausbildungshilfe never wanted to compete with such a big organization. Our own approach was much more humble, but hardly less effective: young people were to be educated well with the help of a scholarship and were enabled to earn their own living as well as to train others. This way Ausbildungshilfe became a specific form of development aid.

When we talk about development, the respective ministry of our government or other NGO's may come to our minds. But in relation to our Education Fund I would rather think of development in a more focused sence: God has given us many gifts and talents, be it in Germany or Asia or Africa. They do not always de-velop immediately but slumber in us. We have to develop them that they may be displayed and serve the community, the public sector as well as the church. But how can a young person, boy or girl, develop Gods given gifts? A respective education will help to discover those gifts and talents!

I understand our Education Fund till today as – to name it – a sort of self-development-aid. With this financial aid from Germany we can equip young peopleto become what they ought to be: people gifted by God. In that regard, dear congregants, we achieved quite a bit in the course of the years of half a century. More than 16 Million Euro contributed towards young Christians lifes in Asia and Africa to master their lifes without paternalism. That has created relationships beyond borders, languages and colours.

One symbol for it is that we can welcome a number of overseas guests today. The jubilee of the Education Fund somehow becomes a harvest festival! We thank God for his blessings, that he let grow in the development of individual, self-conscious personalities and at the same time as a communion of believers and of our churches.

What has all this to do with our watchword for the week? Once again: for me it appears very impressive that Jesus tells about those who inadversantly belong to the "Just", acting charitably never had in mind to do something on behalf of or for Jesus: they fed the hungry and thirsty, hosted the strangers, dressed the naked, visited the sick and captives. They did it spontaneously and without any side intention for heavenly revenues. They did what had to be done, just because it was human. Only much later, afterlife, netherworld, they inadversantly experience, that their humanity was considered a service to Christ.

Foremost nothing else but a clear view for the emerging need is at stake. That's how the Education Fund began 50 years ago. Within that framework we grew together more closely, discovered ourselves as sisters and brothers not merely among each other but rather as sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ. He declares his solidarity with those, whose talents are huge and many, but whose possibilities are limited due to difficult conditions. Since he is our brother we became his family.

So the Education Fund does not only lead us to the many young people whom we support in their personal development but is always also a way to an unexpected encounter with Christ. That makes our Ausbildungshilfe so attractive. We never remain among ourselves if we help others. We can, yeah we must expect to meet Christ, who is our brother.

Therefore we ask him today that he shall remind us in Germany again and again of our responsibility for the young Christians in Asia and Africa; may he open our eyes for the emerging needs of the world and that we do what needs to be done: simple deeds of humanity. They are worthwhile as they will change our world. The jubilee proves it richly for which we are grateful.

May God grant his blessings on the Ausbildungshilfe also in the future days to come. Amen

Bishop Prof. Dr. Martin Hein

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