

During four days, September 30 to October 3, 2015, delegations from the southern diocese of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary and from the diocese of Linköping in the Church of Sweden have been meeting for talks in Vadstena – an ancient pilgrimage destination on the shores of the Vättern lake, and the resting place of Saint Bridget of Sweden.

The talks form part of an 18-year old partnership between the two dioceses. This year they were held during the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe. At the end of the meeting, the following statement was made by the bishops Péter Gáncs, southern diocese of the Lutheran Church in Hungary, and Martin Modéus, diocese of Linköping, Sweden.

We are faced with a big challenge when people flee from war and poverty to come to Europe and to our countries. This is the time for us to be available to those in need. We must be of service and spread the word and love of God. Saint Francis of Assisi put it best: “We must always preach the Gospel, and sometimes with words”.

Our respective situations are different in many ways. The Church of Sweden is a majority church. The Lutherans in Hungary form a small minority. Sweden is for many refugees a country of final destination. Hungary is situated on the edge of the Schengen area, where refugees are passing through.

So the challenges are different in some ways. But basically, the human condition remains the same, and we face the same fundamental spiritual tasks. We must stand up for fundamental Christian values of compassion and human dignity, welcoming every human being, for everyone was made in the image and likeness of God. The refugees are our sisters and brothers. Seeing the humanity in each person crossing our borders is something that we as Christians must always do. This is the task with which the Lord entrusted us.

We do believe and hope that this global crisis can help us discover our common identity, roots and mandate with the help of God. We pray together for the people and communities who work hard among the needy, for those who make responsible decisions, and for ourselves, so that we may follow Christ and the Gospel in these times with so much challenge.

Vadstena, October 3, 2015

Péter Gáncs

Martin Modéus