Council 50*: Towards a Church –*
Inspired by the Gospel – for the world
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The 'Council 50' gathering in Rome from 20-22nd November, sought to shine new light on the seeds of the Second Vatican Council, marking 50 years since it closed.

"We are ready to help Pope Francis implement the Second Vatican Council now" declared the 100 delegates representing worldwide catholic reform movements. Grass roots groups from every continent worked on a combined declaration and will continue networking in 2018 in Latin America and in 2021 in Africa.

Reform movements from across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas gathered last weekend in Rome for a lively and inspiring conference. The aim of 'Council 50' was to relight the flame of the Second Vatican Council and make visible the prophetic voice of the 'people of God' that has continued to thrive **despite 35 years' of suppression during the last two pontificates**. The assembled group consisted of priests and lay people as well as men and women religious. Together, they demonstrated the great potential to revive the Church so that we can better contribute to healing many of the urgent problems in the world.

Keynote speaker, Dr Nontando Hadebe, a theologian from Zimbabwe, welcomed the perspectives opened up by Pope Francis to evolve the Catholic Church to meet the challenges of the 21st century. She introduced the idea of God as an interconnected reality reflected in the interconnectedness of people all over the world throughout history, and between cultures, the laity and hierarchy, all religions and between heaven and earth. She reflected on how church leaders had remained silent on topics such as HIV infections and the kidnapping of hundreds of girls by Boko Haram. Dr Hadebe pointed out that this is a clear sign of the fear of addressing the need to change attitudes towards women. She also expressed the need for **an 'encyclical of the kitchen, living room and neighbourhood' rather than the Church only focusing on the bedroom**.

Later on, speakers from five continents presented their common efforts to create structural and spiritual reforms for a more decentralised Catholic Church and demonstrated **how much we all have in common, despite our different social and cultural backgrounds.**

A group statement has been drafted based on workshop discussions held during the event (on topics such as nonviolence, peace based on social and economic justice, environmental action, women's role in the Church and on sexual teaching - especially concerning LGBT people). The 'Council 50 Charter' **will be finalised and given to Pope Francis** during the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the close of the 2nd Vatican Council (December 8th, 2015). Conscious of the 'signs of the time', this statement declares the commitment of reform movements to working for a revival of the Church that demonstrates the power of the Gospel to meet the challenges of our time.

The delegates of this historic and unprecedented gathering of worldwide reform movements **agreed to ongoing networking and to hold subsequent conventions -** in **2018 in Latin America** (50 years after the Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Columbia) and in **2021 in Africa**.

'Council 50' was founded by the *European Network Church on the Move* (EN-RE) and the *International Movement We Are Church* (IMWAC) and benefits from the contributions, participation and support of members of the following networks and associations:
American Catholic Council, Amerindia, Articulacion Continental de Comunidades eclesiales de base, Asociación de Teólogos Juan XXIII, Australian Coalition for Church Renewal, Catolicas por el dercho a decider, Center for Asia Peace and Solidarity (CAPS), Comunita' Cristiane di Base Italiane/Italian Grassroot Communities, Coordination of European Base Communities, Corpus, Ecumenical Association Third World Theologian (EATWOT), European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups, Federacion latinoamericana para la renovacion de los ministerios, International federation for a renewed Catholic Ministry, Institute for Theology and Politics, Kairós/Nós Também Somos Igreja – Brasil, Marienburgvereniging, Movimiento Fé y Politica, Brasil, Pax Romana, Réseau des Anciens Jecistes d'Afrique, Rede brasileira de grupos catolicos LGBT, Redes Cristianas, Vision of Faithful People, Netherlands, We Are Also Church, South Africa, The Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW) & World Forum Theology and Liberation.

Committee of Recommendation / Messages of Solidarity:
Leonardo **Boff** (Brazil), Pedro **Casaldaliga** (retired bishop of São Félix, Brazil), José Maria **Castillo** (theologian, Spain), Giovanni **Cereti** (theologian, Italy), Paul **Collins** (Australian Coalition for Church Renewal), Duarte **da Cunha** (Secretary of the conference of Bishop Conferences of the European Union), Giovanni **Franzoni** (former Abbot of St Paul and one of the founders of grass root community of San Paolo, Rome), Jacques **Gaillot** (bishop of Partenia, Paris), Nontando **Hadebe** (theologian from South Africa and Zimbabwe), Hermann **Haering** (Prof of Theology, The Netherlands/Germany), Paul **Hwang** (Center for Asia Peace and Solidarity, South Korea, present in Rome), Douglas **Irvine** (WAACSA, South Africa, present in Rome), Marco Cassuto **Morselli** (Presidente dell'Amicizia Ebraico-Cristiana di Roma, Italy), Jon **Sobrino** (Jesuit theologian, San Salvador), Hans **Kueng** (Stiftung Weltethos, Germany). Raniero **La Valle** (journalist, Italy), Germaine **Lipeb** (Réseau des Anciens Jecistes d'Afrique), Anthony **Padovano** (CORPUS, USA), Luiz Carlos **Susin** (World Forum Theology and Liberation, Brazil), Juan José **Tamayo** (Asociación de Teólogos Juan XXIII, Spain), José María **Vigil** (theologian, Panama), Alex **Zanotelli** (missionary, Italy) ■

Rome, 24th November 2015