

Prague a city of meeting

The European Forum of National Lay Committees (ELF) held its Presidents Council Meeting last week in Prague in the beautiful Strahov Premonstratensian Monastery.

Twenty one presidents of different national lay committees and councils in Europe recognised by their Bishops' conference, shared experiences, learned from each other, dialogue with each other.



By collaboration and exchange between its members, ELF contributes to raising awareness about the mission of the Church in the world and its pastoral work. ELF provides experiences of synodality in the life of Church and explores pastoral and socio-political topics.

The Forum was founded in 1965 encouraged by statements of the Second Vatican Council based on the concept of the laity in the Church.

Besides the aim of strengthening the European consciousness about the role of lay people in the Church, ELF also wants to contribute to the collaboration between lay people and priests and bishops in the Catholic Church.

In Prague the presidents talked about their 'Experiences of the Synodal Process so far'.

Every attendee presented answers to some questions, prepared in their national forums:

- A. What lessons have you learnt from the Synodal Process?
- B. In what ways have you been transformed by the Synodal Process?
- C. What examples of good practices can you share?
- D. What obstacles were encountered?
- E. What recommendations can you give in terms of concrete steps or actions to facilitate the Roman Catholic Church's synodal conversion at every level?

Mgr Tomáš Halík was not in Prague at that time but in a video speech he gave a lecture about "The Synodal Way, what it is and what ELF's role is". His words were very inspirational and placed the different experiences in a clear framework. More about the content of the talks and the lecture can be found on the ELF website: www.europ-forum.org

Other agenda topics were the preparation of the ELF Statutory and Study Assembly 13th-16th June 2024 in Lugano, Switzerland. It was an initial exploration of a possible theme, suggestions for guest speakers and discussion of program.

Further thoughts were given to ELF's profile and public relations, including discussion on extension, relationships with Vatican, COMECE, CCEE and other European lay organisations. How ELF can support work of National Lay Committees has been discussed and how it can have exchanges with churches and organisations of other traditions and ecumenical movements and those of other religions.

After digital meetings, it was good to see each other again live and with the help of the Holy Spirit to encourage each other, to get to know each other better and more deeply understand the working of the Church in each country.