

Towards the 1700th Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (325): The Council and its Creed in the Theology of Benedict XVI

– A successful experiment for the annual meeting of the Neuer Schülerkreis Joseph Ratzinger Benedikt XVI.

With an event at St Mary's University Twickenham in London from 10th to 12th May 2024, the Neuer Schülerkreis Joseph Ratzinger Benedict XVI. literally broke new ground. The conference, which was held entirely in English, focused on the Council of Nicaea, the 1700th anniversary of which will be celebrated next year.

The internal meeting began on Friday evening and continued on Saturday morning after Holy Mass in the university chapel. The warm welcome from the Catholic University, the elegant ambience of the Victorian architecture and, last but not least, the almost midsummer weather, which dispelled all prejudices, contributed to a relaxed atmosphere and, at the same time, a lively discussion about the further activities of the Neuer Schülerkreis.

Saturday afternoon was dedicated to the public part of the meeting. This took place in the venue at St Mary's University where Pope Benedict XVI had given a speech to the representatives of various religions and denominations during his visit to the United Kingdom in 2010. After a welcoming address by Prof. Achim Buckenmaier, who gave a historical overview of the council and formulated initial questions, Prof. Jacob Phillips, Faculty Dean at St Mary's, reflected in detail on the council's "signal word", *homoousios*. Then followed a paper by Fr Uwe Michael Lang, also of St Mary's, who spoke about the position of the Nicene Creed in the Roman missal. Fr Lang, a member of the Neuer Schülerkreis, was also the skilful and considerate local organizer.

Fr. Vincent Twomey, Emeritus Professor at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, one of Joseph Ratzinger's academic students, vividly traced the historical horizon of the Creed of Nicaea, which was characterized above all by the Arian crisis of the 4th century.

Moderated by Fr Sven Conrad, the numerous attendees were able to raise their questions to the speakers and thus to facilitate a lively exchange. This intensive academic part of the event ended with a summary and thanks by Prof. Christoph Ohly. A festive dinner, again in the elegant neo-Gothic rooms, removed the last culinary prejudice with which one can enter the island.

Fr Michael Lang hosted a Mass on Sunday at the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in South Kensington. In the nearby Victoria & Albert Museum, a knowledgeable art historian offered a tour of treasures selected from the immense collection of this huge museum of cultural history for the participants, especially pieces dating from the period of transition from pagan to Christian antiquity – the period to which Nicaea also belongs. With British sobriety, the conclusion after these intensive days of study, culture and the get-together of the Neuer Schülerkreis was simply: “well done”.

Achim Buckenmaier