



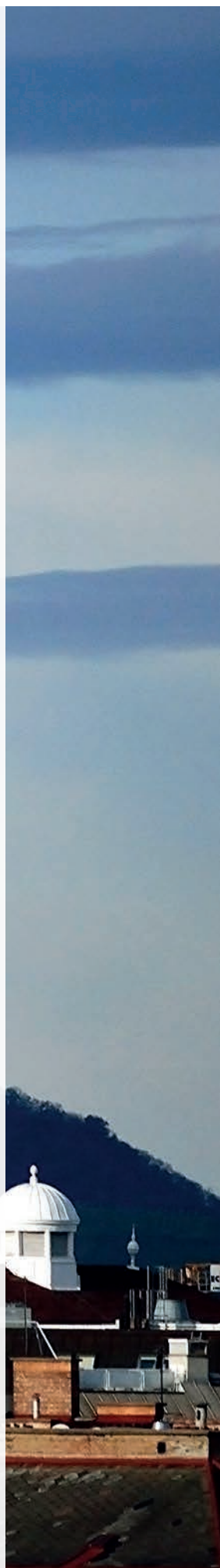
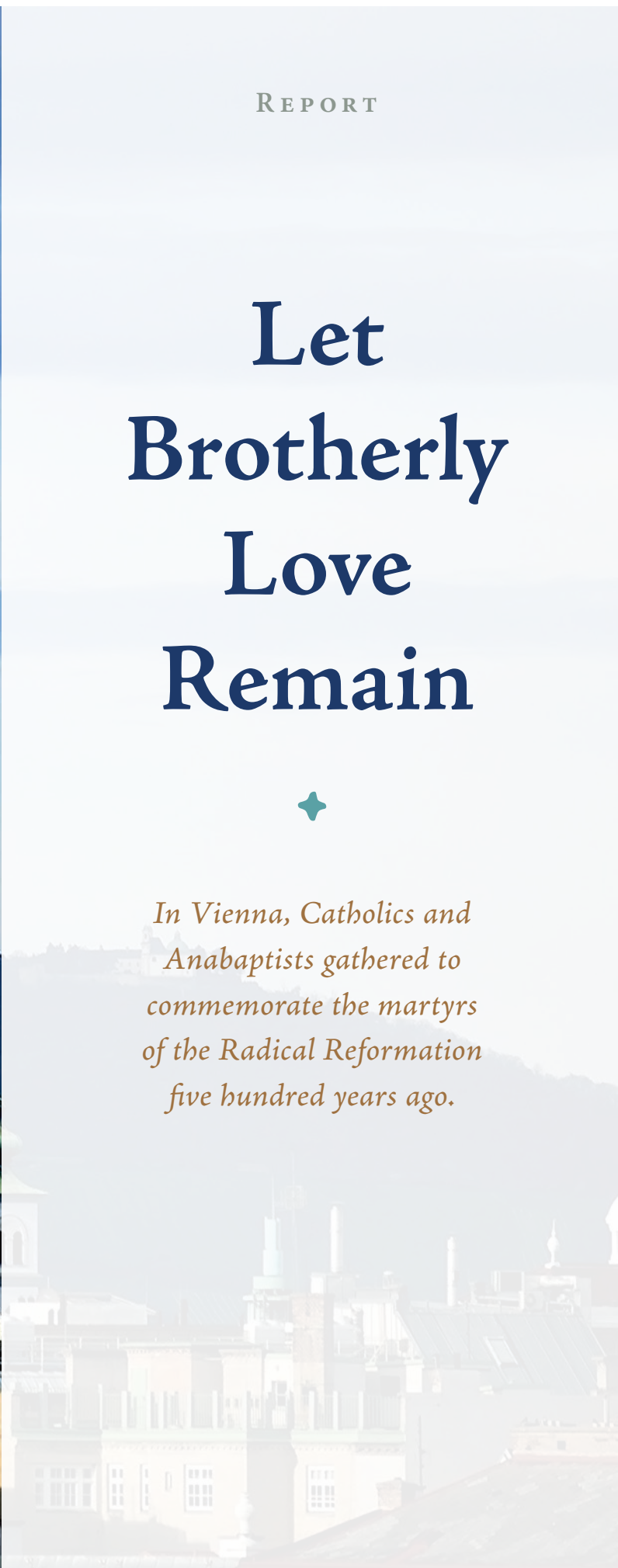
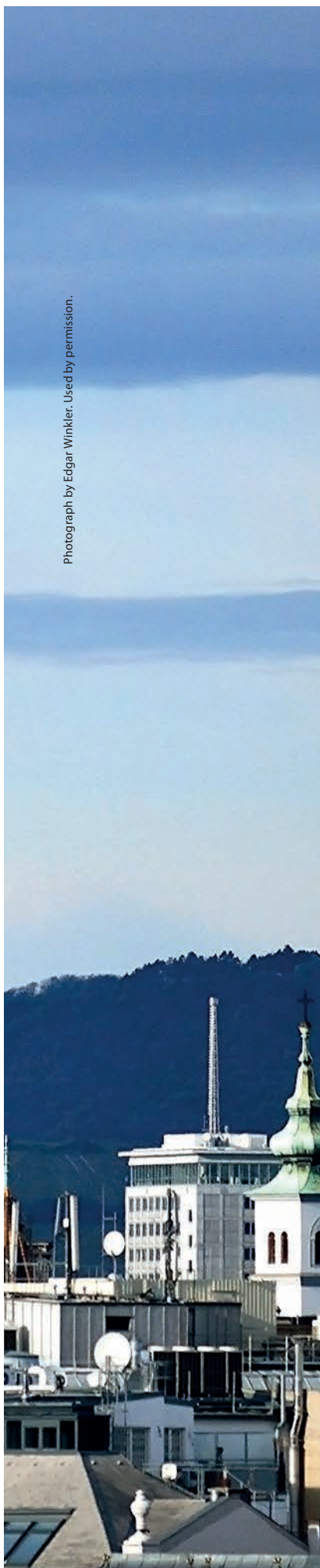
Photograph by Edgar Winkler. Used by permission.

REPORT

Let Brotherly Love Remain



*In Vienna, Catholics and
Anabaptists gathered to
commemorate the martyrs
of the Radical Reformation
five hundred years ago.*



What will it take to heal the divisions that separate Christians of different denominations? In November 2021, Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, archbishop of Vienna, and Bruderhof pastor Heinrich Arnold welcomed participants to Saint Stephen's Cathedral to commemorate the historical persecution of Anabaptists – a first in the city's history. The event looked forward as well as back: it celebrated the founding of two new Bruderhof communities in Austria, both in former monasteries. These selections from the day's events have been translated as necessary and edited for length and clarity.

The Healing of Memory

Christoph Cardinal Schönborn

WE GATHER IN THIS special place today to “remember the former things,” as Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously put it. Here in our country many Christians were persecuted on account of their faith. In this service, remembering the Anabaptist victims of persecution in Austria, we cannot mention each of them by name. On behalf of all of these victims, however, we want to recall two married couples in particular: Elsbeth and Balthasar Hubmaier, and Katharina and Jakob Hutter. Their witness remains important for many Christians in Austria today.

Our Lord Jesus Christ warned his disciples to expect persecution, but how painful it must be for him when such persecution is at the hands of other Christians! On the one hand, then, this service is for expressing our sorrow,

for penitential reflection on the fact that such a thing could have happened in our country.

Yet on the other hand, we want to thank God that we can gather in this church today not

as persecutors and persecuted but as brothers and sisters, looking upon Christ together, who redeems us from all sin and evil through his suffering. Only God can redeem us from our own sins and from the burden of past sins. The following passage from Psalm 51 provides a fitting introduction to this service of commemoration:

Hide thy face from my sins,
and blot out all mine iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God;
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence;
and take not thy holy spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;
and uphold me with thy free spirit.
Then will I teach transgressors thy ways;
and sinners shall be converted unto thee.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
thou God of my salvation:
and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy
righteousness.
O Lord, open thou my lips;
and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
For thou desirest not sacrifice;
else would I give it:
thou delightest not in burnt offering.



The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
a broken and a contrite heart, O God,
thou wilt not despise.

Let us pray:

We thank you, dear Father, that we can gather today with joyous hearts, but also with broken and contrite hearts. Forgive us, dear Lord, wherever we have harmed your children in the past, those who are our brothers and sisters. Heal the memories of those Christians who were persecuted here in our country. Forgive and redeem the injustice that has taken place here. Grant that we may now, in this country, bear witness to the unity among Christians who belong to different confessions. For your glory and the building up of your kingdom, Amen.

The Path to Christian Unity

Heinrich Arnold

JESUS SAID, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

The threads of God’s plan run throughout history, woven together in a fabric that will one day be complete in a perfect tapestry of God’s kingdom of love and justice. The colorful threads are lives that burned with love for Jesus and others, the many that stayed faithful through trials and tribulation and laid down their lives in service of others and for their faith. Jesus showed the way with his life, teachings, miracles of healing; with his suffering, blood, death, and resurrection.

The Holy Spirit established the Christian Church at Pentecost, built on the rock of faith



Katharina & Jakob Hutter

Jakob Hutter, a native of the village of Moos in South Tyrol, was a gifted preacher and a zealous missionary. Fleeing persecution in Tyrol, he joined the Anabaptist communities that were forming in Moravia (today’s Czechia) in 1529. Despite the great danger, he traveled back to Tyrol several times to continue his missionary work until he was summoned to take on the role of bishop in Moravia. In 1535, he and his wife Katharina were arrested in Klausen, South Tyrol. Three months later in Innsbruck, following severe torture, Jakob Hutter was burned at the stake. Katharina was able to escape from prison in the town of Gufidaun, but some years later she was arrested again and executed by drowning. Jakob Hutter wrote in a letter to the fellowship in Moravia shortly before his arrest:

O you most beloved ones, wake up, wake up for the Lord’s sake, for your king is coming in great power and glory! The time is at hand, the hour is well-nigh here, the great and terrible day of the Lord, which will come upon all people, has drawn near. Don your wedding garments, holy and honorable, your garments of love, faith, hope, righteousness, and truth – don Jesus Christ, the Son of God! Love one another with fervor, pure and whole of heart; love as newborn babes, born again of God’s word and Spirit! Serve one another in all faithfulness and love, in all things, each with the gift he or she has received from God. Do so willingly and with gladness, without grumbling or dispute! Those who are willing to serve the Lord God wholeheartedly and to be obedient in all things – in them is God well pleased and delights in them as in his own dear child. ♦



Fittingly, Vienna's cathedral is dedicated to Christianity's first martyr, Saint Stephen.

in Jesus Christ, embodied and led by Peter and the other disciples and joined by all who were compelled by the call of the Spirit to turn from sin, to repent and be baptized, and live a new life of love in deed and in truth. The message and the flock grew and flourished and spread, in spite of – even fanned on by – persecution.



The church also went through times of weakening and decay through the deceit and cunning of the evil one, and the fallen nature of men. But always there are sparks, embers, fanned and

rekindled by the Holy Spirit into flames of renewal. These are men and women of faith and courage, building blocks of a growing kingdom.

One such renewal was the early Anabaptist movement five hundred years ago, kindled right here in this land, a calling of renewal back to the true and pure discipleship of Jesus. Through the work of Christ's Spirit, the church had to become visible – a flesh-and-blood reality, a community of human beings who, despite their weaknesses, are a sign of God's coming kingdom of perfect love, peace, and justice. This was costly discipleship – many were persecuted and lost their livelihoods, homes, families, even their lives for staying true to their newfound faith and calling.

This same calling inspired the founding of the Bruderhof community one hundred years ago. It is the reason why the

Bruderhof's founder, my great-grandfather Eberhard Arnold, inspired by the first-century Christian church and every movement of renewal to complete discipleship, sought out the descendants of the early Anabaptists, the Hutterites in North America, and in 1930 was ordained as a Hutterite minister. That is why the foundations and church order of the Bruderhof come from our brothers and sisters in the Hutterite church. (By the way, this history is especially important to me personally, because my wife Wilma is a Hutterite and my children and grandchildren have inherited this legacy.)

It seems significant to me that God led us to Austria just in time to celebrate the hundred-year anniversary of our Bruderhof movement. It was only four years ago that several Austrian Catholic brothers and sisters encouraged us to consider starting a Bruderhof community here. In our wildest dreams, we would never have imagined what God would give in the meantime. I thank so many of you joining us today who have encouraged and supported our new beginning here in Austria.

Jesus' final prayer for unity among his disciples in John 17, "That they may all be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you," is so vital and important today. Are we all one today? What does Jesus mean by that? How can we be one? What a tragedy that we Christians today are still so divided, not just because we have different traditions and doctrines, or call ourselves Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, and Anabaptists, but because we don't have enough love for each other. Why is it that after two thousand years we still have not arrived at the unity Jesus prayed for?

Twenty-five years ago, my father Johann Christoph Arnold spoke about this difficult question with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The future Pope Benedict XVI made a profound statement about what true unity involves. It is a statement that the early Anabaptists, I believe, would agree with. He said:

We cannot bring about unity in the church by diplomatic maneuvers. The result would only be a diplomatic structure based on human principles. *Instead, we must open ourselves more and more to our Lord Jesus Christ.* The unity he brings about is the only true unity. Anything else is a political construction, which is as transitory as all political constructions are.

This is the more difficult way, for in political maneuvers people themselves are active and believe they can achieve something. We must wait on the Lord, that he will give us unity, and of course we must go to meet him by cleansing our hearts. . . . Together let us allow the Lord to cleanse us and let us learn the truth from him, the truth that is love, so that he can work and so that he brings us together.*

We gather today with all of you to remember the Anabaptist forebears who gave everything they had, even their lives, in costly discipleship. Let us also reaffirm our own personal commitment to a life of discipleship that testifies to God's kingdom. Let us also, as Pope Benedict XVI encouraged us, "allow the Lord to cleanse us and let us learn the truth from him, the truth that is love, so that he can work and so that he brings us together."

* Remarks by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in a meeting on June 24, 1995, in Rome. Translated from German.

Tragic Siblings: Jesuits and Anabaptists

Eduard Geissler

Dr. Geissler is secretary of the Hutterer Arbeitskreis Tirol und Südtirol (Hutterite Working Committee, Tyrol and South Tyrol).

I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN by looking at the historical context surrounding the persecution of the Anabaptists, particularly at the tragic role played by the Jesuit order. Cardinal Schönborn and Heinrich Arnold have written the following invitation for today's service:

We no longer address each other as members of two different sides but simply as





Photograph courtesy of Karl Satzinger

The service began with a dramatic monologue "On the Run" by Gertrud Geissler, showing an Anabaptist fleeing Austria.

brothers and sisters. Despite the weight of history and all our theological differences, we come together as Christians who have found each other and want to learn from one another how we can faithfully serve Jesus Christ today.

Imagine the blessings that would have flowed had this wisdom been heeded five hundred years ago!

Unfortunately, what transpired was very different. In 1550, the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I facilitated the establishment of the first Jesuit college in the empire, here in Vienna. Many more such colleges were to follow and constituted the centers of the Counter-Reformation. Ferdinand appointed the Jesuit provincial superior Petrus Canisius, later canonized, as his court theologian because he recognized – late but nevertheless – the need for the Roman Catholic Church to be reformed. He saw in the Jesuits, whose order was founded in 1534, a miracle cure for

Protestantism and Anabaptism in his hereditary lands, one that would restore these regions to a pure Catholicism.

Beginning in 1527, as territorial prince of Tyrol and later king and emperor, Ferdinand had unleashed wave upon wave of persecution against the Anabaptists, who were held in high esteem by the general population. Adherents of the movement were burned alive, beheaded, or drowned. Their children were wrested from them, their property confiscated, and their houses were burned down, along with those of the people who sheltered them. The Hutterian Chronicle reports twenty-three executions in Vienna alone, with the note, "and many secretly executed," alluding to a high number of unreported deaths. Victims could only escape persecution through renouncing their Anabaptist faith or fleeing. Moravia received many refugees, who were protected by local nobility and went on to form flourishing communities.

Why such brutality? The state saw the foundations of the existing order threatened by the Anabaptists, who refused all forms of violence and would not take part in war, which was of particular interest to the empire during a time of frequent conflict with the Ottomans. The Anabaptists also refused to take oaths. They sought to establish alternative societies after the example of the early Christians, societies not restricted by existing church hierarchies. The main branch of the Anabaptist movement in Austria, the Hutterites, held all their possessions in common, following the Book of Acts. Forming settlements in accordance with these commitments, they also rejected infant baptism. This meant that, from a Roman Catholic point of view, children were “robbed” of a place in heaven if they died before being baptized.

None of these persecutions were particularly successful; the Anabaptist movement grew in spite of them. That changed after the Jesuits arrived, and Bohemia’s Protestant nobility lost its influence after the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. Two-thirds of the approximately 30,000 Hutterites converted to Catholicism. The rest fled to western Slovakia and Transylvania in Romania.

Over the following decades, the Jesuits proselytized in Anabaptist areas of the empire and directed heavy polemics toward them, seeking to persuade those imprisoned in torture chambers to renounce their Anabaptist faith. They directed their focus to the centers of Hutterite settlement. The persecution in Moravia started with simple, polemic agitation. After that, the Jesuits began to employ more brutal tactics. Hired muscle was used to forcibly remove community leaders, Anabaptist preaching was banned, and children were taken away from Anabaptist parents. Forced conversions succeeded. Only a very small



Elsbeth & Balthasar Hubmaier

Balthasar Hubmaier came from Friedberg in Bavaria. As a priest and university professor, he initially rejected any reforms and defended the church’s traditions. From 1522, however, he started to engage more intensively with the Reformation writings and disputations in Zurich. Beginning in 1525, he advocated for more radical reforms than even Luther or Zwingli, and had to flee to Moravia. There he became one of the most important theologians of the Anabaptist movement. In 1525, Balthasar Hubmaier was burned at the stake in Vienna. Three days later, his wife Elsbeth was drowned in the Danube. This is an excerpt from his 1526 commentary on the Twelve Articles of the Christian Faith:

O holy God, O mighty God, O undying God! I have confessed my faith with heart and mouth and publicly witnessed before the churches through water baptism. I ask earnestly that you graciously preserve me in this until my end. And even if I am driven from it by human fear or weakness, by tyranny, ordeal, sword, fire, or water, I hereby cry out to you, O merciful Father of mine. Raise me up again by the grace of your Holy Spirit, and do not let me go to my death without this faith. This I ask you from the bottom of my heart, through Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, our Lord and Savior. Father, do not allow me to perish in eternity. Amen. ✦

remnant of around eighty people, including children, was able to flee in the dead of night via Wallachia to the Ukraine. With support from the Mennonites, the Hutterites were able to successfully rebuild. They would later have to migrate again, this time to North America.

The story of Anabaptist persecution at the hands of Jesuits is one of the most tragic chapters in Christian history. Here we find a group of genuine Christians, devoted to Christ – the Jesuits – playing a key role in the harassment and persecution of other, equally genuine and devoted Christians – the Anabaptists. It is clear that both sides shared common concerns but drew different conclusions.

Spiritually, both groups shared roots in late medieval mysticism and the lay movement *Devotio Moderna*. They both had the same basic conviction that a personal relationship with God or wholeheartedly following Jesus presupposes a commitment made with a mature faith. For the Anabaptists, this meant believers' baptism. For the Jesuits, this meant a prayer of total surrender after completing the spiritual exercises. Suddenly Catholicism had a counterpart to believer's baptism, a factor that probably also contributed to the success of the Counter-Reformation.

Moreover, both groups looked to the model of the early church. The Anabaptists wanted to recover this model, founding churches on the principle of "new wines in new wineskins." The Jesuits wanted to renew the church so that the Catholic Church would be a "genuinely spiritual church with genuinely spiritual Christians." Neither wished to return to the church that existed before the Reformation. Both emphasized putting faith into practice in everyday life, following the directives in scripture as "doers of the word," which presupposes knowledge of the Bible. And both sides invested in education, forming their own high-quality schools.

The suppression of Anabaptists and their hasty expulsion silenced their preaching and example. This silencing tore a spiritual hole in Central Europe that, in my opinion, has not yet been filled – despite the flourishing of free churches, Catholic popular missions, and other awakenings. But, with joy, I can see that this hole is now beginning to fill. The following things have contributed to this:

Working for the healing of memory. In addition to providing historical details, the opening of memorials brings together the heirs of the state and the Catholic Church with those of the victims, the Hutterites.

Such spiritual processes change the spiritual atmosphere of a country, bringing about a new openness to the message of Jesus. The fact that the Bruderhof received such a warm welcome with its recent settlement in Austria is, in my opinion, also related to this. I pray and expect that rich blessings will flow from today's service.

Listening to what Anabaptists have to say today, learning from them, and being challenged by them. The themes relating to the five-hundredth anniversary of the Anabaptist movement can help us do this: living in freedom of religion and conscience, living together, living a life consistent with one's beliefs, living nonviolently, and living in hope.

Let us then cherish the apostolic heritage that all churches have been able to preserve in their different ways for the sake of the body of Christ. There is still much to discover and learn in order to serve Jesus more faithfully. The Anabaptist movement, along with the Orthodox churches (which we should not neglect), can be a great help for us here. We now have the unique opportunity of doing this face-to-face with our Anabaptist brothers and sisters from the Bruderhof in Austria. Let's embrace it!

Of Foremothers and Forefathers

Cari Boller

MY NAME IS CARI BOLLER. I am twenty-three and live in Retz, Austria, at the Bruderhof that was started two years ago in the former Dominican cloister there.

My full name is actually Cari Elizabeth Boller, Elizabeth after my grandmother whom we called “Ankela Lizzie” (*Ankela* is Hutterite dialect for *grandma*). My ankela was born on a Hutterite colony in Canada, where she grew up. Her father was Jacob Maendel. He might have been a descendent of Hans Mändel, who was baptized in South Tyrol in 1537 as a seventeen-year-old. He became a preacher and missionary, and over the next twenty-four years he told thousands of people about Jesus and baptized hundreds as adults. At that time this was a capital offense, and he was burned at the stake in Innsbruck in 1561.

My ankela’s mother was Rachel Hofer. It is possible that she was a descendent of Ulrich Hofer, who was living with his family in Steinebrunn in the Weinviertel in the sixteenth century – not far from Retz, where I am living now. But in 1539 his wife (possibly my great, great, fifteen-times-great grandmother) had to watch weeping as her husband was chained with ninety of his brothers in the faith to begin the long march to Trieste. On account of his faith he was condemned to serve as a galley slave on the Austrian military ships. By a miracle of God he escaped and was able to return to his family with almost seventy other condemned Anabaptists.

However, the family was not able to stay in Steinebrunn. They had to flee to Moravia where my ancestor Ulrich died. Last summer I was able to visit the castle ruins at Falkenstein,

where Ulrich Hofer and the other Anabaptists were condemned and where there is now an exhibit commemorating their suffering. Two years ago I visited Innsbruck, where there is a monument for Hans Mändel and other Anabaptists in the Hutterite Park.

The witness of our ancestors moved my Ankela Lizzie very much. As a young woman she made a decision to follow Jesus with the same dedication and determination. It was practically predestined that she would marry in a Hutterian colony and spend her entire life there. But God had another plan for her life.

My name is neither Hofer nor Maendel, but Boller – a name that does not enter the Hutterian chronicles. How come?

In the early twentieth century many young Christians in Germany and Switzerland were unhappy with conventional life. They wanted to live a life of radical discipleship. Among them was a young German theologian named



Lizzie Maendel
at the Forest
River colony,
1953





Above: Hannes and Else Boller with their children (Hans-Uli standing), 1931.



Right: Hans-Uli and Lizzie Boller at Forest River, ca. 1956

Eberhard Arnold, who began living in community with a handful of others. At the time, they had no idea that descendants of the Hutterites had survived the great persecutions of the Reformation. They didn't know that there were still Hutterian communities in North America. They learned of them five years later and made contact. After corresponding for several years, Eberhard Arnold made the long journey to Canada. He spent an entire year among the Hutterites, seeking God's will. The Hutterian elders agreed to ordain Eberhard Arnold as a servant of the Word (or pastor) and, at the end of the year, sent him back to Germany as a missionary. He accepted this task obediently. In 1931, he became the first Hutterian missionary, and the small Bruderhof in Germany became the first Hutterian community in

German-speaking Europe in more than 350 years.

Not long after Arnold returned to Germany from Canada, a young family came from Switzerland who were seriously looking for a life of discipleship. Their name was Boller. They were deeply struck by the witness of church community and decided to leave the Swiss Reformed

Church in which he was a pastor and join the Bruderhof. Eberhard Arnold baptized my great-grandparents Hannes and Else Boller and accepted them into the Hutterian Church as a brother and sister. Their son, my grandfather Hans-Uli Boller, was eight years old. That was exactly three months before Adolf Hitler was named Reichskanzler.

The Bruderhof and my grandfather's family had to flee Germany. My grandfather grew up as a refugee in England and Paraguay, immigrating as a young man to the United States.

In the meantime, my ankela grew up in a Hutterite community in Canada. She and her youth group longed for a new spiritual life. In their isolated Canadian communities they missed the missionary zeal of their ancestors. When the Bruderhof founded a community in the United States in 1954, many hoped that through contact with these "new" Hutterites a fresh wind would blow. The marriage of my grandfather Hans-Uli with my ankela Lizzie in October 1956 was the first of many marriages

between Bruderhof and Hutterite young people, and in this way our different traditions became closely interwoven. I am one of many who have both Bruderhof and Hutterite ancestors.

God is a God of the past, and I thank him for the witness of my ancestors Hans Mändel and Ulrich Hofer (as well as many other Anabaptists) who remained faithful to Jesus and their faith in difficult times. I am glad that today we remember the Anabaptist victims of persecution. For me it is a sign of God's great love that in the twenty-first century I can live in an Anabaptist community in Austria, the first of my family for more than fifteen generations.

God is also a God of the present. After concerning myself with this history, I have to ask myself: How can I live more intensively for Jesus? Am I ready, as my ancestors were, to give up everything – money, family, happiness, perhaps even my life – because I love Jesus so

much? It would be difficult for me to do this on my own. We need one another. As a member of the Bruderhof, I am thankful every day that I have brothers and sisters who go this way with me. But the Bruderhof needs you too, and I thank God that Cardinal Schönborn and so many other Christians have welcomed our community with such great love.

And God is also a God of the future. I pray that he might bless this new beginning of the Bruderhof in Austria and that it might become a blessing for many people in this country. I hope that as we leave here today, we are encouraged and determined, as disciples of Jesus, to carry our small lights into the world, that we continue to work toward bringing our small flames together until the whole world burns for Jesus and God's kingdom comes on earth. ➤

Translations from German by Cameron Coombe.

Cardinal Schönborn cuts a hundredth-birthday cake for the Bruderhof.

Photograph courtesy of Rolf Wetzke

