

Greeting from the Bonifatiuswerk
for the founding of the Apostolic Administration of Estonia 100 years ago

Dear Bishop Jourdan,

Dear Mr Läänemets, Minister of the Interior

Dear Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear sisters and brothers in faith,

One hundred years ago, Pope Pius XI established the Apostolic Administration of Estonia – and originally, we intended to celebrate this anniversary today. However, Pope Francis has given us an early gift for this anniversary: A few weeks ago, he elevated the administration to the diocese of Tallinn. Once again, I would like to offer our warmest congratulations on behalf of the entire Bonifatiuswerk!

Catholics in Estonia have awaited this decision for a century; not idly, but actively. Catholic parishes have emerged and grown under the difficult conditions of a diaspora situation; parsonages, churches and monasteries have been bought and built. Seminaries and Catholic schools were founded - and are now full of life. Bishop Philippe Jourdan and his dedicated team have played a decisive role in this: Bishop Jourdan has been leading the fortunes of the Church in Estonia since 2005, working here since 1996. The Bonifatiuswerk of German Catholics began supporting our brothers and sisters in Estonia - and also in Latvia - a year earlier, in 1995. Over just the past five years, the aid organization has approved more than 1.2 million euros for 22 projects in Estonia. Projects here on the ground have received support through all four forms of aid provided by Bonifatiuswerk: children and youth aid, religious aid, transport aid, and building aid, in close collaboration with the Renovabis aid organization.

The sponsored projects include, for example, the new children's missal, as well as the yellow BONI buses, a trademark of the Bonifatiuswerk. They have been made available to the parish of Pärnu, the Piritä Monastery and the parish of St Peter and St Paul in Tallinn, among others. The renovation of both St Michael's School in Tallinn and the Catholic School in Tartu have also been supported. In particular, the Catholic schools have developed well and provide valuable integrative work for their communities.

The Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, ongoing now for nearly three years, is also a particular challenge in Estonia. Refugees find shelter and assistance here, and Catholic schools work to provide the refugee children with connection, distraction, and a safe, albeit temporary, new home.

From 2021 to 2023, the Bonifatiuswerk also funded the position for press and media relations for the diocese of Tallinn with Dr Marge-Marie Paas holding this post. We are delighted that this has opened up new prospects as Marge-Marie Paas is now accompanying the beatification process of Archbishop Eduard Profittlich SJ as diocesan postulator with great commitment – and I may say with a great deal of passion. Born in Germany, he worked

from 1930, first as a parish priest and then as Apostolic Administrator in Estonia – until his martyrdom in Soviet captivity. This summer, Marge-Marie Paas visited the diocese of Trier, Archbishop Profittlich's home, for an information event on the beatification process in Germany.

The Bonifatiuswerk also celebrates significant birthdays this year. Firstly, it has now been in existence for 175 years, and secondly, the aid organisation has been supporting Catholics in Northern Europe for 50 years. A special highlight in September to mark the 50th anniversary of Bonifatiuswerk Northern Europe Aid was an international networking meeting with contacts from the youth ministry – also including attendees from Estonia, which we were very pleased about. It was a very good exchange, and we hope this will yield many future collaborations. This is the beautiful and special thing that characterises our German-Estonian friendship: We learn from and with each other and support each other wholeheartedly.

Dear Bishop Jourdan, dear brothers and sisters in faith, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of all employees of the Bonifatiuswerk as well as the Secretary General Monsignor Georg Austen and the President Manfred Müller, I would like to thank you for almost thirty years of partnership – a partnership which is characterised by mutual visits and a meaningful exchange. I would also like to thank you for the hospitality that you have shown me over the past few days.

All the best and God's blessing for your future endeavours and for the diocese of Tallinn! We are and will remain united in the confidence of faith and in prayer as a universal church.