

[From Bishop Thor Henrik With, sent 16 May 2013 to those who have been praying for him, after his meeting with Mrs. Laila Riksaasen Dahl, the bishop of Tunsberg Diocese]

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Dear Praying Friends,

I am filled with deep gratitude to you who have prayed for my meeting with the Tunsberg bishop today. An extra thank you to all of you who responded so quickly. Assured of prayers and support from all of you, I traveled to Tønsberg with confidence. During the meeting, I felt comfort and peace.

The conversation in Tønsberg was characterized by a surprisingly calm seriousness. The Church of Norway has placed Mrs. Laila Riksaasen Dahl as bishop of Tunsberg diocese. Since I now live in Tunsberg diocese, it is her official duty to make the final decision on disciplinary measures, because I let myself be consecrated bishop in violation of applicable canon law provisions of the Church of Norway.

In the conversation I elaborated the basis for the actions that began with doctrinal conversations at my initiative with my then Bishop of Nidaros, and ended with my episcopal ordination in Tromsø in 2012. Laila Riksaasen Dahl listened attentively and sympathetically, revealing good theological insight and respect. She expressed, in an unexpectedly clear manner, her understanding that this matter shall at the Last Day be of profound seriousness to both parties.

I pointed out that when the bishops and CoN's General Assembly accept unbiblical teachings in the Church, they break apart the unity of the Church of Norway. Because of the new doctrine of the bishop of Nidaros, I had to exclude him from the church communion fellowship. And when church members, because of what has happened elsewhere, have no shepherd and call me to help, my ordination vow commits me to take care of the flock – even as a bishop. With fervent desire I encouraged her, along with my former Bishop of Nidaros, to change their doctrine, and I promised my prayer for that to happen.

Laila Riksaasen Dahl concluded the conversation by stating that, particularly due to the episcopal ordination in Tromsø, she decided to terminate my authorization as a pastor in the Church of Norway. To this I replied that the new doctrine contrary to Scripture has led us to this rupture, and to the consequences that are now taking place. There and then I put on my episcopal cross and made visible in this way our claim to be a diocese in the church. Explicit notice was taken of this symbolic act.

Epilogue:

I see an image of the Norwegian church as a large and pleasant area, built on floats. Priests, bishops - and laity in the CoN General Assembly – cut away the tendons that keep this area secured to land – one mooring after the other. When the floating area now drifts from shore, it can easily seem that they who control developments are sending us who have other foundations under our feet away from themselves. But we, who stand on the firm ground, know that really it is they who drift away from the mainland of Christ's Church; they drift away before the weather and wind of this age.

Let us pray that the Lord may have mercy!

Yours in Christ
+Thor Henrik