

grew! Under the given circumstances, it should have been cross. But no! We learned anew that the sign of the church is the Cross. I knew that beforehand, but now we could witness to it again.

This is why the international community gained considerably from the Ethiopian Christians than the Ethiopian Christians did the international community. And that, of course, includes Girma Tumsa. Blessed is the church that has such a charismatic leader!

As far as suffering is concerned, it went beyond Gudina's person. He could only live and accept it because his family, particular his wife Tsehay, accompanied him and stood with him the painful decisions he had to take. All honor and respect to your dear sister Tsehay, for having taken the suffering upon yourself during your long ten year imprisonment, and to you, the children, having to leave the country and becoming refugees. However, for my wife and myself and our children it was not only a catastrophe, but was also the beginning of our being one family. We are grateful for that.

At the beginning of this account, I depicted my first encounter with Gudina in 1972. I want to close by making a brief reference to my last encounter which was in 1979. He had been arrested the second time. They had taken him around to various prisons. Then he was back in Addis Ababa, and the rumor went around that they might kill him. When this message reached us, three of his children were with us in Germany: Kulani, Aster and Boru. I just couldn't stay at home. We had the Kirchentag event (big German church rally) in 1979. A closing speaker was Bishop Kibira (Ev. Lutheran Church of Tanzania), one of my predecessors in the office of President of the Lutheran World Federation. We got together, being driven by concern and fear for our brother Gudina.

Bishop Kibira and I flew together to Tanzania, where we met President Nyerere. The Tanzanian church was part of the international community which was so very closely affiliated and

related to the EECMY and Qes Gudina at that time. And President Nyerere said, "I will be on my way to a visit in Khartoum, to the head of State of the Sudan. I have to refuel my plane on the way. I will see that I can do this at an appropriate place. You go immediately to Addis and go to the Tanzanian Embassy. Just wait."

So I did. And we had the headline in next day's paper: "Surprise visit to Ethiopia by the Head of State of Tanzania". I was waiting in Addis Ababa and stayed in contact with the Tanzanian embassy there. My host was Pastor Henner Scheffer of the German congregation, whom many of you know from his most helpful involvement at that time. All of a sudden the bell rang at the door and he opened, saying to me: "Here comes a visitor and you will not believe who it is." It was Gudina! He was free. He came with Tsehay and with Lensa. I was in a position to offer him - all three of them - to go with me right away to Tanzania. Time was pressing.

It was then that we experienced what I indicated in the beginning: We also had a complicated friendship. There he was, this tall man; he still had this white gabi around him, coming straight from prison. When I made him the offer to leave the country immediately for the sake of his safety, he got up and took me violently by the lapels and said: "Don't tempt me!" Then he quoted from the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "For the love of Christ leaves us no choice, when once we have reached the conclusion that one man died for all and therefore all mankind has died. His purpose in dying for all was that men, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for him who for their sake died and was raised to life." (2 Corinthians 5: 14f, New English Bible).

Gudina was not a man without fear. He would not have liked to be made a hero. He always said he was afraid of torture. "If that would only pass me by", he said. But he saw that the cup was on the table, and he accepted to drink it. He said to me: "How can I leave the country, my church, being a leader of this flock? I have to stay, and as you promised me, you take care of them." He pointed at Tsehay

and Lensa. We prayed together and then we parted. It was our last encounter. Shortly thereafter, he was abducted again by government forces as he had himself envisaged, and, as we know today, he was murdered soon thereafter.

Paul Wee in his lecture yesterday referred to Bonhoeffer. While Bonhoeffer's and Gudina's situations in many ways were not identical, the consequences from their witness and lives can, indeed, be compared. Bonhoeffer once wrote: "The last responsible question is not how I can end up as heroic as possible. But the last responsible question is how the next generation is able to live".

Qes Gudina took care of this. He kept the door open for the next generation to live and to witness to Christ. No national hero, no political hero, but a theologian, a charismatic church leader who became a martyr of the church. Blessed the church that has martyrs, i.e. steadfast witnesses even in the face of death. Blessed the world community that can share in the experience, the riches and the treasures of martyrdom lived out for us! We share in the life of Qes Gudina and through him see the many, many others who gave their lives, who accepted the cup, who endured suffering and allowed the miracle to happen: a few fish, a little bread, but they all were satisfied.

Martin Luther said: "We are not the ones who can uphold the church, nor were our forebears, nor will our descendants be. Rather, it is He who is, and was, and will be, the one who says: 'I am with you always up to the end of the world'." This is the message. May He be and remain with you all!

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