



Ulf & Birgitta Ekman  
Photo: Livets Ord

[Aletheia Blog & Think Tank - Aletheia.se] During Sunday morning service, (10<sup>th</sup> March 2014) former Word of Life pastor Ulf Ekman announced for a partially stunned congregation that he and Birgitta Ekman intends to convert to the Roman Catholic Church. In information that went out to members before Sunday's meeting the members were pre warned there was going to be a special announcement.

"We want to welcome you to worship this Sunday at 10 am. Carl-Gustaf Severin will tell us about his trip to India and Pastor Ulf Ekman will preach. The theme is "follow the Lamb wherever he goes " During the service , we will also give you some important news, so we hope you are able to come . "

Part of the church leadership got the news a few months earlier, along with selected preachers from around the country of Sweden. Also key people within Swedish Christianity has carefully and methodically been informed ahead of time the announcement many today find it difficult to believe. Last in line, the Church members were finally informed after a well prepared sermon , intended to indicate reasons for the decision to convert .

Ulf Ekmans conversion is a news story that affects a relatively large part of Swedish Christianity. We have as many knows , followed Ekmans steps towards Roman Catholicism since 2007, at times under a lot of ridicule from both members and leadership of the congregation, but also from others within the Christian Community in Sweden. Based on Ulf Ekman's various articles, sermons , statements, and even type of organizations he decided to support financially, a painstaking puzzle has been laid in which the last piece of the puzzle now is in place.

Shock, anger, sadness, despair and confusion were the reactions we got from several people when we gave a few selected a preliminary report of the decision earlier in the weekend. Even from the Catholic side. Others were relieved that Ulf Ekman's long love affair with the Catholic Church finally was consummated openly, which is also a help in theological discussions. Some rejoice with the couple's decision to "cross the river tiber" [Convert to Roman Catholicism]

The news reached us late last week by a journalist who wanted to confirm the information along with people within the movement. After careful consideration and despite the temptation, we decided to wait with publishing the news before the Sunday Service thus avoiding to create panic in the ranks of members and followers.

Ulf Ekman and Word of Life's leadership has categorically rejected Aletheia's concerns as conspiracy theories. The former Senior pastor has often responded to the issues we raised against his work toward unity and evidence of a theological crossover with rhetorically formulated questions and answers and often managed to create a caricature of critics by ridiculing them and critical issues presented [1].

During New Year's Conference 2008/2009 came Ulf Ekman with an odd statement, and perhaps he had today's conversion in mind when he said the following:

"Pentecost was a complete surprise to the devil. Likewise, there are similar cases that are complete surprises. And now we do not reveal it, but I can still say, as much as it will be a shock effect in the Holy Spirit and a cackling without precedent. The 1980's will be like a little breeze compared to the cackle coming ahead as the pieces come together, and if this coordination can take place, this spiritual maturity can occur / ... / It will happen, it will be / ... / it is a mobilization". [2]

When the Swedish newspaper "Dagen" a few years ago did a series of articles about the Word of Life Church, Ulf Ekman spoke trivializing about his journey, and perhaps it was done to reassure the members considering the criticism that flourished already then:

"You will probably see me in some odd circles, but do not be nervous. If I shake the hands of a [Catholic] cardinal it may of course look odd, "Well, now we're heading there." But that's not necessarily what it means, it simply means I met that person." [3]

The article continues with some quotes of Catholic Bishop of Sweden, Anders Arborelius, from his visit at the Word of Life. Notice what Robert Ekh says about the critics who have asked themselves whether Ulf Ekman was going to "bow his head to the Holy See":

"... it is actually very clear in our time that even Christians of other denominations somehow still see the Pope as a symbol of unity, even if they do not recognize all of the reality that we see in the office of St Peter. But a global and media intense time is actually very beneficial to the papal task in the world," said Arborelius adding that the Pope might be able to be a "unifying symbolic figure."

Ulf Ekman did no comment this. Was it an expression of generosity to allow the guest to finish his train of thought and the fact that this was not a debate in the first place? Or did he secretly agree as many critics suggested to eventually "bow his head to the papacy"?

Robert Ekh thought the answer was obvious.

"Submit to the Holy See? Of course not, it's a creating a ghost for people to react to ." [3]

In retrospect , and after following Ulf Ekman's journey for nearly seven years , we can now say that it was not a ghost, but clearly the truth .

The questions arising are of course many. First of all for all those the pastor successfully hid this theological journey for . A journey that rarely takes less then a decade for people with a Protestant background.

Word of Life University [ LOTS ] will be resurrected this fall [recently closed down] if all goes according to the Church plans under a new "ecumenical flag", which of course would make it easier for the new Catholic converts within the movement to continue teaching , and opens the door wide open for the broad knowledge base the Jesuits at the nearby Newman Institute has to offer.

How the movement's congregations in for instance Russia and Ukraine will take the news, remains to be seen. The newly launched International Organization "Word of Life International" will later this week meet with leaders from East to among other things inform them about Ulf Ekman's decision to convert.

Hoping to soothe upset and confused Church members, a special members only meeting is held on Monday, the day after this announcement.

Aletheia.se will return with analytical articles and interviews about today's historic event. The article will be updated continually.

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[1] <http://ulfekman.nu/2009/01/14/jassa-ar-livets-ord-pa-vag-mot-rom>

[2] <http://andreasglandberger.wordpress.com/2009/01/18/jassa-ulf-ekman-besvarar-kritiken/comment-page-2>

[3] <http://www.dagen.se/nyheter/dokument-livets-ord-del-7-ekumeniken>