

A network of living cells

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In a prophetic 1984 talk given in East Berlin, Bishop and theologian Klaus Hemmerle outlined the Church of the future from the two focal points of the spirituality of unity: the presence of Jesus in the midst of the people and the abandonment experienced by Jesus on the cross as the highest expression of love. We offer here two passages of particular relevance for this issue of Ekklesia. Reprinted from Italian: K. Hemmerle, Profile of the Church of Tomorrow. Reflections on the Self-Understanding of the Church in Our Time, Ekklesia 1 (2018) n. 1, pp. 22 and 24.

This seems to me truly decisive for the Church of tomorrow: it will be—while fully preserving its objective dimension as ministry, sacrament, and Gospel—a network of living cells with the Lord in their midst. Yet it will not be merely a sum of such cells— one cell here, another there, still another somewhere else— topped only by an objective superstructure. Rather, it will consist of (and this appears to me another decisive element for the future of the Church) living cells that come into being wherever we embrace the forsaken God and live together with him. And these cells will have the Lord among them, where the center of each cell is also the center among the cells. [...]

The Church is the lived experience of God with human beings, and of human beings with God and one another. When we live the Forsaken and live in such a way that the Lord lives among us, there is a fulfilment of time in the midst of this world. For me, the future of the Church consists in living the contemporary human experience with God. It consists in the fact that we do not abandon God, but rather live his different time, his alternative time, his fulfilled time with him, so that God's time becomes present. It consists in sharing the time and burdens of others beyond ourselves and, in this way, there is communion among ourselves, a sharing time with one another, and the Lord is present in our midst.