

WELCOME

Prof. Dr. Annegret Bollée
Vice-President, University of Bamberg

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues -

It is an honor for the University of Bamberg and a great pleasure for me to welcome you here today on behalf of President Oppolzer who is at present absent from Bamberg. He has asked me to extend his greetings to you and his best wishes for a successful Colloquium and a pleasant stay in Bamberg.

The International Astronomical Union has chosen the town of Bamberg for its 69th Colloquium, and among the many old houses of this town one that stands out as having a particularly colorful history: one so full of memorable events that a little book could be written on the subject; indeed one has been written by my colleague and former Rector of the University, Elisabeth Roth. I refer you to her book for more detailed information.

The present building - in fact, two houses united into one - dates back to the Middle Ages. Before becoming Hochzeitshaus - I shall explain this name in due course - it was the Gasthaus zum Wilden Mann, the Wild-Man-Inn, the wild man being a kind of hairy giant, a figure which is often found in medieval and Renaissance coats-of-arms and also as a house sign. The inn Zum Wilden Mann was first mentioned in a document of 1484, and in the 16th Century it must have been an inn of great renown, otherwise the Prince Bishop would not have chosen this accommodation for his famous guest Albrecht Dürer in 1520. On the photo in your programme you can see the memorial tablet in memory of Dürer's various sojourns in Bamberg in that year.

In the times of the Renaissance, times of sumptuous festivities and opulent meals, German towns used to provide a public building for their citizens where they could celebrate private events, especially weddings. In 1605, therefore, the Mayor and Council of Bamberg decided to buy the Wild-Man-Inn and to transform it into a Hochzeitshaus for the townspeople of Bamberg. Hochzeit, meaning 'wedding' in modern German, did not have this restricted meaning in Old and Middle High

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German. It meant 'festivity' or 'feast' in general. However, the Hochzeitshaus zum Wilden Mann was in fact mainly used for big weddings. This destination is documented by the painting of the Wedding at Cana. This painting by an unknown artist, dating from the early 17th century, was rediscovered in the course of the renovation of the building in 1973/74 and thoroughly restored in 1975.

The Hochzeitshaus was among the very few houses of Bamberg to be very badly damaged in the war, in 1945. Rebuilt in 1950-52, it was restored to its present shape in 1973-75. The Hochzeitshaus is part of our programme "Universität in der Altstadt", a programme which aims at integrating a new university into an old town by restoring old buildings and filling them with new life. I said a new university because it was in fact founded in 1972. But rather than a new foundation, it is a re-foundation; it takes up a tradition dating back to the 17th century. In 1648 the Prince Bishop Melchior Otto Voit von Salzburg raised a former seminary for priests to the rank of an Academy. After his patron saint Otto he named it Academia Ottoniana. At the beginning there were only two faculties, Theology and Philosophy, all the professors and the rector belonging to the order of the Jesuits. Prince Bishops succeeding Melchior Otto gradually enlarged the Academy in the course of the 18th century by adding faculties of Law and Medicine. In 1773 the academic constitution was changed in accordance with those of other German universities, and the name was changed to University of Bamberg. In the early 19th century, however, this promising development was interrupted. In 1802 the reign of the Prince Bishops of Bamberg came to an end and Bamberg became part of the state of Bavaria. The university was dissolved in 1803, but theological and philosophical studies have survived up to the present day. I shall not bore you with all the details of a rather complicated history. Let me only mention that the institutions succeeding the old university were transformed into a Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule in 1923. Together with a Teacher Training College founded in 1958, the Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule became one of the corner-stones of the refounded University in 1972. The Universitas Bambergensis rediviva at first offered courses only for future priests, teachers and social workers, but in 1977 more faculties were added, and we hope that the period of expansion has not yet come to an end. We have now 2.800 students - we expect to have over 3.000 in the winter term -, a staff of 520 and almost 90 professors. There are 6 faculties: Theology, Philosophy-Psychology-Education, Languages and Literature, History and Geography, Social Sciences and Economics, and a department for the training of social workers.

Ladies and gentlemen, may I wish you a successful meeting, and I hope that you will enjoy your stay in Bamberg. We have just said good-bye to the students who have attended the International Summer Course of German Language and Literature. They seemed to like Bamberg very much, so I hope that you will like it as well.