

Message from Katherine Shirk Lucas, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings from Paris, France.

Along with Bishop Brian Farrell and on behalf of the Roman Catholic delegation to the Global Christian Forum, I would like to express our deep appreciation for the Bogotá gathering which has led to new friendships and strengthened bonds of trust in the Holy Spirit on our journey towards the fulfillment of Jesus' Prayer that all may be one so that the world may believe (John 17: 21).

“Let mutual love continue” (Hebrews 13:1) SLIDE 1

The Bogotá message states, “We want to share and grow the joy we have experienced, by extending the experience of the Global Christian Forum through regional and local initiatives rooted in the places where we live.”

We are grateful that Catholic ecumenical officers and Catholic communities have been involved in organizing Christian Forum events in different regions around the world. In Europe, the first Francophone Christian Forum took place in Lyons, France, in October 2018, on the theme “Jesus called called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him” (Mark 3:13). More than two hundred Christians from 20 Christian confessions and families from Belgium, France and Switzerland came together for three days of prayer, fellowship and mission in the urban community. The Swiss are now preparing for the first regional Swiss Francophone Christian Forum in October and plans are underway for a second European Francophone Christian Forum.

May these signs of growth bring us joy and strengthen our faith in God's will of reconciliation and unity for the Church and our human family.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5: 16-17) SLIDE 2

The Bogotá message calls on Christians to remember in their daily prayers all “who suffer persecution and martyrdom for living their faith.” We persist in our prayer for the Metropolitan Archbishops of Aleppo, Boulos Yazijy and Mor Gregorius Yohann Ibrahim, kidnapped on April 22, 2013.

SLIDE 3

During the pandemic, Christians have gathered across space and time in creative ways thanks to technology to offer prayers for our suffering world, in particular for those who are ill or who have lost loved ones. International and regional online prayer celebrations for Christian unity have taken place, and thousands of Christians have joined in daily online Taizé prayer.

We hope that the prayerful momentum brought about by the pandemic will continue to thrive in easier times for, as Pope Francis reminds us, prayer is the oxygen of the ecumenical movement.

SLIDES 4, 5, 6

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18)

At one of the plenary question sessions in Bogotá, an African-American pastor shared the pain and disappointment his community felt when they were not included in invitations from mainstream Churches. He concluded on a hopeful note, “But we are still waiting.”

I have often thought of this pastor’s plea over the past three years. In the United States and elsewhere, ethnic minority communities bear the terrible violent burdens of racism and discrimination. In the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, Christians have come together to witness that Black men, Black women, and Black children are created in the image and likeness of God. Their lives are sacred. Much work remains for our Churches. God has entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to us. May God help us seize this *kairos* moment. Dear Pastor, I sincerely hope your community has received love and support from your neighbors.

SLIDE 7

Thank you to the Global Christian Forum Committee for bringing us together today.

SLIDE 8

“May the Spirit of God continue to gather us together in mutual love in Jesus Christ, encouraging and strengthening one another, to stand firm in our shared faith and help us be the prophetic witness to the hurting world.”

May the Peace of Christ be with you.