

Be Renewed in the Spirit

The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism

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Introduction

“Be renewed in the spirit of your minds...” (Eph. 4:23)¹

1. In response to the prayer of our Lord “that they may all be one...” (John 17:21) and motivated by Christ’s call for renewal of life and conversion of heart, the Joint Working Group (JWG), responsible for fostering the relationship between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), initiated a project to reflect anew on the spiritual roots of ecumenism. In doing so, the goal is to get back to basics—to remind Christians of the spiritual impulse that has driven the ecumenical movement from its inception, and to consider fresh ways that churches can nurture these spiritual roots on the ground by offering some practical recommendations. Thus, after explaining the use of the terms “spirituality” and “ecumenism” (words that popular culture often uses without sufficient clarity), this study will explore briefly the theological basis for spiritual ecumenism; will consider practices of piety, prayer, and worship that nurture these spiritual roots; will highlight how God in Christ through the Holy Spirit breathes new life into Christians through examples among the saints and transforming encounters with the other; and will offer some practical ways to appropriate this foundation more fully in local settings. The members of the JWG do so mindful of the variety of cultural contexts and many stressful situations in which churches find themselves, while seeking to be faithful to the gospel in the twenty-first century.

2. In the face of all sorts of tensions and conflicts, local and international, among churches and in the world, the members of the JWG are keenly aware of how essential is a reconciling witness. We are conscious both of the continuing divisions among Christian churches and of the perception that many are content with the status quo. Some are openly critical of the ecumenical movement because they fear that it will compromise doctrine and ethical teachings as they understand them. Yet as the Vatican II *Decree on Ecumenism* declared, division “openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to

1. All biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version. (1989, 1995) The Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

every creature.”² People who live in a reconciling spirit are powerful witnesses to the essence of the Christian faith.

3. Long before the twentieth century, whenever divisions among Christians occurred, the impulse toward unity also was evident. The modern ecumenical movement, however, began with certain markers—the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, 1910; the Conference on Life and Work in Stockholm, 1925; and the World Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne, 1927. Resolution (9) of the Lambeth Conference of 1920 on the reunion of Christendom was saying “We believe that the Holy Spirit has called us in a very solemn and special manner to associate ourselves in penitence and prayer with all those who deplore the divisions of Christian people, and are inspired by the vision and hope of a visible unity of the whole Church.”³ An encyclical from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1920, addressed “unto all the churches of Christ, everywhere,” was another cornerstone in the ecumenical foundation being laid at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴ Much has been written about these initiatives. They have borne good fruit.

4. After the World Council of Churches was formed in 1948, member churches identified certain assumptions about the basis of their relationship. Among these was a commitment by the member churches to “enter into spiritual relationships through which they seek to learn from that the life of the churches may be renewed.”⁵ Sixteen years later, the *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio-UR)* of the Roman Catholic Church resonated with a similar spirit. In what was the culmination of a long process of “return to the sources” in scriptural, liturgical and theological studies, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) formally and irrevocably committed the Catholic Church to the search for Christian unity. In the chapter on *The Practice of Ecumenism*, the *Decree* asserted that “There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart.

2. *Unitatis Redintegratio*. (1966) *The Documents of Vatican II*. The American Press, USA, Par. 1.

3. Cf the Lambeth Conference official website: <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-9.cfm>

4. Cf. Bishop John (Kallos) of Amorion. A Historical Sketch of the Ecumenical Movement. www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/ecumenical/john_thermon_history_ecumenism.htm; Fr Peter Alban Heers. The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism. <http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/heers-themissionaryrootsofmodernecumenism.pdf>.

5. *Toronto Statement*. (1950) World Council of Churches Central Committee, IV.8.

For it is from renewal of the inner life of our minds, (cf. Eph. 4:23), from self-denial and an unstinted love that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way.”⁶

5. Although the contemporary ecumenical movement takes various institutional forms—councils of churches, bi- and multi-lateral dialogues, initiatives of the Christian world communions, the student Christian movement, world missionary conferences, united and uniting churches, encyclicals from Orthodox and Catholic religious leaders—all these institutional forms have a spiritual foundation.

6. The members of the JWG rejoice in the many successes that have taken place in the last century. While the communion of our churches remains incomplete, Christians neither should dwell on the negatives nor overly exult about the positives, but always return to the reason for engaging in the quest for Christian unity. Christians do this work to be faithful to the gospel, believing it will bear good fruit in God’s good time.

7. Followers of Christ are called to incorporate “a broad spirituality of openness to the other in light of the imperative of Christian unity, directed by the Holy Spirit.”⁷ At the heart of the Christian faith is the idea of a reconciled community of people who treat each other with the same compassionate, loving, reconciling spirit that God has shown and continues to show through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. The very nature of the Godhead is one of community. God created human beings to share in this sacred friendship. As friends of God, each one of us realizes our own unique gifts in community with others and in solidarity with all whom God loves, indeed, with all creation. The sharing of these gifts in community leads to change and growth.

8. Only God’s grace and the work of the Holy Spirit can truly bring Christians together with all the riches which God has sown in each of the churches and in all peoples. As growth in communion ecumenism is a powerful witness to the gospel that all Christians can bear before a fragmented and divided world. The more Christians remain rooted in Jesus Christ, the self-revelation of God, the more credible will be their witness to the world at large. The ecumenical movement regularly highlights this understanding. As the Apostle Paul asserts, “we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us” (2 Cor. 5:20). Fresh

6. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Par. 7.

7. *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*. A Joint Working Group Study: Eighth Report, Par. 37.

focus on the spiritual roots of ecumenism is an appropriate response to contemporary challenges among churches and within the world.

I. Basic Terms

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor. 5:17)

9. The words “ecumenism” and “spirituality” tend to be used in a variety of ways. The JWG will be using terms in the following ways:

10. Christian spirituality is the living and sharing in God’s love because, in the words of the Apostle Paul, “...God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). It enables Christians and their churches to respond to God’s initiatives—to what the triune God is doing in and through us. Theology and spirituality are inextricably intertwined, because both deal with God and God’s relationship with humanity through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. It involves discerning God’s activity in people, in churches, in the world. By the grace of God, Christians seek to grow in understanding God’s will, and to follow that will in themselves, in the community of the church, and in society. Spirituality is a holistic discipline. It is personal (not individualistic); at the same time, it flourishes in community. It grows from our human capacity as conscious, free beings in relationship to others and in relationship to the ground and source of our being, the triune God. It is meaning-seeking and a power of transformation. Spirituality moves toward authenticity and encounters truth, fulfilling our life, restoring our true dimension, and enabling us to have a fuller understanding, real dialogue, and communion. It shapes our horizons. Christians have relied on a variety of personal and communal ways, chief among them prayer and worship, to understand and follow the will of God.

11. Ecumenism is a response to Christ’s prayer for unity for the sake of the world (John 17:21). The term comes from the Greek word, *oikoumene*, which means “the whole inhabited earth.” In the twentieth century, the word “ecumenism” came to be applied to efforts to heal divisions among Christian churches for the sake of the world. The WCC Constitution articulates elements of this vision: “The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and

to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.”⁸ This quest is important because it is an essential dimension of the gospel. As the WCC founding Amsterdam assembly message affirmed, “Christ has made us His own, and He is not divided.”⁹ Churches help one another to be faithful to the gospel mandate of reconciliation, and call one another to mutual accountability as together, they seek to know the mind of Christ. Because Christ’s call is for the salvation of the whole inhabited earth, the quest for Christian unity is not for its sake alone.

12. The unity Christian churches seek is not a call for uniformity. Nor does it entail compromises of doctrine or conscience as churches address differences in perspectives about basic Christian tenets. Unity allows for legitimate diversity in theological expression, spirituality, rite, reflections on faith, and inculturation. Rather, legitimate diversity aims to enrich the whole body of Christ. “The dynamic of the ecumenical movement is rooted in the tension between the churches as they are and the true *koinonia* with the triune God and among one another which is their calling and God’s gift.”¹⁰ The living force of this ecumenical quest is the Holy Spirit, who bestows the fruit of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22).

13. In the twentieth century, the word “ecumenism” began to refer specifically to Christians working toward “visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship.” While we affirm the essential value of promoting positive relationships among all peoples of faith, the intra-Christian understanding of the term “ecumenism” is how the word will be used in this text.

14. Ecumenical dialogue and interreligious dialogue are related to each other. Christians need to bear common witness in so far as it is possible with people of other religions. *The Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* takes notice of this fact. It states:

There are increasing contacts in today’s world between Christians and persons of other religions. These contacts differ radically from the contacts

8. *Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches* (as amended by the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006), III Purposes and Functions.

9. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill. (1986) *A History of the Ecumenical Movement: Volume I, 1517-1948, third edition*. World Council of Churches, Geneva. p. 720.

10. *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*. (Sept. 1997). A policy statement adopted by the WCC Central Committee [CUV] Par. 2.8.1.

between the church and ecclesial communities, which have for their object the restoration of the unity Christ willed among all his disciples, and are properly called ecumenical. But in practice they are deeply influenced by, and in turn influence ecumenical relationships. Through them, Christians can deepen the level of communion existing among themselves, and so they are to be considered an important part of ecumenical cooperation.¹¹

15. The spiritual roots of ecumenism combine efforts of Christians to discern God's will and to be receptive to the Holy Spirit, with particular attention to "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18) which has been entrusted to us through Christ for the sake of the world—indeed, for all creation, "in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay..." (Rom. 8:21). This is the common hope for all human beings and a source of the ecumenical mandate. Division "openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature."¹² In response to the reality of divisions among Christians, at the 50th anniversary of its founding, the WCC member churches recommitted themselves to nurture "the ability to pray, live, act and grow together in community—sometimes through struggle and conflict—with churches from differing backgrounds and traditions."¹³ In this project, the members of the Joint Working Group have been attentive to the variety of writings within and among Christian traditions that particularly inform this ecumenical mandate.

16. The quest for Christian unity is not something new in the life of the churches. It is rooted in the tradition of the Church from the earliest centuries, and is embedded in liturgy. Furthermore, it is part of the fundamental nature of the church. As Pope John Paul II said in his encyclical *Ut unum sint*, the unity

which the Lord has bestowed on his church and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ's mission. Nor is it some secondary attribute of the community of his disciples. Rather, it belongs to the very essence of this community. God wills the church because he wills unity, and unity is an expression of the whole depth of his agape.¹⁴

11. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism*, 1993, n. 210.

12. *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Par. 1.

13. *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*. (Sept. 1997) A policy statement adopted by the WCC Central Committee. Par. 3.7.1.

14. *Ut unum sint*. No. 9.

In other words, the spiritual roots of ecumenism are at the very heart of the quest for Christian unity: that is, they entail conversion and renewal, holiness of life in accordance with the gospel, personal and communal prayer. At the same time that the response to God's will for unity is grounded in the scripture and tradition that Christians share, the forms of that response are open to fresh winds of the Holy Spirit in ways still to be made known.

17. The members of the JWG have chosen to use the metaphor of "spiritual roots" because roots are a common source of nourishment. As with all metaphors, it is evocative and provides a good visual image for the fundamentals undergirding the ecumenical movement. Roots are dependent on the same life-giving sources of soil and water. These sources often are hidden, yet they quietly sustain. All roots intermingle, sometimes in complex ways not visible to the human eye. They have the potential to bear good fruit. So it is with the spiritual roots of ecumenism. The common source nourishing Christians is the triune God. Christians are reborn and nourished in the waters of baptism, through which we share a real though incomplete communion. Our distinct traditions are inter-dependent. We turn to the same life-giving channels of scripture and tradition discerned through human experience to guide, sustain, and bear the fruit of reconciliation. The ecumenical movement, itself, has been a fruit of the Holy Spirit, refreshing our commitment and inspiring Christians to engage with each other as we reach toward full *koinonia*—"visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship."¹⁵

II. Biblical Foundations

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21).

18. Because prayer is rooted in a relationship with the triune God, the JWG has chosen prayer as an organizing principle to explore the theological foundations of spiritual ecumenism. Prayer rooted in the prayer of Jesus leads the believer to confront his or her sins that contribute to division within the community, and also the sins committed by members of the church in previous ages which have led to schism and fracture in ecclesial communion. By praying with Christ, believers undergo interior

15. *Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches* (as amended by the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006), III Purposes and Functions.

conversion and become instruments of healing who remove obstacles to communion, but also witnesses to the diversity of the Holy Spirit's gifts that make true unity possible. Finally, as Christians who look to Christ as the principal agent of reconciliation, we also cultivate a patience that recognizes the perfection of unity as the final gift of the Lord when he returns in glory. As has been stated in section I (Basic terms), prayer is only one dimension of the spiritual life.

A. The prayer of Jesus as a basis for unity

19. The Gospel of John places Jesus' prayer for unity at the climax of his farewell address to the disciples on the night before his death. In what is often called the high priestly prayer (John 17), Jesus asks the Father to give his disciples, those who belong to him in the time of his death on the cross, as well as those who have yet to believe in him, a share in their communion of life and love. The prayer for unity is first a prayer to "abide" (*μένειν*) in Jesus and in the love that he has for the Father (15:7-10) and for his disciples (13:34). Like branches of the vine (15:5), his disciples will bear fruit if they obey the Father's commandments and love one another as Jesus himself has loved them. To lay down one's life for a brother or sister is the most supreme expression of unity precisely because it imitates the sacrificial love of Jesus revealed on the cross (13:1; 15:13).

20. Unity in the love of Jesus is first an I-Thou relationship which builds communion between individuals and Christ as the ground from which unity between communities emerges. The disciples derive their unity with one another from Christ who shows how to love and how to find the way to the Father (John 8:12; 14:7). It is his love that gives rise to the desire for unity, even in those who have never been aware of the need for it. Saint Cyril of Alexandria writes that Christ wishes his disciples

to be kept in a state of unity by maintaining a like-mindedness and an identity of will, being mingled together as it were in soul and spirit and in the law of peace and love for one another. He wishes them to be bound together tightly with an unbreakable bond of love, that they may advance to such a degree of unity that is conceived to exist between the Father and the Son.¹⁶

The early Christian community, as depicted in the Book of Acts, realizes this harmony of minds and hearts as its members "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread

16. Joel C. Elowsky and Thomas C. Oden, eds. (2007) *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: John 11-21*. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL; Commentary on the Gospel of John 11.9, p. 245.

and the prayers” as well as to the sharing of wealth for the benefit of one another (Acts 2:42, 44-45).

21. All loving action, all fruitfulness of life in communion among Christians flows from hearing the word of Christ and receiving it in faith. The word that Jesus speaks comes from the Father, and is expressed through a variety of teachings and powerful signs. But all of the words and deeds of Christ are, at the same time, concentrated in the one word that is the divine name shared by both Jesus and the Father. “I AM” is the powerful name of God revealed first through Moses to the people of Israel (Exodus 3:14), and now to all peoples through the exaltation of Christ on the cross (John 18ff). Within the high priestly prayer, Jesus acknowledges that he has revealed the Father’s ineffable name to his disciples (John 17:6), the name that saves human beings because it elicits faith from them. Wherever two or three gather to invoke Jesus’ name, he is present in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

22. In the Gospel of Matthew the divine name is similarly invoked in the distinctive prayer that Jesus teaches to his disciples: “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...” The Lord’s Prayer sanctifies the divine name because it petitions the Father for the means to live within the heavenly kingdom, where sins are forgiven and all are reconciled to one another in Christ. This very prayer that Christians of differing confessional allegiances often recite in common today is the prayer for unity *par excellence*. As St. Cyprian noted about the Lord’s Prayer, “we say not ‘My Father, which art in heaven,’ nor ‘Give me this day my daily bread’... When we pray [the Lord’s Prayer] we pray not for one but for the whole people, because we the whole people are one.”¹⁷

23. The prayer for unity, the prayer of Jesus and his disciples, achieves its desired object only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Earlier in his farewell address, Jesus promises another Advocate in whom the disciples will abide and in whom his memory will be preserved in all truth (John 14:16-17, 25-26). The same Spirit that helps us in our weakness, intercedes for us when we do not know how to pray (Rom. 8:26-27), and enables us to proclaim that “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor. 12:3)—that same Spirit draws the first Christians into the unity of the richly endowed church at Pentecost. Sent by the Father through the Son, the life-giving Spirit (Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed) accompanies the church throughout the pilgrimage of history, preserving believers in the truth and enabling

17. St. Cyprian, Treatise IV, *On the Lord’s Prayer*. No. 8; www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.iv.v.iv.html (Accessed March 15, 2010).

them to witness boldly to the gospel. In the process of praying, working and struggling for unity, the Holy Spirit also “comforts us in pain, disturbs us when we are satisfied to remain in our division, leads us to repentance and grants us joy when our communion flourishes.”¹⁸

24. Finally, the unity for which Christ and his followers pray achieves its fulfillment only when the rest of humanity finds its place within creation’s worship of the triune God (Phil. 2:10-11). Jesus prays that we may be one “so that the world may believe” that he is the one sent by the Father—a realization that marks the beginning of eternal life (John 17:3). Thus communion among Christians fosters mission, which includes both the proclamation of the word as well as action on behalf of justice, peace and care for God’s creation. It is in this spirit that John Calvin offered a prayer saying “Save us, Lord, from being self-centered in our prayers; teach us to remember to pray for others. May we be so caught up in love for those for whom we pray, that we may feel their needs as keenly as our own, and pray for them with imagination, sensitivity, and knowledge.”¹⁹ Christians today who pray for unity stand within the modern ecumenical movement, which began more than one hundred years ago with the realization that the mission of announcing the good news of Jesus Christ is impeded by the discordant witness of Christian communities in competition with or indifferent to one another. Such a contradiction becomes an obstacle for those who hear the message and who might otherwise place their faith in Christ.

B. Our calling to repentance and conversion as a basis for unity

25. The dialogue of *metanoia* which comprises repentance and conversion is also a dialogue of unity among Christians.²⁰ From the beginning of history, sin has led either to a break or a wound in humanity’s communion with God, which has resulted in conflicts between individuals and their communities. God’s solution to the catastrophic consequences of human rebellion is to restore the relationship by means of a covenant. Through the prophets of Israel, the people are further educated in the bond between worship and justice, sacrifices and merciful deeds (e.g. Hos. 6:6).

18. *The Unity of the Church: Gift and Calling—The Canberra statement*. (1991) World Council of Churches. No. 4.1; www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-unity-of-the-church-gift-and-calling-the-canberra-statement.html (Accessed March 15, 2010)

19. Dorothy Stewart, compiler. (2002) *The Westminster Collection of Christian Prayers*. WJK, Louisville, KY, p. 314.

20. *Ut unum sint*. No. 35.

26. With the coming of Jesus Christ, the new Adam who renews all of humanity through his incarnation and life-giving death on the cross (cf. 1 Cor. 15:47), believers receive the definitive plan for communion and unity. By the grace that comes through faith in Christ Jesus, believers who are baptized into him have the means of overcoming their sins and evil in the world and of being transformed into holy instruments of God's new creation (Gal. 3:27).

27. Christians rejoice in the ways that the Lord equips them to be ambassadors of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19) and announcers of a gospel that promises renewed friendship with God (cf. John 15:15). "Humanity is one, organically one by its divine structure; it is the church's mission to reveal to men that pristine unity that they have lost, to restore and complete it," said St. Hilary of Poitiers.²¹ The vocation of service to unity is, therefore, an inherent part of the call to discipleship.

28. In our worship, the community makes a confession of sin in order to remove the obstacles to communion with God and fellowship with one another. Sometimes the confession takes the form of a communal prayer. At other times it is a litany that repeats the words of penitents in the Gospel: "Lord, have mercy"/*Kyrie eleison* (cf. Mark 10:48; Luke 18:13, 38). In confessing our sins together as part of communal worship, we turn together to Christ whose blood pays the debt of our sins (cf. Rom. 5:16) and calls out for mercy and reconciliation among believers and within the wider human family (cf. Heb. 12:24; Col. 1:20).

29. The community of believers that carries the message and presence of Christ into the world begins its life at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord had promised to send (Acts 1:8; cf. John 14:16). What had been a Jewish feast of God's gift of the covenant at Sinai becomes for the followers of Jesus the beginning of a new phase in the history of salvation, in which all the earth's peoples are represented (Acts 2:1-11). Through the outpouring of the Spirit, Christ undoes the damage wrought by Babel (cf. Gen. 11:1-9) and enables human beings to reunite in the language of faith in the one whose blood dissolves the walls of division (Eph. 2:14-15). Christ makes himself the head of this new body (Col. 1:18), but animates it by the Spirit who is the bearer of God's love (Rom. 5:5)—a love that casts out fear (1 John 14).

30. The church is the place where humanity rediscovers its unity in communion with God. In the images of the early church Fathers, the

21. Henri de Lubac. (1988) *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*. Ignatius Press, San Francisco, pp. 45, 48, 53.

church is the ark which “in the full sail of the Lord’s cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world,” and through which human beings are “saved from the flood” as in the days of Noah.²²

31. At its ninth assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006, the World Council of Churches affirmed in its statement on ecclesiology, *Called to Be the One Church*, that the Church is the sign and instrument of what God intends for the salvation of the world. “The kingdom of God can be perceived in a reconciled and reconciling community called to holiness: a community that strives to overcome the discriminations expressed in sinful social structures, and to work for the healing of divisions in its own life and for healing and unity in the human community.”²³

32. Conversion to Christ and prayer for unity lead to the healing of those memories of intolerance, hatred and even violence perpetrated by Christians against other Christians in the name of religion. As Pope John Paul II said in his encyclical *Ut unum sint*: “With the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Lord’s disciples, inspired by love, by the power of the truth and by a sincere desire for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, are called to re-examine together their painful past and the hurt which that past regrettably continues to provoke even today.”²⁴ With similar dedication, they are to affirm and renew “the image of God in all humanity” and to work “alongside all those whose human dignity has been denied by economic, political, and social marginalization.”²⁵ Joined to Christ the reconciler, Christians do not hesitate to engage in works that promote healing and unity in the broader society, even while recognizing with Paul that such good work appropriately begins in the household of faith (cf. Gal. 6:10).

C. *The gifts of the Spirit in a dialogue with cultures as a basis for unity*

33. Spiritual ecumenism values unity and diversity as two interpenetrating gifts that Christ in his Spirit bestows upon the church. Already in the New Testament, the new people of God reveals itself as a unity rich in diversity when the Word and the Spirit appear together in moments of God’s creative acts. In his spiritual interpretation of the baptism of Jesus

22. St. Augustine. *Sermon*. 96,7,9: PL 38, 588; St. Ambrose, *De virg.* 18 118: PL 16,297B; cf. already 1 Pet. 3:20-21.

23. WCC. (2006) *Called to Be One Church—Porto Alegre Statement*. No. 10; www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/christian-unity-and-message-to-the-churches/called-to-be-the-one-church-as-adopted.html (Accessed March 15, 2010).

24. *Ut unum sint*, No. 2.

25. WCC. (2006) *Called to Be One Church—Porto Alegre statement*. No. 10.

and the day of Pentecost, Augustine of Hippo points out that it is the same Holy Spirit who reveals himself in both events as the source of the new creation (cf. Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34; Acts 2:4). The two manifestations of the Spirit represent, according to Augustine, the diversity of gifts and the unity of faith in the one church. At Pentecost, Augustine writes, “there is a diversity of tongues, but the diversity of tongues does not imply schisms. Do not be afraid of the separation in the cloven tongues, but in the dove recognize unity.”²⁶ In the hovering of the Spirit over Jesus, at the moment the Father pronounces his Son “beloved,” the unity of all those who would be baptized in Christ and made children of the one God, also is manifested. For Augustine, incorporation into Christ at baptism and the gathering into the church at Pentecost are two aspects of God’s single response to the chaos provoked by sin.

34. Unity in diversity is found throughout the life of the church, in every stage of its existence. Given the mandate of the church to proclaim the gospel and baptize people of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20), the church enters into dialogue with disparate cultures. Each new culture and ethnic community that receives the gospel and allows the church to take root on its soil, contributes its own gifts to the life of the body of believers. Worship, theology, and witness find new and enriching expressions because the dialogue of church and culture continues in every age. Christians on the ecumenical journey agree with Paul that the Holy Spirit bestows a rich variety of theological and pastoral gifts for the up-building of the one church (cf. Eph. 4:1-16).

35. Yet the principle of diversity of gifts is qualified by the ecclesial purpose to which they are always directed: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:4-7). The churches recognize the important work of theological dialogues that aim to identify doctrinal convergences across confessional divides. Christians today can gratefully acknowledge that sometimes another tradition comes nearer than one’s own to a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation, or has expressed them to better advantage. “In such cases, these various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting.”²⁷

26. St. Augustine. *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 6:3. ACCS: Acts, p. 22.

27. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, No. 17; www.vatican.va/archives/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/va-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (Accessed March 15, 2010).

36. While affirming the life-giving effects of the gifts of the Spirit, we also recognize the limits of diversity. Diversity is integral to the nature of ecclesial communion. There is, however, also a diversity of cultures which can undermine communion when it renders impossible the common profession of faith in Christ as God and Savior the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8); or when doubt is cast upon “salvation and the final destiny of humanity as proclaimed in Holy Scripture and preached by the apostolic community.”²⁸ When diversity gives way to a profound divergence in the way the gospel is proclaimed by people, or when it breaks apart fellowships of Christians because of profound differences in understanding the moral life, then it no longer accords with the mind of Christ or with the movement of his Spirit in the church. Those on the ecumenical journey can say with Origen of Alexandria (185-254): “Wherever there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies, and disputes.” By the same token, wherever there are virtues like patience and humility borne of the Spirit “there is also harmony and unity, from which arise the one heart and one soul of all believers.”²⁹

37. Unity in diversity finds its perfect expression in the absolute oneness and distinction of persons in the Holy Trinity. God, the Father Almighty, God the only begotten Son, and God the Holy Spirit who is Lord and giver of life, are one God, as professed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381). Each Person (*hypostasis*) is distinct in his identity, co-equally sharing in the one divine essence (*ousia*). The church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit mirrors—albeit in a creaturely and imperfect way—the “oneness in rich diversity” of the living God. The prayer and spiritual works for Christian unity are therefore aimed at the growth of ecclesial communion into the Trinitarian communion of self-giving love, from which it derives its life.³⁰

38. Christians on the ecumenical journey understand the importance of hospitality as a virtue that helps to overcome the barriers between historically divided churches. Over the last hundred years, we have learned to welcome into our communities the stranger who later was discovered

28. Faith and Order Commission. (1991) *The Unity of the Church: Gift and calling—the Canberra statement*, World Council of Churches, No. 2.2; www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-unity-of-the-church-gift-and-calling-the-canberra-statement.html (Accessed March 15, 2010).

29. Origen, Hom. In Ezech. 9,1: Par. 13, 732.

30. WCC, *Called to Be One Church*. No. 3.

to be our sister or brother in Christ. One of the great ecumenical challenges today is to cultivate a Trinitarian spirituality that fosters within our communities an attitude of welcome toward believers from churches other than our own. Like Abraham and Sarah who entertain the “divine friends” unaware of their identity, we too may find a blessing in receiving the holy other into our tents, and also the rich spiritual gifts that he or she bears (Gen. 18:1-19; cf. Heb. 13:2).³¹

D. Enduring hope as a basis for unity

39. As believers in Jesus Christ, Christians desire what the Lord desires; and he desires unity, peace and friendship for his disciples. Yet this unity for which we labour must be acknowledged as a gift of the Lord before it ever becomes the task of his disciples. Unity accompanies the Holy Spirit whom the Father sends through the Son on the day of Pentecost as a permanent endowment. Whenever the Lord’s followers fall into division, we contradict ourselves as members of his body. Discord and fracture within the church always call for deeper prayer, repentance, and remembrance of the original gift of the Spirit.

40. The final vision of the people of God is one of harmonious worship and fruitful life in the kingdom of God. All divisions will fall by the wayside, and all of creation will become a song of praise (Rev. 5:11-14). Christians wait in joyful hope for the return of the Lord who will gather his elect into perfect communion. In the meantime, we look for signs and opportunities to heal the body of Christ of all its divisions. Yet we also seek to find some purpose even in our disunity, knowing that God’s grace is more powerful than our sins of division. Saint Paul understood that the divisions unsettling the church in Corinth helped to expose genuine Christian belief and practice from its false opposites (1 Cor. 11:19). Commenting on this same text, Saint Augustine argued that even divisions over false teachings render the truths of faith more luminous.³²

31. See Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, No. 28: “Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an ‘exchange of gifts.’” Cf. No. 57: “Communion is made fruitful by the exchange of gifts between the Churches insofar as they complement each other.” www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html (Accessed March 15, 2010).

32. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 7, chap 19: “For the disapproval of heretics makes the tenets of Your Church and sound doctrine to stand out boldly. For there must be also heresies, that the approved may be made manifest among the weak.”

41. While recognizing that diversity can contribute to the fulfillment of God's plan, Christians know that God's call is to be together as ambassadors of reconciliation and agents of peace. Mindful of this call, the delegates to the first assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Amsterdam, said in their message, "God has broken the power of evil once and for all, and opened for everyone the gate into freedom and joy in the Holy Spirit."³³ Appreciative of the Spirit's rich variety of gifts, we fulfill our calling and anticipate the coming of God's heavenly reign.

III. Some Implications for Prayer and Liturgical Practice

"Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive." (Matt. 21:22)

42. Prayer has long been recognized as the soul of the ecumenical movement. As was noted in the previous section, the prayer for unity is always an extension and participation in the prayer of Christ who desires that we be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:21). This prayer is for the followers of Christ. In prayer, Christians are invited to respond to this appeal, and to become fully that for which our Lord prayed. Prayer is the spiritual taproot of ecumenism—the main root from which all else springs.

43. The biblical principle, "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5) applies to the work of removing obstacles to full communion among the Christian people. Through prayer, Christian believers invite Christ to shape unity as he wills it—to let go of any notions or habits that are not consistent with his will. By praying with Christ and in Christ the believer is united with all believers in a symphony of prayer that orients minds and hearts to the service of building unity within the one church.

44. Christians regularly pray for each other in a variety of ways. This is one of the fruits of the ecumenical movement—a fruit that is in continuity with the traditions of the church. Many churches include prayers for unity (collects) in their liturgies. Some are a regular part of worship, others are for occasional or particular use during certain seasons or on particular days. For example, many Lutheran worship services include

33. *The Message of the Assembly*. The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches: The Official Report. (1949) W.A. Visser't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, ed. Harper & Brothers, New York, p.10. This publication is Volume V of the series *Man's Disorder and God's Design*. Also available at www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/ejubilee/8-piece8.htm.

petitions for peace (“give peace to your church...”³⁴) which address the need for reconciliation among peoples, and for the church (“where it is divided, reunite it...”³⁵). The historic Anglican eucharistic prayers and intercessions usually include prayer for the unity of the church, and the following phrase represents a classic formulation: “beseeching thee to inspire continually the universal church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord...”³⁶ In the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom during the great litany, the priest invites the people to pray “For peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all...”³⁷ At the dismissal, the priest prays “Grant peace to Your world, to Your churches...”³⁸ In the Roman Catholic Church, when the priest invites members of the congregation to offer each other a sign of peace, he begins by saying: “Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your apostles, peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever.”³⁹

45. Christians also pray with each other in ecumenical gatherings. As the report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches observed:

Common prayer in ecumenical settings makes it possible for Christians from divided ecclesial traditions to praise God together and offer prayer for Christian unity. Prayer lies at the centre of our identity as Christians, both in our separate communions and in the conciliar ecumenical movement. The very fact that we are able to pray together both as individuals and as representatives of our churches is a sign of the progress that has been made. Yet our common prayer is also a sign of those things that are still to be achieved. Many of our divisions become apparent precisely in our common prayer.⁴⁰

34. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Pew Edition*. (2006) Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN, p. 73.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

36. From the prayer “for the whole state of Christ’s Church militant here in earth” in the Service of Holy Communion in the *Book of Common Prayer 1662*.

37. *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*. (1985) Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, MA, p. 1.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

39. *The Roman Missal*. The Communion Rite, “Sign of Peace.”

40. Final report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. (14 February 2006) Appendix A, “A framework for Common Prayer at WCC Gatherings,” par. 1. Pdf version: wcc.oikoumene.org/resources/docu-

The report concluded: “Our divisions will not be resolved solely with theological dialogue and common service to the world. We must also pray together if we are to stay together, for common prayer is at the very heart of our Christian life, both in our own communities and as we work together for Christian unity.”⁴¹

46. Some intentional communities have been inspired and shaped by the ecumenical vision, and have used it as an organizing principle in their life together. It has shaped their prayer life and informed the spirit of hospitality with which they receive Christians into their life. Among these are the Chemin Neuf Community, the Focolare Movement, the Community of Grandchamp, the Iona Community, the Ecumenical Community of Taizé, and the Monastic Community of Bose.

47. Some churches observe an ecumenical prayer cycle in which they systematically pray for Christian churches around the world. Some pray especially for churches in times of threat and for churches under the cross. At the 50th anniversary assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, Nelson Mandela thanked the churches, saying “Your support exemplified in the most concrete way the contribution that religion has made to our liberation.”⁴² Prayer was an essential part of this support. Some have special companion relationships with Christians in other parts of the world for whom they pray. Some support a fruitful outcome of ecumenical events through prayer.

48. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU), now observed among churches around the world for over a century, helps the faithful focus intensely on Christian unity. This “week,” observed from 18-25 January (or in some places, during Pentecost or in the southern hemisphere, in July), has been called “one of the oldest and most enduring institutionalized expressions of ‘spiritual ecumenism.’”⁴³ Suggested materials for a common WPCU text now are prepared by the commission on Faith and Order of the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian

ments/ assembly/porto-alegre-2006/3-preparatory and background documents/final report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC.html.

41. *Ibid.*, Conclusion, Par. 43.

42. Diane Kessler, ed. (1999) *Together on the Way: Official report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. WCC Publications, Geneva, p. 8.

43. Nicholas Lossky et al. (2002) *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. WCC Publications, Geneva. “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity,” by Thomas F. Best, p. 1203.

Unity, and distributed widely by churches, bishops conferences, councils of churches, and other ecumenical organizations. It has served as a catalyst for connection among young adults, and is among the most visited sections on the WCC's website. That churches offer these prayers is a sign of a real though incomplete communion which already exist among them.

49. The Joint Working Group study on *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*, observes that "Our common commitment to Christian unity requires not only prayers for one another but a life of common prayer."⁴⁴ In other words, Christians not only should be praying for each other, but also with each other. When this happens, as Pope John Paul II observed in *Ut unum sint*, "the goal of unity seems closer. The long history of Christians marked by many divisions seems to converge once more because it tends toward that Source of its unity which is Jesus Christ."⁴⁵ It is worth noting that this section on *The Primacy of Prayer* precedes the section on *Ecumenical Dialogue*, and that prayer is considered "the basis and support" for dialogue. Thus, every gathering of Christians from different traditions should be enveloped by prayer.

50. Where to begin? Christian churches hold the Lord's Prayer in common. It is used both for private devotion and public worship. When Christians from various traditions gather in ecumenical settings, the experience of praying the Lord's Prayer together, each in his or her own language, is an especially powerful reminder of the unity already shared through our baptism. In so doing, we follow our Lord's counsel to "Pray then in this way" (Matt. 6:9a). This is the ultimate rule of prayer that establishes unity in communion, however partial.

51. Churches are learning and receiving from one another's patterns of worship. The liturgical movement is a genuine source of the spiritual roots of ecumenism, especially in its ecumenical recovery of shapes of liturgical rites that predate the major divisions of the church. For instance, in the Western churches, hymns, canticles and other musical resources are shared ecumenically. Music from the Taizé community has had a profound ecumenical influence. Styles of worship in Charismatic and Pentecostal churches, especially the use of hymns and spiritual songs, are being integrated in the liturgy of some historic churches. Increasingly, the

44. *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*. (2005) Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Eighth Report. WCC Publications, Geneva, p. 80, Par. 42.

45. *Ut unum sint*, No. 22.

services of daily prayer in many of the Protestant traditions share much in common with the Anglican, Catholic and Orthodox traditions. These services of daily prayer are steeped in the Psalms, which are a unifying element among the churches in prayer and liturgical life.

52. The liturgical movement fostered renewal in the eucharistic services of the Protestant, Anglican, and Roman Catholic churches. These liturgies share common roots in the ancient structure of the eucharist which always has been part of the living tradition of the Eastern and Oriental and Orthodox. A significant sign in the recovery of a common understanding of the eucharistic theology which accompanied the renewal of Western liturgy is the 1982 convergence text on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*⁴⁶ from the commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. This convergence has been recognized and honoured when structuring opportunities for shared prayer in ecumenical settings.

53. All churches face the challenge of helping the faithful live out that for which they pray. Christians trust that God hears these prayers for unity, but God also invites us to cooperate in their fulfillment. Even as prayer deepens faith, it also is in the service of unity and mission. The challenge faced by all worship leaders is to find ways to help members of the congregation be attentive to the full import of these prayers for unity—in their own lives, in the life of their churches, and in their communities.

IV. Examples Inspired by the Saints

“[Since] we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...” (Heb. 12:1-2a)

54. As Christians become more familiar with the spiritual gifts of each other's traditions, they are reclaiming those gifts in ways that bring them and their churches closer together to inform and guide them into unity. They are inspired by writings from all Christian spiritual traditions; they are enriched by stories of singular commitment and devotion; and despite the diversity in devotional practices, they are enlivened by persons who have been exemplary examples of holy living and dying. Martyrs, saints, and living witnesses—these sources of inspiration provide a unity in the diversity of the spiritual life of Christians. These holy men

46. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Faith and Order Paper No. 111. (1982) World Council of Churches, Geneva.

and women, not just of the past but also of our own times, nurture and inform our relationships in church and society. They are icons of Christ in ways that have attracted us to God, and through God, to the reconciling spirit at the heart of the gospel and the core of the ecumenical mandate. All have the potential to refresh and rededicate us to be witnesses “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

55. Beginning with Christ himself, the scriptures provide abundant reminders of the power of holiness. Jesus said “unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:24-25; Heb. 12:1-2a).

56. The influence of Christian martyrs transcends the categories that sometimes bind and separate. In fact, martyrdom remains a powerful witness among the churches of our day—an eloquent defence of conscience where Christians are a persecuted minority. These witnesses nurture all Christians in the faith. And in this way, they are reminders of the real though incomplete communion shared through baptism—a communion, that as John Calvin observed, is united through a common heavenly Father, with Christ as the head, so that the faithful “cannot but be united in brotherly love, and mutually impart their blessings to each other.”⁴⁷ When Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I and Pope Paul VI met in Rome in 1967, they voiced this link between the witness of martyrs and the ecumenical mandate.

We hear...the cry of the blood of the apostles Peter and Paul, and the voice of the church of the catacombs and of the martyrs of the Colosseum, inviting us to use every possible means to bring to completion the work we have begun—that of the perfect healing of Christ’s divided church—not only that the will of the Lord should be accomplished, but that the world may see shining forth what is, according to our creed, the primary property of the church—its unity.⁴⁸

57. Among the many examples, we mention the following: In 1968 Pope Paul VI journeyed to Uganda to dedicate the site for a shrine to honour forty-five Anglican and Catholic faithful who had been martyred at the direction of King Mwanga II. This visit was followed in 1984 with a pilgrimage by Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie. In Romania the

47. John Calvin. *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Book IV, 1, 2-3.

48. Nicholas Lossky et al. (1991) *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. WCC Publications, Geneva. “Martyrdom,” p. 661.

church and the state annually celebrate “The Day of Heroes” on the Feast of the Ascension to honour all martyrs of the country including those of communist persecution, and those killed in the 1989 uprising-revolution.

58. Pope John Paul II gave fresh impetus to the ecumenical potential of martyrs in *Ut unum sint*. The second paragraph of the encyclical calls attention to the witness of martyrs as a force for unity. The text asserts that:

The courageous witness of so many martyrs of our century, including members of churches and ecclesial communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church, gives new vigor to the [Second Vatican] council’s call and reminds us of our duty to listen to and put into practice its exhortation. These brothers and sisters of ours, united in the selfless offering of their lives for the kingdom of God, are the most powerful proof that every factor of division can be transcended and overcome in the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel.⁴⁹

59. In an effort to give visible witness to this idea, on May 7 in the Jubilee Year 2000 the Pope held an “Ecumenical Commemoration of Witnesses to the Faith in the Twentieth Century” in the Colosseum, a site of martyrdom in the early Church of Rome.⁵⁰ Representatives of other churches and ecclesial communities from a variety of nations were invited to participate in the service of evening prayer marking the occasion. These initiatives offer great promise. While particular churches may have a process for recognizing saints and martyrs for their own members, the churches still need a means of providing ecumenical recognition where Christian martyrs of different traditions are honoured together, as a fruit of the ecumenical movement and a means of fostering unity.

60. A significant initiative to explore ways that the witness of martyrs can be a force for unity was a gathering sponsored jointly by the Monastery of Bose and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, held in the autumn of 2008. The setting was especially appropriate because the Community of Bose already had published *Il libro dei testimoni*—an ecumenical martyrology offering daily stories with short prayers and Bible readings about witnesses, drawn from various Christian traditions.⁵¹ The Feast of All Saints occurred during the symposium. According to the message of the meeting:

49. *Ut unum sint*, No. 1.

50. See “Ecumenical Commemoration of Witnesses to the Faith in the Twentieth Century,” Press Conference, www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents.

51. *Il Libro dei testimoni. Martirologio ecumenico, a cura di Comunità di Bose*, Ed. San Paolo, Milano, 2002.

The aims behind this project were: to recognize each other's witnesses of faith, when this is not mutually exclusive; to find ways of commemorating witnesses from various traditions at ecumenical meetings; to develop or recover the commemoration of witnesses in churches that do not have such a practice; to work towards a common ecumenical martyrology.⁵²

61. As the participants in the Bose meeting recognized, when one wades into the history of Christian martyrdom, one quickly realizes that the circumstances of martyrdom in some situations have an underside that must be surfaced and addressed as a step towards reconciliation among churches. Over the centuries, many Christians have been martyred in inter-confessional acts of violence, thus fueling the flames of acrimony between Christians. *Ut unum sint* acknowledges the need for a "purification of past memories."⁵³ A common exploration of painful memories offers Christians an opportunity to acknowledge past wrongs, repent for sins committed, seek forgiveness, and transcend the past in keeping with the reconciling spirit of the gospel.

62. This process is not easy. It requires "speaking the truth in love," so that "we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love" (Eph. 4:15-16). In this way, an exploration of a common martyrology offers the possibility for churches to grow together through costly obedience to the reconciling essence of the gospel.

63. The Bose symposium acknowledged that churches continue to differ in particular matters as, for instance, "the intercession of the saints, canonization, veneration of saintly relics, and the practice of indulgences" (par. 4.1). It observed that "churches differ in the ways they commemorate the great witnesses. Many churches do so through story telling, religious instruction, publications, and artistic expression. Some also commemorate witnesses as part of their daily liturgical life" (par. 4.2). Yet Christians are united in being attracted to examples of holy living from all our traditions, and are doing so in a variety of ways—through "ecclesiastical calendars, liturgies, books, catechetical materials, memorials, pilgrimages and celebra-

52. Tamara Grdzeldze and Guido Dotti (eds). (2009) *A Cloud of Witnesses: Opportunities for ecumenical commemoration*. Faith and Order Paper No. 209. WCC Publications, Geneva. "A Cloud of Witnesses: A message to the churches from a symposium at the Monastery of Bose, Par. 1.2.

53. *Ut unum sint*, No. 2.

tions” (par. 4.3). These saints are accessible because of the way that they have evidenced holiness in their very humanity. Their appropriation by all traditions helps break out of defining ourselves over against the other.

64. A popular hymn written in the nineteenth century is titled “For All the Saints.” The fourth verse reads, “O Blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine; Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine. Alleluia!”⁵⁴ In this sense, all are called to holiness through baptism. The saints show us the way. Their holiness in imitation of Christ shines through especially clearly, inviting emulation in an ongoing conversion of heart.

65. One concrete way that the reconciling potential of examples among the saints is being realized is through the creation of ecumenical chapels of martyrs and similar memorials. The spirit of these chapels is one of unity. The chapels provide a welcoming space for all Christians to pray and reflect in the company of women and men who suffered and died as witnesses to their faith. The martyrs come from different continents, cultures, and Christian traditions. Some have been recognized officially. Others live in the collective memory of the faithful.

66. Another example of this growing convergence is the creation of “A Resource for Worship and Personal Devotion” titled *Walking with the Saints*,⁵⁵ developed by Beeson Divinity School—an interdenominational evangelical seminary in the United States. The text begins with Patrick (c. 390-461), “Bishop and Missionary to Ireland,” and concludes with Bill Wallace (1908-1950), “Baptist Surgeon and Missionary.” Invoking the ecumenical martyrs, including those in the twentieth century who died by working for justice (e.g. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Oscar Romero) can be a powerful means of joint prayer and study.

67. These are visible signs of a growing convergence in understanding Christian martyrs as belonging to the whole people of God. They draw the faithful to Christ, and through Christ, toward each other.

V. The Power of Transforming Encounters

“There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.” (1 Cor. 12:4-6)

54. *For All the Saints*, no. 306. (1931, 1935, 1958) *Pilgrim Hymnal*. The Pilgrim Press, Boston.

55. *Walking with the Saints: A resource for worship and personal devotion*, 2007-2008. (2007) Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama.

68. Each of us can think of people in living memory whose lives were transformed by experiences or encounters with Christians of other traditions and who, as a result, became converts to the reconciling aims embodied in the ecumenical movement. When people in the ecumenical movement are asked about how they became actively involved, or about what keeps them going when challenges arise, they often tell stories of their own transforming encounters. “When I became involved with Christians from other traditions, my life was changed. I never will be the same. My faith has been enriched, and that has been a great blessing of God.” Over and over again, Christians offer similar testimonies that speak of a deepening faith and commitment to Christ through such encounters. These human exchanges may occur when Christians from different traditions are thrust together in difficult circumstances, such as being prisoners of war, persecuted minorities, or survivors of natural disasters. They may be brief and providential, or the result of deepening relationships with mentors or friends.

69. When Christians seek to discern God’s will in their life and in the life of their churches, they are drawn to Christ’s prayer “that they may all be one” (John 17:21). This prayer leads believers to confront the sins which contribute to division within and among members of the community, and to become receptive to the working of the Holy Spirit who draws Christians into ever deepening fellowship. In this place of openness and vulnerability, and in conversation with the Triune God, a dialogue of conversion begins. Fears are acknowledged and confronted. Trust increases. Minds and hearts are changed from an exclusive to an inclusive spirit. Through the grace of God, this transformation of persons also contributes to the healing of divisions among churches for the sake of the world. Then the churches, themselves, become increasingly effective witnesses to the reconciling power of the gospel, whether they are calling for more compassionate responses to persons affected by HIV and AIDS, or banding together to support Millennium Development Goals.

70. This conversion to become a reconciling witness in the midst of division may happen when Christ uses a single revelatory encounter. More often, however, such a conversion is a process of engaging in progressively deepening relationships with Christians of other traditions. The believer learns to listen, experiences the pain of past wrongs, the distress of separation. Fear and anxiety ebb; curiosity and interest increase. Understanding and appreciation of the other develop to the point that he

or she has become a friend in Christ. Believers begin to share both the gifts and tasks of mission. Faith matures, deepens, and is enriched.

71. In this way, Christians long to make visible the unity that Christ bestows and which our relationships with one another have intimated, and we are led to a renewed responsibility to cooperate with God and other Christians in the process of reconciliation. The status quo of division is no longer acceptable. We discover that what can be done together far surpasses what can be done separately. Reaching this conclusion itself is a revelation.

72. The Scriptures are full of stories of people who have been transformed and whose vision of the other has been radically changed—either through an encounter with Christ himself, or through the working of the Holy Spirit in human interactions. For example, when the Samaritan woman met Jesus at a well where she came to draw water, the conversation she had with him changed her life and influenced many from her village. At the same time, it opened the eyes of Christ's disciples to see Samaritans, who had been considered aliens, as brother and sisters (John 4:7-42). When the disciples were inclined to push children to the periphery, Jesus brought them into the circle, saying that “it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (Matt. 19:14). In another parable, Jesus responds to the question, “Who is my neighbour?” by using the improbable example of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). And in giving his disciples the great commandment to “love one another as I have loved you,” he uses the language of friendship to describe the relationship of those who emulate his love and bear good fruit that will last (John 15:12-17).

73. Jesus' followers in the early church continued to learn about the nature of *koinonia*—of true communion—through transforming encounters with the risen Christ and with each other. When Peter was challenged by the question of why he was going to uncircumcised and eating with them, he responded “Who was I, that I could hinder God?... Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life” (cf. Acts 11: 17-18). When Paul and Barnabas returned to Jerusalem for a consultation about whether there should be distinctions between Jews and Gentile converts, they “met together to consider” the matter with the apostles and the elders. They had “much debate,” and concluded that circumcision and keeping the law of Moses would not be necessary, because “we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” (Acts. 15: 11) This was a great “ecumenical act” which established an ideal of shared responsibility in the spirit of Christ.

74. This commitment is not without risk and fear, both for individuals and for institutions. The following are examples of fears that surface when people engage in ecumenical relationships: people may be afraid that they do not know their own faith well enough to explain it or, if necessary, to defend it. If Christians come from a tradition that has not always practiced Bible reading among the laity, they may feel intimidated by those who come from traditions that historically have encouraged such a practice. They may fear the unfamiliar, because it pulls them out of their comfort zone. They simply might fear change, and the anxiety that accompanies growth and development. They may be afraid of losing or betraying their confessional identity by considering teachings not their own. They may fear being swallowed up. They may have to relinquish an identity which has been formed by differentiation from the other.

75. The common denominator among all these anxieties is fear. But Christians believe that “[p]erfect love casts out fear” (1 Jn. 4:18). For example, Mother Teresa, fearless in reaching out to people of all backgrounds, once observed: “by blood, I am Albanian; my citizenship is Indian; in my heart, I belong to Christ.” What gives Christians their security is the conviction that their essential identity is rooted in the God known through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

76. Persons who have been challenged and blessed by ecumenical encounters speak about the ways that their prayer life has been enhanced, enlivened, and enriched. They talk about feeling comfortable in a variety of liturgical settings, even though they have one particular tradition which they call home. They know that “to sing hymns is to pray twice,” and they sing with gusto hymns from many traditions. They claim as friends people from various traditions, cultures, races, and places. As a result, they are attentive to the needs of the world with a sense of compassion and justice that has been informed by dialogue with many Christians. They benefit from the teachings and writings of all Christian scholars. They are influenced by all Christian spiritual traditions. In these ways, Christians testify to the power of transforming encounters with brothers and sisters in faith, whether across the road or around the world.

VI. Practical Opportunities for Churches—

Some recommendations to the Parent Bodies

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16-21)

77. The Joint Working Group makes the following practical recommendations to the WCC and PCPCU, and through them, to all the churches, for ways to reclaim and reinforce the spiritual roots of ecumenism. This list is intended to stimulate further creative ideas and actions within and among churches.

A. Opportunities to pray together

- The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has fostered prayer for unity among Christians for over a century. The JWG commends this practice, and affirms initiatives by the international planning committee to offer some materials that meet the needs of children, youth, and young adults. The JWG also recommends that the regional and local organizers continue to take a fresh look at the preparatory materials, and to place more emphasis on ways that participants can engage with each other both in prayer and in conversation.⁵⁶ This could include offering a simple question to stimulate dialogue before or after the service of prayer; shared Bible study; or the possibility that participants could be given an architectural tour of the church building in which the service is being held. These are only examples of possibilities, but they point to the aim of finding ways to link prayer and ecumenical encounter. Churches need to create more spaces to help people share their faith experiences and traditions with each other.

- Churches should find fresh ways to promote regular use of the Ecumenical Prayer cycle, initiated by WCC Faith and Order in Bangalore, 1978. The communications offices of denominations may be helpful in circulating and promoting this initiative.

- Because Christians share a deep love of the Holy Scriptures, the gathering together of Christians from different traditions offers a particular opportunity for the prayerful hearing and studying the word of God. Thus, it should be encouraged. This may occur either during scheduled gatherings, or at particular times during the liturgical year when Christians are brought together for the explicit purpose of shared Bible study, perhaps using a classical method such as *lectio divina*. One occasion that

56. Walter Cardinal Kasper. (2007) *A Handbook for Spiritual Ecumenism*. New City Press, Hyde Park, N.Y.

might be particularly appropriate is Good Friday, when a procession of the way of the cross (*Via Crucis*) could be ecumenical in nature, such as occasionally has occurred when the Pope has invited representatives from other Christian traditions to offer meditations on the sufferings of Jesus, and has invited others to participate in the procession. This presents great opportunities for local collaboration.

- The churches at all levels should be encouraged to take every opportunity to place on the agenda at ecumenical events an exploration of whether prayers for unity are a regular part of worship; the degree to which the faithful are conscious of the ecumenical intentions and implications of these prayers; and how the representatives at these meetings could contribute to a deepening awareness of the practice of prayer for unity in their own settings.

- A growing practice among Christians in many places, which could be emulated, is that of combining prayer with fasting. This is not confined to the Lenten period, when we commemorate Jesus' forty days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness. It follows, rather, the tendency within the early church to spend considerable time in prayer and fasting before jointly undertaking some significant assignment in mission.

B. Opportunities for ecumenical witness

- One of the customs of the twentieth century ecumenical movement has been to send small delegations of Christians representing a variety of traditions on visits to brothers and sisters in Christ to express solidarity, share in particular events, and learn from each other. Hospitality on these occasions is given and received. By placing a human face on the ecumenical movement, Christians are led by the Holy Spirit to understand each other in fresh ways, and to communicate that understanding to their home church and community. The JWG recommends that this custom be commended to the churches for more widespread use in a variety of local and national, as well as international settings. The Roman Catholic custom of holding World Youth Days offers an opportunity to extend this practice to ecumenical youth delegations. The ecumenical rationale for this practice should be made explicit to maximize the value of the visits.

- All persons who have experienced the transforming power of ecumenical encounters should be encouraged to see themselves as witnesses, and should be prepared to offer testimony to the ways in which their experiences with other Christians have been blessings that have deepened their own spiritual roots. Ecumenical leaders often have heard the claim,

“You are never the same after you attend an ecumenical gathering.” Thus, at the conclusion of such meetings, the organizers should be encouraged to invite people to share this good news in their own contexts.

C. Opportunities to offer ecumenical hospitality

- Although existing divisions among churches pose obstacles for couples in inter-church marriages, and for their families, clergy have an opportunity—particularly on occasions such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals—to demonstrate and model hospitality in ways that are consistent with their tradition and do not scandalize the faithful. Theological educators should be attentive to this need as they educate candidates for ministry. Continuing education events for clergy also offer opportunities to help clergy in particular contexts address with compassion the concrete pastoral issues arising from inter-church marriages.

- Another way to pray together and learn about each other is to attend services in the liturgical tradition of ecumenical partners, and thus, to experience how the other prays. To maximize the ecumenical benefits of such experiences, however, preparatory planning by the partnering congregations should occur. In this way, the sending delegation will feel welcomed and can be recognized by the receiving congregation; the purpose of the visit can be presented through an ecumenical lens; adequate support can be provided so the visitors understand and can participate as fully as possible in worship; and post-worship conversation can be offered, so the visitors have an opportunity to engage in dialogue about what they have experienced. Such a format would be appropriate both for youth and adults.

- Increasing numbers of people of all ages, especially but not only from the developed world, are engaging in pilgrimages and educational travel, often in groups. Many are curious about other places, people, cultures, and religious traditions. They are eager to learn. When they return home, they are eager to share their experiences with others. In some cases, Christians respond to invitations from church-related institutions to make visitations—pilgrimages—to particular holy sites, such as those in the Holy Land. (In this and similar situations where churches are under the cross, it might be particularly helpful to offer preparatory briefings about the context and situations they will experience.) These sites often are part of our shared spiritual heritage. In this field, the ecumenical movement has an opportunity to focus on the spiritual roots of ecumenism. Several components would be necessary to achieve this aim:

an intentional effort to involve Christians from different traditions in the travel experience; ecumenically informed and culturally sensitive travel guides; a carefully developed and structured programme; and the specific aim to encounter Christians in the setting they are visiting in ways that promote dialogue and an exchange of spiritual gifts in the Biblical sense that Christians are called to “Receive one another as Christ has received you for the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7). The JWG recommends exploring the possibility of a pilot project with the WCC Palestine Israel Forum and the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People on pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

D. Opportunities for programmatic engagement

- Because the Bible is the authoritative text that Christians hold in common, it provides a mutually enriching basis for shared study, dialogue, reflection, and prayer. This practice is common in ecumenical contexts. Thus, the JWG commends and encourages such practices in a variety of settings. We recognize that churches use different translations. These variations, themselves, can provide opportunities to stimulate fresh insights into the significance of particular texts and the context in which those texts were written, as all churches seek to be faithful to the word of God. The use of the Bible for faith-sharing and prayer as a basis for the practice of piety lends itself to spontaneous, locally initiated encounters.

- All Christians, but particularly those for whom encountering Christians from other churches is a new or courageous experience, may find the opportunity to work together in response to community problems or in joint mission, such as programmes supporting “justice, peace, and creation,” to provide an opening to appreciate the other through shared work and common aims. All too often, however, the potential ecumenical benefit of such encounters is lost unless the sponsoring organizations make a particular effort to help participants understand the religious motivation for their initiatives, and the underlying unity in Christ that they share and that motivates their work. Thus, the JWG encourages organizations to be attentive to opportunities for ecumenical initiatives, and to be intentional about using appropriate occasions.

E. Opportunities in ecumenical education

- Religious leaders are encouraged to be attentive to clergy and lay leaders, particularly the young who have some potential or demonstrated interest in ecumenism, so they can foster their ecumenical exposure. This can be done by including them in ecumenical delegations and by enabling

their participation in ecumenical studies at centres like the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, the Tantur Institute for Ecumenical Studies, the Centro Pro Unione, the Corrymeela Community, and the Irish School of Ecumenics. Existing youth organizations could be helpful in identifying appropriate candidates. Some of these entities include the World Council of Churches' "youth body" ECHOS, the World Student Christian Federation, Syndesmos—the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth, and Catholic Youth Organizations.

- In the same way that Christian scholars share research and perspectives through ecumenical professional organizations, churches also should encourage academic staff to draw intentionally and explicitly on the spiritual roots of ecumenism for their students, and to focus on the importance of the purification of memories. This may be done in a variety of ways: through the study of all Christian spiritual traditions; through promoting participation in ecumenical observances such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; through enabling students to take advantage of scholarship opportunities for ecumenical education at various institutes; through discussions and study days on ecumenical issues; through joint retreats for students; through cross-registration for courses at theological schools; and through the exchange of teachers among seminaries and theological faculties of different traditions.

78. Much thoughtful attention has been given to the spiritual roots of ecumenism among contemporary theologians. Some highlights of this work are listed in the bibliography which follows this text. The Joint Working Group commends them for study and reflection.

VII. Some Resources

This list is intended to be suggestive and illustrative, rather than exhaustive. The selections include reference works, some materials on the topic from key consultations, and a sampling of writings from some key figures in the ecumenical movement.

Anastasios (Yannoulatos), Archbishop. *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian essays on global concerns*. New York, St. Vladimir's Press, 2003. Provides persuasive reasons why Orthodox Christians should be engaged in ecumenical dialogue.

Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch. "Remarks of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on the quest for unity of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches." In *Speaking the Truth in Love—Theological and spiritual exhortations of ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*.

Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis, ed., with foreword by Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury. New York, Fordham University Press, *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Thought*, 2010. Contains three paragraphs on elements contributing to reconciliation: “fervent prayer for unity,” “countless acts of love, forgiveness and mutual respect,” and “theological dialogue... [through which] we seek the guidance of the Spirit who will lead us in all truth.”

Bria, Ion and Dagmar Heller, eds. *Ecumenical Pilgrims: Profiles of pioneers in Christian reconciliation*. Geneva, WCC Publications, 1995. Offers profiles of fifty twentieth century ecumenical witnesses.

Canadian Council of Churches, Faith and Witness Commission. *Liturgies for Christian Unity: The first hundred years, 1908-2008*. Ottawa, Les Editions Novalis, 2007. Offers a wide variety of liturgical resources focusing on the quest to heal divisions among Christian churches.

“Ecumenical Spirituality,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Gordon S. Wakefield. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1983, pp. 125-127. Despite the phrase “ecumenical spirituality,” the actual text offers a brief, yet comprehensive description of the field. It includes Biblical warrants, theological basis (“God is the agent of reconciliation; Christ is the means”), understanding of the church, implications for life together (“conversion or change of heart towards Christians of other churches”), place of renewal, reconciliation, and hope, significance of Christian friendship.

Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: The report from the fourth phase of the international dialogue 1990-1997 between the Roman Catholic Church and some classical Pentecostal churches and Leaders. www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj4/rcpent97.html. See Chapter 5, Nos. 105-109. The section titled “Resolving conflicts in the quest for unity” speaks about the “mutual respect” and the “deeper understanding of the meaning of faith in Christ” which participants in the twenty-five year old dialogue have gained through their relationship with each other.

Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. 14 February 2006, pdf version: www.oikoumene.org/.../final-report-of-the-special-commission-on-orthodox-participation-in-the-wcc.html. See especially section V on common prayer and Appendix A: “A framework for common prayer at WCC gatherings.”

Grdzlidze, Tamara and Guido Dotti, eds. *A Cloud of Witnesses: Opportunities for ecumenical commemoration*. Geneva, WCC Publica-

tions, 2009. Presents results from an international symposium exploring the growing awareness that contemporary witnesses to the faith are a source of inspiration for all churches.

In God's Hands: The ecumenical prayer cycle, in book and website. Produced by the World Council of Churches. www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/prayer-cycle.html. Contains aids for intercessory prayers, "prayers on behalf of and in solidarity with others."

John Paul II. *Ut unum sint* (That All May Be One). Origins, CNS Documentary Service, Vol. 25: No. 4, 8 June 1995. Encyclical "On Commitment to Ecumenism." See especially the section on "Renewal and Conversion," paragraphs 15-17. Par. 15 calls attention to "new horizons for which the Triune God calls us to give thanks" and to "an increased sense of the need for repentance."

Kasper, Walter Cardinal. *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*. Hyde Park, NY, New City Press, 2007. A brief book, suitable for laity and clergy, giving an overview of the fundamentals of spiritual ecumenism.

The Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom. www.orthodoxchristian.info/pages/sermon.htm. Read aloud in every Orthodox parish on the morning of the Great and Holy Pascha Jesus Christ. Noted for its exemplary Christian compassion and spirit of charity.

The Patriarchal and Synodal Encyclical of 1920, "Unto All the Churches Wheresoever They Be." Published in *Guidelines for Orthodox Christians in Ecumenical Relations*, The Revd Robert G. Stephanopoulos, General Secretary, S.C.O.B.A.. The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America, 1973. Generally acknowledged as the formal basis of Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement.

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*. Vatican City, 25 March 1993. Paragraph 25 observes that "ecumenism...reaches into the depths of Christian spirituality."

"Prayer in the Ecumenical Movement," "Spiritual Ecumenism," and "Spirituality in the Ecumenical Movement," in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd Edition*. Nicholas Lossky et al., eds. Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002, pp. 925-928, 1069-1070, 1070-1073. Builds on the concept of discipleship. Defines spirituality as follows: "Spirituality...is the way people take to be Christian, to fulfill their Christian vocation. It embraces ministry and service, relationships, life-style, prayer and response to the political and social environment." Includes sections on definition, histori-

cal context, marks of the church (one, holy, catholic and apostolic), and “implications and new explorations.”

“Prayer and Worship: Towards Conversion of the Heart,” in *The Ecumenical Movement: An anthology of key texts and voices*. Michael Kinamon and Brian C. Cope, eds. Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997, pp. 497-525. Contains excerpts from individual writings (Paul Couturier, Roger Schutz, Lukas Vischer, Desmond Tutu), prayers used in ecumenical contexts (student Christian movements, WCC assembly worship books, Lima liturgy), material from ecumenical gatherings (Fourth and Fifth World Conferences on Faith and Order), and John Paul II’s ecumenical encyclical, *Ut unum sint*.

The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas. *Pastoral Letter on the Occasion of the Third Christian Millennium*. www.scoba.us/resources/third_christian_millennium.html. See paragraphs 115-124, “A Community of Healing and Reconciliation,” which says “The involvement of the Orthodox Church in the quest for reconciliation of Christians and the restoration of the visible unity of the churches is an expression of our faithfulness to the Lord and His Gospel. By seeking the reconciliation of divided Christians, we are in fact sharing in our Lord’s ministry of reconciliation.”

Unitatis Redintegratio, Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism, Chapter II, “The Practice of Ecumenism.” Provides the basis for the Vatican II understanding of the spiritual roots of ecumenism. A frequently quoted text: “There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart.” Also worthy of note: “Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth.” And “Let all Christ’s faithful remember that the more purely they strive to live according to the gospel, the more they are fostering and even practicing Christian unity.”