



# Information Service

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EDITOR

Reverend Father Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP

ADDRESS FOR ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity  
VA – 00120 Vatican City

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# POPE FRANCIS AND ECUMENISM

*January – June 2015*

## AUDIENCES WITH ECUMENICAL DELEGATIONS

### TO AN ECUMENICAL DELEGATION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND

22 January 2015

*“A shared Christian witness is very much needed in the face of the mistrust, insecurity, persecution, pain and suffering experienced so widely in today’s world”. Pope Francis said this on Thursday, 22 January, to an ecumenical delegation of the Lutheran Church of Finland, which came to Rome on an annual pilgrimage on the Feast of their patron St Henrik, also coinciding with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Here below we publish the Pope’s text followed by the address of H.E. Björn Vikström, Bishop of Porvoo.*

#### ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Dear Bishops, Dear Friends,

It is with joy that I welcome you, on the occasion of your annual ecumenical pilgrimage to Rome to celebrate the feast of Saint Henrik, the patron of your country. This annual event has proven to be a truly spiritual and ecumenical meeting between Catholics and Lutherans, a tradition dating back thirty years.

Saint Pope John Paul II addressed the members of the first Finnish ecumenical delegation which had come to Rome thirty years ago in these words: “The fact that you come here together is itself a witness to the importance of efforts for unity. The fact that you pray together is a witness to our belief that only through the grace of God can that unity be achieved. The fact that you recite the Creed together is a witness to the one common faith of the whole of Christianity”. At that time, the first important steps had already been taken on a common ecumenical journey towards full, visible unity of the Christians. In these intervening years much has been done and, I am certain, will continue to be done in Finland to make “the partial communion existing between Christians grow toward full communion in truth and charity” (John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 14).

Your visit comes within the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year our reflection is based on Christ’s words to the Samaritan woman at the well: «Give me to drink» (*Jn* 4:1-42). We are reminded that the source of all grace is the Lord himself, and that his

gifts transform those who receive them, making them witnesses to the true life that is in him alone (cf. *Jn* 4:39). As the Gospel tells us, many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony. As you, Bishop Vikstrom, have said, there is so much that Catholics and Lutherans can do together to bear witness to God’s mercy in our societies. A shared Christian witness is very much needed in the face of the mistrust, insecurity, persecution, pain and suffering experienced so widely in today’s world.

This common witness can be sustained and encouraged by progress in theological dialogue between the Churches. The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, which was solemnly signed some fifteen years ago between the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, can produce further fruits of reconciliation and cooperation between us. The Nordic Lutheran–Catholic dialogue in Finland and Sweden, under the related theme *Justification in the Life of the Church*, has been reflecting on important questions deriving from the *Joint Declaration*. Let us hope that further convergence will emerge from that dialogue on the concept of the Church, the sign and instrument of the salvation brought to us in Jesus Christ.

It is my prayer that your visit to Rome will contribute to strengthening further the ecumenical relations between Lutherans and Catholics in Finland, which have been so positive for many years. May the Lord send upon us the Spirit of truth, to guide us towards ever greater love and unity.

ORE, 30 January 2015

#### ADDRESS OF BISHOP BJÖRN VIKSTRÖM

Your Holiness, and your Excellences and Eminences!

It’s a great honor and joy for me to have been given this opportunity to bring You greetings from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, and from my own diocese, the diocese of Porvoo. Porvoo is a small town in the south of Finland, who, mostly by coincidence, has given the name to the so called Porvoo-agreement between, among others, the Scandinavian Lutheran churches and the Anglican church. The Diocese of Porvoo is the diocese for the Swedish speaking minority in the Evangelical Lutheran church of Finland.

It has been a tradition for exactly 30 years that the bishop of the Catholic diocese in Finland and one of the Lutheran bishops come here to Rome to celebrate together the memory of St Henrik, the patron saint of Finland. As we move closer to the commemoration of the 500 years of the Lutheran

\* Sources of the texts are designated as follows: OR: *L’Osservatore Romano*, daily edition in Italian; ORE: *L’Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English. If texts come from sources other than *L’Osservatore Romano*, this will be noted. When translation is undertaken by the *Information Service* it is indicated by the abbreviation: *IS*.

reformation, it is more important than ever to underscore our common history and our common calling as Roman-Catholic and Lutheran sisters and brothers in faith.

I would also like to express my deep admiration for the way that You, Your Holiness Pope Francis, have managed to fulfil your difficult and important calling as the leader of the largest Christian Church. Especially I would like to thank You for underscoring our calling as Christians to care for those who are poor or threatened by war, oppression or sickness. In a world threatened by social injustices, war and environmental degradation, we must remember that our Lord Jesus Christ very strongly identified himself with those who do not see any better future for themselves.

By Your humble and trustworthy example You have shown what it means to be a leader in a Christian setting, as Jesus Christ has said (in Marc 10:42-45): "...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Your example is a challenge to me and to everybody else who is called to be a leader in a Christian Church. As an organization and a community on earth, every Church and denomination needs structures, leadership, decision makers and responsible financial planning. But we mustn't forget that the reason why our Lord founded his Church was not only that people should find peace through their faith in God, but also that the sick should be healed, the oppressed and imprisoned should be released, the poor and hungry should be fed, and those who mourn should get comfort. I hope and pray that we Christians more and more should work together and inspire each other, so that the Gospel would be preached everywhere both by words and by deeds, making the grace and love of God visible on earth. When we work together as branches on the same tree we can bring light and hope into the lives of people in Finland, in Rome and around the world.

TO THE JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR  
THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC  
CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX  
CHURCHES

*30 January 2015*

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Dear Brothers in Christ,

With great joy I welcome you, the members of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Through you, I offer fraternal greetings to my venerable brothers, the heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. I thank His

Eminence Anba Bishoy, Co-President of the Commission, for his kind words.

It is gratifying to reflect on the work of your Commission, which began in January 2003 as a joint initiative of the ecclesiastical authorities of the family of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. In the last ten years the Commission has examined from an historical perspective the ways in which the Churches expressed their communion in the early centuries, and what this can mean for our pursuit of communion today. In the course of this week's meeting you have also embarked upon a deeper examination of your work on the nature of the sacraments, and of baptism in particular. I express my hope that this work will bear rich fruit for our common theological research and help us to experience ever more fully our fraternal friendship.

With deep appreciation I recall the inspiring commitment to dialogue shown by His Holiness Ignatius Zakka Iwas, Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East, who died this past year. Together with you and his own clergy and faithful, I pray for the eternal rest of this dedicated servant of God.

At this time we especially feel dismay and deep sadness at what is happening in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Syria. I think of all those living in the region, including our Christian brothers and sisters, and many minorities, who are experiencing the effects of a prolonged and painful conflict. I join you in praying for a negotiated solution and in imploring God's goodness and mercy upon all those affected by this immense tragedy. All Christians are called to work together, in mutual acceptance and trust, in order to serve the cause of peace and justice. May the intercession and example of the many martyrs and saints who have borne courageous witness to Christ in all our Churches sustain and strengthen you and your Christian communities.

Dear brothers, I thank you for your visit. Upon you and your ministry I invoke the Lord's blessing and the maternal protection of Mary Most Holy. Please pray for me.

ORE, 6 February 2015

TO REVEREND JOHN P. CHALMERS, MODERATOR OF  
THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

*16 February 2015*

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Dear Moderator, Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am happy to have this opportunity to meet this delegation from the Church of Scotland, and to reaffirm our common commitment to the Gospel and to the cause of Christian unity.

Scotland's rich cultural and historical traditions have been shaped by outstanding saintly witnesses to Christ from various confessions. The present state of ecumenical relations in Scotland clearly shows that what we, as Christians, hold in common is greater than all that divides us. On this basis the Lord is calling us to seek ever more effective ways to overcome old prejudices and to find new forms of understanding and cooperation.

It is heartening for me to see that the good relations between the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church have borne fruit in shared reflection on the challenges posed by contemporary society, and that in many cases we are able to speak with one voice on issues which deeply affect the lives of all Christians. In our globalized and often confused world, a common Christian witness is a necessary requisite for the effectiveness of our efforts to evangelize.

We are pilgrims and we journey alongside one another. We need to learn to have "sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God's face" (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 244).

Faith and Christian witness are currently confronted by such great challenges that only by working together will we be able effectively to serve the human family and enable the light of Christ to reach every dark corner of our hearts and of our world. May the journey of reconciliation and peace between our communities continue to draw us closer, so that, prompted by the Holy Spirit, we may bring life to all, and bring it in abundance (cf. *Jn* 10:10).

I would now like to turn to my native tongue to express feelings of profound sorrow. Today I read about the execution of those twenty-one or twenty-two Coptic Christians. Their only words were: "Jesus, help me!". They were killed simply for the fact that they were Christians. You, my brother, in your words referred to what is happening in the land of Jesus. The blood of our Christian brothers and sisters is a testimony which cries out to be heard. It makes no difference whether they be Catholics, Orthodox, Copts or Protestants. They are Christians! Their blood is one and the same. Their blood confesses Christ. As we recall these brothers who died only because they confessed Christ, I ask that we encourage each another to go forward with this ecumenism which is giving us strength, the ecumenism of blood. The martyrs belong to all Christians.

Let us pray for one another, and continue to advance in the way of wisdom, good will, strength and peace.

ORE, 20 February 2015

ADDRESS OF THE RIGHT REVEREND JOHN CHALMERS, MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Your Holiness, I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and I bring you the greetings and the prayers of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. We rejoice that relations between our two Churches have never been more cordial and productive. We have travelled a significant journey.

It is now inconceivable that we in Scotland would commemorate sensitive periods of our history without acknowledging the pain of our separation; we know that there is more to be gained from drawing on each other's understanding, than drawing lines on the map of history that we dare not cross.

Such attitudes have blighted our culture in the past, but we are now seeing substantial change for the good, most significantly at local level where ministers and priests have forged new friendships and people's attitudes have changed as they have first shared their stories and then shared their faith.

Through community arts, theatre and schools projects, people have come to see each other in a new light. The benefits have not just been for our churches, but for the wider community of Scotland. Our dialogue must deepen and we must find ways of working toward deeper fellowship and communion.

Now, however, we are facing challenges on the world stage. Our faiths, Catholic and Reformed, must take a lead in teaching tolerance and in promoting non-violent means of dealing with our differences. This includes the need for new levels of inter-faith dialogue, greater understanding of the principles and processes of peace-making and real investment in the hard talk of peace rather than the hardware of war. This is a matter of urgency across the world, but of particular importance in the land of our Saviour's birth and we are at one in desiring peace with justice for the people of Israel, Palestine and the Occupied Territories.

In a world where so many are suffering for their faith and where belief in God is often scorned we need to become more adept at standing up for our belief. Paul's advice to Timothy, *to study to present himself as one who correctly handles the word of truth*,<sup>1</sup> has a new and more poignant meaning in the context of strident modern day scepticism.

Your Holiness, I know that we share a deep concern for the way in which we use and abuse the resources of the earth. *The earth is the Lord's and everything that is in it*,<sup>2</sup> and yet we treat it as if it was some disposable asset. Climate Change is perhaps the most pressing issue in human history, its effects are most keenly experienced by the poorest of the world's poor; so we await with eagerness your Encyclical Letter on Ecology, and ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, I hope that it may galvanise

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1. 2 Timothy 2:15

2. Psalms 24:1

religious leaders across the world to make this matter one which unites us in common purpose.

The prayers of the Church of Scotland are with your people in Scotland; they have travelled a difficult journey in these last few years and we share a pastoral concern for each one of your flock. It would be a wonderful boost to their morale and the morale of all people of faith in Scotland if, soon, you were able to make a pastoral visit to a country that would surely welcome you with open arms.

We continue to pray that God will bless and use you as God is so obviously using you today.

#### ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

30 April 2015

*“There is a strong bond that already unites us: it is the testimony of Christians victims of persecution and violence. The blood of these martyrs will nourish a new era of ecumenical commitment”. With these words the Holy Father addressed the members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, whom he received on Thursday, 30 April. The following is the address delivered by the Pope.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is a pleasure to be with you, the members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. In these days you are gathered for a new session of your dialogue, which is now studying the relationship between the universal Church and the local Church, with particular reference to processes for discussions and decision making regarding moral and ethical questions. I cordially welcome you and wish you a successful meeting.

Your dialogue is the result of the historic meeting in 1966 between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey, which gave rise to the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. On that occasion, they both prayed with hope for “a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, [would] lead to that unity in truth for which Christ prayed” (*The Common Declaration by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Michael Ramsey*, Rome, 24 March 1966).

We have not yet reached that goal, but we are convinced that the Holy Spirit continues to move us in that direction, notwithstanding new difficulties and challenges. Your presence here today is an indication of how the shared tradition of faith and history between Anglicans and Catholics can inspire and sustain our efforts to overcome the obstacles to full communion. Though we are fully aware of the seriousness of the challenges ahead, we can still realistically trust that together great progress will be made.

Shortly you will publish five jointly agreed statements of the second phase of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, with commentaries and responses. I offer my congratulations for this work. This reminds us that ecumenical relations and dialogue are not secondary elements of the life of the Churches. The cause of unity is not an optional undertaking and the differences which divide us must not be seen as inevitable. Some wish that, after fifty years, greater progress towards unity would have been achieved. Despite difficulties, we must not lose heart, but we must trust even more in the power of the Holy Spirit, who can heal and reconcile us, and accomplish what humanly does not seem possible.

There is a strong bond that already unites us which goes beyond all divisions: it is the testimony of Christians from different Churches and traditions, victims of persecution and violence simply because of the faith they profess. And not only now, that there are many of them: I think also of the martyrs of Uganda, half Catholics and half Anglicans. The blood of these martyrs will nourish a new era of ecumenical commitment, a fervent desire to fulfill the last will and testament of the Lord: that all may be one (cf. *Jn 17:21*). The witness by these our brothers and sisters demands that we live in harmony with the Gospel and that we strive with determination to fulfill the Lord's will for his Church. Today the world urgently needs the common, joyful witness of Christians, from the defence of life and human dignity to the promotion of justice and peace.

Together let us invoke the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to be able to respond courageously to the signs of the times which are calling all Christians to unity and common witness. May the Holy Spirit abundantly inspire your work. Many thanks for your service.

ORE, 8 May 2015

#### AUDIENCE WITH A DELEGATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF SWEDEN

4 May 2015

*Christians of other Churches and confessions are not “adversaries” or “competitors” but “brothers and sisters in Christ”. Pope Francis recalled this when he received in audience Dr Antje Jackelén, Archbishop of Uppsala, with a Delegation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden.*

#### ADDRESS OF THE MOST REVEREND DR ANTJE JACKELÉN, ARCHBISHOP OF UPPSALA

Your Holiness,  
Your Eminences and Excellencies,

It is an honor and a joy for me to bring you greetings from the Church of Sweden.

Since Vatican II, there have been numerous contacts between the Vatican and the Church of

Sweden. Last spring, it was a special honor to host ecumenical vespers in Lund Cathedral, in memory of the 25th anniversary of the visit of Pope John Paul II to Sweden and other Nordic countries. Also, in my previous capacity as bishop of Lund, I had the pleasure of meeting Rev. Dr Anders Ruuth, and hearing about his experiences from Argentina.

Your Holiness, it was with great joy that I, as a council member of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), witnessed the presentation of the document *From Conflict to Communion* (FCTC)<sup>1</sup> two years ago – the result of nearly five decades of dialogue between Catholics and Lutherans. For the first time since the 16th century, we now have a shared account of reformation history as well as shared commitments for the future.

With *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ)<sup>2</sup> from 1999 and *From Conflict to Communion* from 2013 we have reason to highlight some solid ecumenical developments between Catholics and Lutherans. They may not always capture the positive imagination of all experts, but they do inspire the ecumenical hopes and dreams of people at parish level, especially those families longing to go to the Lord's Table together. We share experiences of mutual condemnation, division and hate, but also of life-giving reconciliation and of lay and grassroots engagements that eagerly anticipate the realities yet to be confirmed by official dialogue.

*Koinonia*, communion, is “learning by doing” in response to the needs of the world. We have been learning – sometimes the hard way – that it is about sharing the richness of traditions rather than building fences around one's own turf; that it is about empowerment rather than about power.

It adds to my joy that the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church will jointly host an ecumenical event in the fall of 2016, in anticipation of the 500th Reformation anniversary in 2017. Like our fellow churches in the LWF, the Church of Sweden is dedicated to ecumenical accountability and global perspectives. We are eager to contribute to a commemoration in common thanksgiving for the Gospel and repentance for the pain that conflict and division have caused, as well as in joint commitment to common witness. As the fifth imperative in *From Conflict to Communion* urges us: “Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world” (FCTC 243).

And indeed, the world is crying out for credible words of hope and for the works of love that the Gospel of Jesus Christ compels us to carry out, together with people of good will from many traditions. In these days, expectations that the Church

be an agent of peace and justice are both high and demanding.

Your Holiness has sent waves of hope throughout the world by speaking out on issues of poverty, marginalization and equality – most recently on the scandal of the gulf between wages for men and women. I have been encouraged by people in Sweden to bring Your Holiness a word of gratitude from the LGBTQ community: some of what you have said has evoked a small sense of reconciliation and of dawning acceptance.

Children and women are those who suffer the most from injustice, food and water stress, violence, trafficking and climate change. However, experience proves that women also are those who bring about many of the changes needed, once they are given the rights to education and self-determination. It is necessary not only to speak about and for women, but to speak *with* them, and to enable their leadership skills to contribute to the flourishing of church and society.

Freedom of religion or belief, social justice, protection of whistleblowers and minorities – the list of challenges for church leaders is long, as it is for the international community. We are grieved and angered by the tragic decline of the Christian presence in the Middle East. The need for humanitarian aid to the victims of wars and catastrophes continues.

Moreover, we are challenged by the spiritual poverty that otherwise well-to-do societies are facing. Secularization leaves us with mixed feelings: on the one hand, it is a result of the success of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because, when “the world” is challenging us to be braver in affirming human freedom and dignity, it is challenging us with the fruits of our own preaching – which is good. On the other hand, secularization has undermined the knowledge and practice of faith, leaving especially young people without access to the spiritual resources offered by the church. Thus, loneliness, the haunting feeling of never being fully accepted, and the lack of courage to fully face life's ups and downs are threats to the spiritual health of whole generations.

Insecurity provides a fertile soil for xenophobia and intolerance, a growing problem in Europe. It also keeps us from the urgent necessity to do two things at the same time, such as being involved in interreligious dialogue in order to strengthen social cohesion in diverse cities, while at the same time resisting violence in the name of religion.

The tragedies at the doorsteps of Europe continue. Thousands of people dying in *Mare nostrum*, our Mediterranean: a shame for Europe! Migration and millions of refugees and IDPs will continue to put our values and our ability to act to the test.

Your coming encyclical on climate will be welcomed by religious leaders, NGOs and decision makers around the world. Climate change probably is the greatest common challenge ever faced by humankind. Now it is time for science, politics, business, culture and religion – everything that is an

1. <https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/From%20Conflict%20to%20Communion.pdf>

2. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_31101999\\_cath-luth-joint-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html)

expression of human dignity – to work together. Climate is about science and faith, about justice and lifestyle, welfare and interdependence, sin and reconciliation, about humans as “created co-creators”, about revisiting anthropocentric world views and about hope. The world looks to religious leaders, since religions provide a cultural integrity, a spiritual depth and a moral force often lacking in purely secular approaches.

A year ago, the bishops of the Church of Sweden published a so-called *Bishop's Letter About the Climate*.<sup>3</sup> Last fall, the Church of Sweden completed its divestment process and its financial portfolio is now completely free from fossil fuel companies. We hope many others will follow.

Today's challenges are no longer defined by local or national borders. They are glocal, both global and local. Borders are no longer what they used to be. That should not scare us. Because at the center of Christianity, there is a God crossing the most dramatic border of all: the one between divine and human. Transgression of borders always entails “Berührungsangst”, the anxiety of touching and being touched by what is different, strange, other. As people of faith, we can live with these anxieties, remaining centered in the Gospel of the incarnated Christ and open, very much open, to the world. And so, united in prayer for God's creation and the church of Jesus Christ, we say with confidence: *Veni Creator Spiritus, Come Creator Spirit*.

#### ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Dear Dr Jackelén, dear sister, Dear friends,

I greet you cordially and I thank you for your kind words. Last year, with gratitude to God, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which is still for us the fundamental point of reference for the ecumenical efforts of the Catholic Church. This document made clear that ecumenism was henceforth to become a priority. It invited all Catholics to undertake the way of unity, in recognition of the signs of the times, so that division among Christians could be overcome. Such division is not only in opposition to the will of Christ, but is indeed a scandal in the world, as it damages the most sacred of duties: the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.

In speaking of the “seamless robe of Christ” (No. 13), the Decree expressed deep respect for and appreciation of our separated brethren, to whom, in our daily lives, we risk paying too little attention. They should not be perceived as adversaries or competitors, but rather recognized for what they are: brothers and sisters in faith.

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3. <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/omoss/biskoparnas-brev-om-klimatet>

Catholics and Lutherans need to seek and promote unity in their dioceses, parishes and communities across the whole world. On the way towards full and visible unity in the faith, in sacramental life and in ecclesial ministry there remains much work still to be done. But we can be certain that the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, will be always the light and strength of spiritual ecumenism and theological dialogue.

With appreciation I wish also to recall the recent document entitled *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*, published by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity. It is with heartfelt hope that this initiative – with the help of God and through our cooperation with him and among ourselves – may encourage further steps in the path towards unity.

The call to unity as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ carries with it the urgent summons to a common commitment to charity in favour of all those in the world who suffer as a result of extreme poverty and violence; they especially need our mercy. The witness of our persecuted brothers and sisters, in particular, stirs us to grow in fraternal communion.

Urgent also is the vital issue of the dignity of human life, which is always to be respected. So, too, are issues concerning the family, marriage and sexuality. These cannot be suppressed or ignored, simply for fear of risking the ecumenical consensus already achieved. It would indeed be sad if in these important matters new confessional differences were to arise.

Dear friends, I thank you again for your visit. In the hope that Lutheran-Catholic collaboration will be strengthened, I pray that the Lord may bless each of you abundantly, as well as your communities.

I would like, in addition, to express my gratitude for two things. First of all, I wish to thank the Swedish Lutheran Church for welcoming so many South American migrants in the time of the dictatorships. This fraternal welcome made it possible to raise families. In the second place, I wish to thank you for the delicacy, dear sister, with which you mentioned my good friend, Pastor Anders Root; I shared the Chair of Spiritual Theology with him, and he helped me a great deal in my own spiritual life. Thank you.

ORE, 8 May 2015

#### ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO A DELEGATION FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC ON THE OCCASION OF THE 600<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF JAN HUS

15 June 2015

*Continue to study “the person and activity of Jan Hus”, “who for a long time was the subject of contention among Christians, while today he has become a reason for dialogue”. The Pope said this to*

*representatives of the Church in the Czech Republic, of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church and of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren on Monday, 15 June, who were participating in the meeting on the sixth centenary of Hus' death. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's address, which was given in Italian.*

Dear Friends,

I welcome you, distinguished representatives of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church and of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, who have come to Rome to celebrate a Liturgy of Reconciliation at the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Reformer Jan Hus. I address a cordial greeting to Cardinal Miloslav Vlk.

This meeting gives us the opportunity to renew and deepen the relations between our communities. In obedience to the will of the Lord Jesus, who on the eve of his Passion and death prayed to the Father for the unity of his disciples (cf. Jn 17:21), we have the duty to promote increasing mutual knowledge and active collaboration. Many disputes of the past beg to be revisited in the light of the new context in which we live, and agreements and concurrences will only be reached if we address the traditional issues of conflict in a new perspective. Above all, we cannot forget that our shared profession of faith in God the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, in which we were baptized, already unites us in bonds of genuine fraternity.

Six centuries have passed since the day that the renowned preacher and Rector of the University of Prague, Jan Hus, died tragically. Previously in 1999, St John Paul II, in an intervening international symposium dedicated to this memorable figure, expressed his "profound regret for the cruel death inflicted [on him]," and numbered him among the Reformers of the Church. In light of this, study must continue on the life and work of Jan Hus, who for a long time was the subject of contention among Christians, while today he has become a reason for dialogue. This research, carried out without ideological bias, will be an important service to the historical truth, to all Christians and to the whole society, even beyond the boundaries of your Nation.

The Second Vatican Council stated: the "renewal of the Church", which "essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling ... Church renewal therefore has notable ecumenical importance" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6). Today, in particular, the need for a new evangelization of so many men and women that seem indifferent to the joyful news of the Gospel, renders urgent the duty of renewal of every ecclesial structure, in order to foster the positive response from all those to whom Jesus offers his friendship (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 27). And the visible communion among Christians will surely render the proclamation more credible.

Responding to Christ's call to continuous conversion, of which we are all in need, we can move forward together on the path of reconciliation and peace. Along this path we learn, by the grace of God, to recognize one another as friends and to consider others' motivations in the best possible light. Through this connection, I hope the bond of friendship will be fostered also at the level of the local and parish communities.

With these sentiments, I unite myself spiritually to the Penitential Liturgy that you will celebrate here in Rome. May God, rich in mercy, grant us the grace to acknowledge ourselves all as sinners and to be able to forgive one another; I assure you of my prayer and I ask all of you, please, to pray for me and for my ministry. Thank you.

ORE, 3 July 2015

TO A GROUP OF EVANGELICALS AND PENTECOSTALS

7 May 2015

*A spiritual ecumenism unites an increasing number of Christians. An ecumenism of blood ties Christians together from various parts of the world where they are persecuted. On Thursday, 7 May a group of 100 Pentecostals and Evangelicals underlined this in a meeting with Pope Francis in a conference room adjoining the Paul VI Audience Hall. Led by Pastor Giovanni Traettino, the group included people from Europe, the Americas and Africa. In an atmosphere of personal friendship, the meeting was characterized by a cordial exchange of experiences of faith with the growing awareness of the need to walk together. Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, was present at the meeting which concluded with a common prayer.*

ORE, 15 May 2015

## MESSAGES OF POPE FRANCIS

MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS TO COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCH TAWADROS II

10 May 2015

*"Today more than ever we are united by the ecumenism of blood, which further encourages us on the path towards peace and reconciliation". Pope Francis affirmed this in a message dated Sunday, 10 May, to the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch Tawadros II on the occasion of the second anniversary of their meeting in the Vatican in 2013 and 40 years after that of Paul VI and Shenouda III. As Francis said the next day at Mass at Domus Sanctæ Marthæ, he also telephoned Tawadros Sunday afternoon. They had a long and cordial conversation, said Fr Federico Lombardi, "focusing on two main themes: the will to continue their common commitment to Christian unity and the proposal of an accord to celebrate Easter on the same day". The following is the text of the papal message.*

To His Holiness Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and  
Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark

As the second anniversary of our fraternal meeting in Rome is at hand, I wish to express to Your Holiness my prayerful best wishes for your well-being, as well as my appreciation for the spiritual bonds which unite the See of Peter and the See of Mark.

Today more than ever we are united by the ecumenism of blood, which further encourages us on the path towards peace and reconciliation. I assure you and the Christian community in Egypt and throughout the Middle East of my unceasing prayer, and I remember in particular the Coptic faithful recently martyred for their Christian faith. May the Lord welcome them into his Kingdom.

With thanksgiving to the Lord, I recall our advances along the path of friendship, united as we are by one baptism. Though our communion is yet imperfect, what we have in common is greater than what divides us. May we persevere on our journey to full communion, and grow in love and understanding.

It is particularly encouraging that the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches has recently finalized the document “The Exercise of Communion in the Life of the Early Church and its Implications for our Search for Communion Today”. I am certain that Your Holiness shares my hope that this vital dialogue will carry on and bear abundant fruit. I am especially grateful for the willingness of the Patriarchate of the See of Saint Mark to hold the next meeting of the Commission in Cairo.

Christians throughout the world are facing similar challenges, which require us to work together in confronting these issues. I appreciate your appointment last year of a delegate to participate in the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops dedicated to the family. It is my hope that our cooperation in this area may continue, especially in addressing matters related to mixed marriages.

With these sentiments, and recalling what has rightly become known as the day of friendship between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church, I exchange with Your Holiness a fraternal embrace in Christ the Lord.

From the Vatican, 10 May 2015

FRANCIS

ORE, 15 May 2015

VIDEO MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE DAY OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

23 May 2015

*A day to promote Christian unity organized by the Diocese of Phoenix, USA, in collaboration with evangelical pastors of the Pentecostal community, was held on Saturday 23 May. Also*

*present was Giovanni Traettino, whom the Pope knows from his days in Buenos Aires. The Holy Father sent a video message for the event, and the following is a translation of the Pope’s message delivered in Spanish.*

Brothers and sisters, may the peace of Christ be with you.

Forgive me if I speak in Spanish, but my English isn’t good enough for me to express myself properly. I speak in Spanish but, above all, I speak in the language of the heart.

I have with me the invitation you sent me for this celebration of Christian Unity, this day of reconciliation. And I wish to join you from here. “Father, may we be one so that the world may believe you sent me”. This is the slogan, the theme of the meeting: Christ’s prayer to the Father for the grace of unity.

Today, Saturday May 23<sup>rd</sup>, from 9 in the morning until 5 in the afternoon, I will be with you spiritually and with all my heart. We will search together, we will pray together, for the grace of unity. The unity that is budding among us is that unity which begins under the seal of the one Baptism we have all received. It is the unity we are seeking along a common path. It is the spiritual unity of prayer for one another. It is the unity of our common labour on behalf of our brothers and sisters, and all those who believe in the sovereignty of Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, division is a wound in the body of the Church of Christ. And we do not want this wound to remain open. Division is the work of the Father of Lies, the Father of Discord, who does everything possible to keep us divided.

Together today, I here in Rome and you over there, we will ask our Father to send the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and to give us the grace to be one, “so that the world may believe”. I feel like saying something that may sound controversial, or even heretical, perhaps. But there is someone who “knows” that, despite our differences, we are one. It is he who is persecuting us. It is he who is persecuting Christians today, he who is anointing us with (the blood of) martyrdom. He knows that Christians are disciples of Christ: that they are one, that they are brothers! He doesn’t care if they are Evangelicals, or Orthodox, Lutherans, Catholics or Apostolic...he doesn’t care! They are Christians. And that blood (of martyrdom) unites. Today, dear brothers and sisters, we are living an “ecumenism of blood”. This must encourage us to do what we are doing today: to pray, to dialogue together, to shorten the distance between us, to strengthen our bonds of brotherhood.

I am convinced it won’t be theologians who bring about unity among us. Theologians help us, the science of the theologians will assist us, but if we hope that theologians will agree with one another, we will reach unity the day after Judgement Day. The Holy Spirit brings about unity. Theologians are helpful, but

most helpful is the goodwill of us all who are on this journey with our hearts open to the Holy Spirit!

In all humility, I join you as just another participant on this day of prayer, friendship, closeness and reflection. In the certainty that we have one Lord: Jesus is the Lord. In the certainty that this Lord is alive: Jesus is alive, the Lord lives in each one of us. In the certainty that He has sent the Spirit He promised us so that this “harmony” among all His disciples might be realised.

Dear brothers and sisters, I greet you warmly, with an embrace. I pray for you. I pray with you. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Because I need your prayers in order to be faithful to what the Lord wants from my Ministry.

God bless you. May God bless us all.

ORE, 29 May 2015

## **APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF POPE FRANCIS TO SARAJEVO (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA)**

6 June 2015

### ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS MEETING

*Pope Francis met with heads of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish Communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Saturday afternoon, 6 June, at the Franciscan International Study Centre. After the greeting of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Sarajevo and that of three representatives of religions, the Pope delivered the following address.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to take part in this meeting, which brings together representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s religious confessions. I offer cordial greetings to each one of you and to your communities, and I thank each of those who offered the kind words that we have just heard. Your words have edified me.

Today’s meeting is a sign of our shared desire for fraternity and peace; it is a testimony to the friendship and cooperation that has been developing over the years and which you already experience daily. To be present here today is already a “message” of that dialogue which everyone seeks and strives for.

I wish especially to recall one of the fruits of this desire for encounter and reconciliation, namely, the establishment in 1997 of a local Council for Interreligious Dialogue, which brings together Muslims, Christians and Jews. I am pleased by the work which this Council does to promote dialogue, coordinate common initiatives and develop relations with State Authorities. Your work in this region is immensely important, particularly in Sarajevo, which stands at the crossroads of peoples and cultures. Here, on the one hand, diversity constitutes a great resource

which has contributed to the social, cultural and spiritual development of this region, while, on the other, it has also been the cause of painful rifts and bloody wars.

It is not by chance that the birth of the Council for Interreligious Dialogue and other valuable initiatives in the area of interreligious and ecumenical work came about at the end of the war, in response to the need for reconciliation and rebuilding a society torn apart by conflict. Interreligious dialogue here, as in every part of the world, is an indispensable condition for peace, and for this reason is a duty for all believers (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 250).

Interreligious dialogue, before being a discussion of the main themes of faith, is a “conversation about human existence” (ibid.). This conversation shares the experiences of daily life in all its concreteness, with its joys and sufferings, its struggles and hopes; it takes on shared responsibilities; it plans a better future for all. We learn to live together, respecting each other’s differences freely; we know and accept one another’s identity. Through dialogue, a spirit of fraternity is recognized and developed, which unites and favours the promotion of moral values, justice, freedom and peace. Dialogue is a school of humanity and a builder of unity, which helps to build a society founded on tolerance and mutual respect.

For this reason, interreligious dialogue cannot be limited merely to the few, to leaders of religious communities, but must also extend as far as possible to all believers, engaging the different sectors of civil society. Particular attention must be paid to young men and women who are called to build the future of this country. It is always worth remembering, however, that for dialogue to be authentic and effective, it presupposes a solid identity: without an established identity, dialogue is of no use or even harmful. I say this with the young in mind, but it applies to everyone. I sincerely appreciate all that you have managed to accomplish up to this point and I encourage each of you in your efforts for the cause of peace of which you, as religious leaders, are the first guardians here in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I assure you that the Catholic Church will continue to offer her full support and willingness to help.

We are all aware that there is a long way yet to go. Let us not be discouraged, however, by the difficulties, but rather continue with perseverance along the way of forgiveness and reconciliation. While we seek to recall the past with honesty, thereby learning the lessons of history, we must also avoid lamentation and recrimination, letting ourselves instead be purified by God who gives us the present and the future: he is our future, he is the ultimate source of peace.

This city, which in the recent past sadly became a symbol of war and destruction, this Jerusalem of Europe, today, with its variety of peoples, cultures and religions, can become again a sign of unity, a place in which diversity does not represent a threat but rather a resource, an opportunity to grow together. In a world

unfortunately rent by conflicts, this land can become a message: attesting that it is possible to live together side by side, in diversity but rooted in a common humanity, building together a future of peace and brotherhood. You can live life being a peacemaker!

I am grateful to you all for your presence and for the prayers which you will, of your goodness, offer for my ministry. For my part, I assure you that I will pray for you, for your communities, from my heart I will pray. May the Lord bless us all.

Now I invite you to say this prayer: to the Eternal, One and True Living God, to the Merciful God.

#### PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God,  
good and merciful Father;  
Creator of heaven and earth, of all that is visible and invisible;  
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,  
King and Lord of the past, of the present and of the future;  
sole judge of every man and woman,  
who reward your faithful with eternal glory!  
We, the descendants of Abraham according to our faith in you, the one God,  
Jews, Christians and Muslims,  
humbly stand before you  
and with trust we pray to you  
for this country, Bosnia and Herzegovina,  
that men and women, followers of different religions,  
nations and cultures may live here in peace and harmony.  
We pray to you, O Father,  
that it may be so in every country of the world!  
Strengthen in each of us faith and hope,  
mutual respect and sincere love  
for all of our brothers and sisters.  
Grant that we may dedicate ourselves  
courageously to building a just society,  
to being men and women of good will,  
filled with mutual understanding and forgiveness,  
patient artisans of dialogue and peace.  
May each of our thoughts, words and actions  
be in harmony with your holy will.  
May everything be to your glory and honour and for  
our salvation.  
Praise and eternal glory to you, our God!  
Amen.

ORE, 12 June 2015

## PASTORAL VISIT OF POPE FRANCIS TO TURIN

22 June 2015

### VISIT TO THE WALDENSIAN TEMPLE

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With great joy I am among you today. I greet you all with the words of the Apostle Paul: To you, who are of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, we wish you

grace and peace (cf. 1 Thess 1). In particular I greet the Moderator of the *Tavola Valdese*, Pastor Eugenio Bernardini, and the Pastor of this community in Turin, Reverend Paolo Ribet, to whom goes my heartfelt appreciation for the invitation they so kindly gave to me. The warm welcome which you reserved for me brings to mind other meetings with friends of the Waldensian Evangelical Church of the River Plate, from whom I have been able to appreciate its spirituality and faith, and to learn so many good things.

One of the principal fruits which the ecumenical movement has already allowed to be harvested in these years is the rediscovery of the fraternity which unites all those who believe in Jesus Christ and have been baptized in his name. This bond is not based on simply human criteria, but on the radical sharing of the foundational experience of Christian life: encountering the love of God which is revealed to us in Jesus Christ and the transforming action of the Holy Spirit who assists us in the journey of life. The rediscovery of this fraternity allows us to perceive the profound bond which already unites us, despite our differences. It is a communion still in progress — unity is achieved while walking — a communion which, with prayer, with constant personal and communitary conversion and with the help of theologians, we hope, faithful in the work of the Holy Spirit, it may become a full and visible communion in truth and in charity.

The unity produced by the Holy Spirit does not mean uniformity. Indeed, brothers are united by one and the same origin but they are not identical to each other. This is very clear in the New Testament, where, although being called brothers, all of those who share the same faith in Jesus Christ, one intuitively that not all Christian communities, to which they belonged, had the same style, nor an identical internal organization. Rather, within the same small community different charisms could be perceived (cf. 1 Cor 12-14), and even in proclaiming the Gospel there were differences and sometimes contention (cf. Acts 15:36-40). Unfortunately, it happened and continues to occur that brothers do not accept their differences and end up making war against one another. By reflecting on the history of our relations, we cannot help but be saddened by the disputes and acts of violence committed in the name of our faith, and I ask that the Lord grant us the grace to recognize ourselves all as sinners and to be able to forgive one another. It is by the initiative of God, who never resigns himself to the sin of man, that new ways open to experience our fraternity, and we cannot escape it. On behalf of the Catholic Church I ask your forgiveness. I ask your forgiveness for unchristian-like and even inhuman attitudes and conduct which, historically, we have had against you. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us!

For this reason we are deeply grateful to the Lord in stating that relations between Catholics and Waldensians today are ever more deeply based in mutual respect and fraternal charity. There have been

many occasions that have contributed to rendering these relationships more steadfast. I think, only to cite a few examples — Reverend Bernardini also did so — of the collaboration in the Italian publication of an inter-confessional translation of the Bible, of the pastoral understanding of the celebration of marriage and, more recently, of the revision of a joint appeal on violence against women. Among the many occasions of cordial contact in various local contexts of shared prayer and study of Scripture, I would like to recall the ecumenical exchange of gifts that took place on Easter, in Pinerolo, from the Waldensian Church of Pinerolo and from the Diocese. The Waldensian Church offered Catholics wine for the celebration of the Easter Vigil and the Catholic Diocese offered our Waldensian brothers bread for the Easter Sunday's Holy Supper. It is a gesture between the two Churches that goes well beyond simple courtesy and which allows a foretaste — in a certain sense — of that unity of the Eucharistic table for which we yearn.

Encouraged by this progress, we are called to continue to journey together. An area in which ample opportunities are open for cooperation among Waldensians and Catholics is that of evangelization. Knowing that the Lord preceded us and always precedes us in love (cf. 1 Jn 4:10), let us go together to meet today's men and women, who at times seem so distracted and indifferent, to pass on to them the heart of the Gospel, or "the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 36). Another area in which we can work ever more united is that of service to the humanity that is suffering, to the poor, to the sick, to migrants. Thank you for what you said about migrants. From the liberating work of grace, in each one of us derives the need to witness to the merciful face of God who takes care of everyone and, in particular, of those who are most in need. The option of the poor, of the least, of those whom society excludes, brings us closer to the very heart of God, who became poor so that by his poverty we might become rich (cf. 2 Cor 8-9), and, as a result, become closer to one another. The differences on important anthropological and ethical issues, which continue to exist between Catholics and Waldensians, do not prevent us from finding forms of cooperation in these and other fields. When we walk together, the Lord helps us to experience that communion which comes before all conflict.

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you again for this meeting, which I hope strengthens us in a new way of being with one another: by first looking at all the greatness of our common faith and of our life in Christ and in the Holy Spirit and, only afterwards at the disagreements that still exist. I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and I ask you to please pray for me: I need it. May the Lord grant to all of you his mercy and his peace.

ORE, 26 June 2015

## OTHER STATEMENTS BY POPE FRANCIS

TO THE ECUMENICAL COLLOQUIUM OF MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS

24 January 2015

*On Saturday 24 January, Pope Francis spoke to those attending the Ecumenical Colloquium of Men and Women Religious, held by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. He recalled three characteristics that must accompany the quest for Christian unity: "there is no unity without conversion"; "there is no unity without prayer"; and "there is no unity without holiness of life". The following is a translation of the Pope's address given in Italian.*

Your Eminences, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I extend my cordial welcome to you and I thank Cardinal Braz de Aviz for the words he addressed to me on everyone's behalf. I am happy that this initiative has brought together men and women religious of different Churches and Ecclesial Communities, whom I greet warmly. It is especially meaningful that your meeting is taking place during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; each year it reminds us that spiritual ecumenism is "the soul of the ecumenical movement", as highlighted by the Conciliar Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, whose 50th anniversary we recently celebrated (cf. n. 8).

I would like to share with you a few thoughts on the importance of the consecrated life to Christian unity.

The will to reestablish the unity of all Christians is naturally present in all Churches and is the concern of the clergy and lay people alike (cf. *ibid.*, n. 5). Religious life, which is rooted in the will of Christ and in the common tradition of the undivided Church, undoubtedly has a *particular vocation in promoting this unity*. Indeed, it is not incidental that countless pioneers of ecumenism were consecrated men and women. To this day, various religious communities are deeply dedicated to this objective and are privileged places of encounter among Christians of different traditions. In this context, I would also like to mention the ecumenical communities, such as those of Taizé and of Bose, both of which are present at this Colloquium. The quest for union with God and for unity within the fraternal community concerns religious life and thus, in an exemplary way, achieves the prayer of the Lord "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

Your encounter is taking place at the Patristic Institute *Augustinianum*. The Rule of St Augustine begins with the following, particularly relevant affirmation: "The main purpose for your having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart" (i:3). Religious life shows us precisely that this unity is not the result of our efforts: unity is a *gift of the Holy Spirit*,

Which creates unity from diversity. It also shows us that this unity can be achieved only if we walk together, if we follow the path of fraternity in love, in service, in mutual acceptance.

*There is no unity without conversion.* Religious life reminds us that at the centre of every quest for unity, and thus of every ecumenical effort, there is first and foremost a conversion of heart, which involves asking for and granting forgiveness. It consists, for the most part, in a conversion of our own gaze: trying to see each other in God, and also being able to see ourselves from the other's point of view: namely, it presents a twofold challenge linked to the quest for unity, both within the religious communities and among the Christians belonging to different traditions.

*There is no unity without prayer.* Religious life is a school of prayer. The ecumenical commitment responds, firstly, to the prayer of the Lord Jesus himself, and is based primarily in prayer. One of the ecumenical pioneers and a great promoter of the Octave for Unity, Father Paul Couturier, utilized an image which well illustrates the link between ecumenism and religious life: he compared all those who pray for unity, and the ecumenical movement in general, to an "invisible monastery" which reunites Christians of different Churches, from various countries and continents. Dear brothers and sisters, you are the leaders of this "invisible monastery": I encourage you to pray for Christian unity and to express this prayer in your daily behaviour and actions.

*There is no unity without holiness of life.* Religious life helps us to be aware of the call addressed to all the baptized: the call to holiness of life, which is the only true way toward unity. The Conciliar Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* highlights this with incisive words: all "the faithful should remember they promote union among Christians better, that indeed they live it better, when they try to live holier lives according to the Gospel. For the closer their union with the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, the more deeply and easily will they be able to grow in mutual brotherly love" (n. 7).

Dear brothers and sisters, in expressing my gratitude to you for the witness that, with your life, you bear to the Gospel, and for the service you offer to the cause of unity, I pray that the Lord bless your ministry abundantly and inspire you to work tirelessly for peace and reconciliation among all the Churches and Christian communities. I ask you to please pray for me and I bless you wholeheartedly. Let us ask the Lord to bless us, praying, each in his own language, the Lord's Prayer. [*Our Father...*].

May the Lord bless us all.

ORE, 30 January 2015

ANGELUS

25 January 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

The Gospel today presents to us the beginning of Jesus' preaching ministry in Galilee. St Mark stresses that Jesus began to preach "after John [the Baptist] was arrested" (1:14). Precisely at the moment in which the prophetic voice of the Baptist, who proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God, was silenced by Herod, Jesus begins to travel the roads of his land to bring to all, especially the poor, "the gospel of God" (cf. *ibid.*). The proclamation of Jesus is like that of John, with the essential difference that Jesus no longer points to another who must come: Jesus is Himself the fulfilment of those promises; He Himself is the "good news" to believe in, to receive and to communicate to all men and women of every time that they too may entrust their life to Him. Jesus Christ in his person is the Word living and working in history: whoever hears and follows Him may enter the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is the fulfilment of divine promises for He is the One who gives to man the Holy Spirit, the "living water" that quenches our restless heart, thirsting for life, love, freedom and peace: thirsting for God. How often do we feel, or have we felt that thirst in our hearts! He Himself revealed it to the Samaritan woman, whom he met at Jacob's well to whom he says: "Give me a drink" (Jn 4:7). These very words of Christ, addressed to the Samaritan, have constituted the theme of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which is concluding today. This evening, with the faithful of the Diocese of Rome and with the Representatives of different Churches and ecclesial communities, we will gather together in the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls to pray intensely that the Lord may strengthen our commitment to bring about the full unity of all Christians. That Christians remain divided is a very bad thing! Jesus wants us to be united: one body. Our sins, history, have divided us and that is why we must pray that the same Holy Spirit unite us anew.

God, in becoming man, made our thirst his own, a thirst not only for water itself, but especially for a full life, a life free from the slavery of evil and death. At the same time by his Incarnation God placed *his own thirst* — because God too thirsts — in the heart of a man: Jesus of Nazareth. God thirsts for us, for our hearts, for our love, and placed this thirst in the heart of Jesus. Therefore, human and divine thirst meet in Christ's heart. And His disciples' desire for unity is part of this thirst. We find it expressed in the prayer raised to the Father before the Passion: "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). That is what Jesus wanted: the unity of all! The devil — we know — is the father of division, the one who always divides, always makes war, does so much evil.

May Jesus' thirst become ever more our own thirst! Let us continue, therefore to pray and commit ourselves to the full unity of the disciples of Christ, in the certainty that He Himself is at our side and sustains us by the power of his Spirit so that we may bring this goal closer. And let us entrust this our prayer to the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church, that she may unite us all like a good mother.

ORE, 30 January 2015

## MORNING MASS AT THE DOMUS SANCTÆ MARTHÆ

21 May 2015

*Unity doesn't come from glue*

*Unity in the Church was at the heart of Pope Francis' reflection during Mass on Thursday morning in the chapel at Sancta Martha. Reading the day's passage from the Gospel according to John (17:20-26), the Pontiff gave particular emphasis to the comfort which comes from hearing the words: "Father, I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word". These are Jesus' words as He bids farewell to the Apostles. At that moment Jesus prays to the Father for the disciples and he "also prays for us".*

*Francis pointed out that "Jesus prayed for us at that time, and He continues to do so". In fact, we read in the Gospel: "Father, I pray for these but also for so many others who are yet to come". This seemingly insignificant detail might escape the inattentive reader. However, the Pope emphasized, "Jesus prayed for me", and this "is precisely the source of faith". We can imagine "Jesus before the Father in Heaven", praying for us. And "what does the Father see? His wounds", or rather, the price that Jesus "paid for us".*

*With this image the Pontiff got right to the heart of his reflection. Indeed, he asked, "what does Jesus ask the Father in this prayer?". Does He say: "I pray that they will have a good life, will have money, will all be happy, will want for nothing?". No, Jesus "prays that they all be one: 'as thou art in me, and I in thee". At that moment He prays "for our unity. For the unity of his people, for the unity of his Church".*

*Jesus is well aware, explained Francis, that "the spirit of the world, which is really the spirit of the father of division, is a spirit of divisiveness, of war, of envy, of jealousy". It is also present "in families, even in religious families, even in dioceses, even in the Church as a whole: it is the great temptation". For this reason, "the great prayer of Jesus" is to bear "likeness to" the Father: "as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee", in the "unity which He has with the Father".*

*Now, one could probably ask: "Father, with this prayer of Jesus, if we want to be faithful, we cannot gossip about each other, can we?". Or: "We cannot label this one as..., this one is this way, that one is...?"*

*And "that other one, who was branded as a revolutionary...?". The Pope responded with a resounding "No". Because, he added, "we have to be one, one single thing, as Jesus and the Father are one single thing". This is precisely "the challenge for all of us Christians: to leave no room for division among us, not letting the spirit of divisiveness, the father of lies enter us". We must, the Pope continued, "always seek unity". Naturally, each person "is how he is", but must seek to live in unity: "Has Jesus forgiven you? He forgives everyone".*

*The Lord prays that we succeed in this. The Pontiff explained: "The Church has such need, so much need of this prayer for unity, not only that of Jesus; we too must join in this prayer". After all, since the very beginning the Church has demonstrated this need: "If we read the Book of the Acts of the Apostles from the beginning", Francis said, "we will see that quarrels, even deceit, begin there. One deceives the other, consider Ananias and Sapphira...". Even in those early years we find divisiveness, personal interests, selfishness. Building unity truly was and is a veritable "struggle".*

*Above all one needs to realize that we cannot achieve unity on our own: indeed, "it is a grace". That is why, the Pontiff pointed out, "Jesus prays, He prayed that time, He prays for the Church, He prayed for me, for the Church, for me to take this path".*

*Unity is so important that, the Holy Father noted, "in the passage we have read", this word is repeated "four times within six verses". However, unity "is not assembled with glue". There is no such thing as a "Church built with glue": the Church is made one by the Spirit. Thus, "we have to make room for the Spirit to transform us, as the Father is in the Son, one single thing".*

*To accomplish this objective, Francis added, Jesus himself gives this advice: "Abide in me". This word too is a grace. Jesus prays: "Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am", that they may "behold my glory".*

*This meditation gave rise to some advice from Pope Francis: to re-read the Gospel of John, Chapter 17, verses 20-26, and consider: "Jesus prays, He prays for me, He prayed and prays for me still. He prays with his wounds, before the Father". He does this "so we may all be one, as He is with the Father, in unity". This "should spur us not to judge", not to do "things that work against unity" and to follow Jesus' advice "to abide in Him in this life so that we may abide with Him in eternity".*

*These lessons, the Pope concluded, are found in Jesus' discourse during the Last Supper. In the Mass, "we relive" that supper, and Jesus repeats those words to us. Therefore, during the Eucharist, "we leave room so that Jesus' words may enter our hearts and we all may be capable of being witnesses of unity in the Church and of joy in the hope of contemplating the glory of Jesus".*

ORE, 29 May 2015

# CELEBRATION IN ROME FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2015

18-25 January 2015

## CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

25 January 2015

*Pope Francis closed the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity by celebrating Second Vespers on Sunday, 25 January, in the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls. In his homily, he recalled “the martyrs of today”, who are “persecuted and killed because they are Christians” regardless of their confessional identity. The following is the English text of the Pope’s homily.*

### HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

*Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls, 25 January 2015*

On his way from Judea to Galilee, Jesus passes through Samaria. He has no problem dealing with Samaritans, who were considered by the Jews to be heretics, schismatics, others. His attitude helps us to realize that encounter with those who are different than ourselves can make us grow.

Weary from his journey, Jesus does not hesitate to ask the Samaritan woman for something to drink. His thirst, as we know, is much more than physical: it is also a thirst for encounter, a desire to enter into dialogue with that woman and to invite her to make a journey of interior conversion. Jesus is patient, respectful of the person before him, and gradually reveals himself to her. His example encourages us to seek a serene encounter with others. To understand one another, and to grow in charity and truth, we need to pause, to accept and listen to one another. In this way, we already begin to experience unity. Unity grows along the way; it never stands still. Unity happens when we walk together.

The woman of Sychar asks Jesus about the place where God is truly worshiped. Jesus does not side with the mountain or the temple, but goes deeper. He goes to the heart of the matter, breaking down every wall of division. He speaks instead of the meaning of true worship: “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (*Jn* 4:24). So many past controversies between Christians can be overcome when we put aside all polemical or apologetic approaches, and seek instead to grasp more fully what unites us, namely, our call to share in the mystery of the Father’s love revealed to us by the Son through the Holy Spirit. Christian unity – we are convinced – will not be the fruit of subtle theoretical discussions in which each party tries to convince the other of the soundness of their opinions. When the

Son of Man comes, he will find us still discussing! We need to realize that, to plumb the depths of the mystery of God, we need one another, we need to encounter one another and to challenge one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who harmonizes diversities, overcomes conflicts, reconciles differences. Gradually the Samaritan woman comes to realize that the one who has asked her for a drink is able to slake her own thirst. Jesus in effect tells her that he is the source of living water which can satisfy her thirst for ever (cf. *Jn* 4:13-14). Our human existence is marked by boundless aspirations: we seek truth, we thirst for love, justice and freedom. These desires can only be partially satisfied, for from the depths of our being we are prompted to seek “something more”, something capable of fully quenching our thirst. The response to these aspirations is given by God in Jesus Christ, in his paschal mystery. From the pierced side of Jesus there flowed blood and water (cf. *Jn* 19:34). He is the brimming fount of the water of the Holy Spirit, “the love of God poured into our hearts” (*Rom* 5:5) on the day of our baptism. By the working of the Holy Spirit, we have become one in Christ, sons in the Son, true worshippers of the Father. This mystery of love is the deepest ground of the unity which binds all Christians and is much greater than their historical divisions. To the extent that we humbly advance towards the Lord, then, we also draw nearer to one another.

Her encounter with Jesus made the Samaritan women a missionary. Having received a greater and more important gift than mere water from a well, she leaves her jar behind (cf. *Jn* 4:28) and runs back to tell her townspeople that she has met the Christ (cf. *Jn* 4:29). Her encounter with Jesus restored meaning and joy to her life, and she felt the desire to share this with others. Today there are so many men and women around us who are weary and thirsting, and who ask us Christians to give them something to drink. It is a request which we cannot evade. In the call to be evangelizers, all the Churches and Ecclesial Communities discover a privileged setting for closer cooperation. For this to be effective, we need to stop being self-enclosed, exclusive, and bent on imposing a uniformity based on merely human calculations (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 131). Our shared commitment to proclaiming the Gospel enables us to overcome proselytism and competition in all their forms. All of us are at the service of the one Gospel!

In this moment of prayer for unity, I would also like to remember our martyrs, the martyrs of today. They are witnesses to Jesus Christ, and they are persecuted and killed because they are Christians.

Those who persecute them make no distinction between the religious communities to which they belong. They are Christians and for that they are persecuted. This, brothers and sisters, is the ecumenism of blood.

Mindful of this testimony given by our martyrs today, and with this joyful certainty, I offer a cordial and fraternal greeting to His Eminence Metropolitan Gennadios, the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch, to His Grace David Moxon, the personal representative in Rome of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and to all the representatives of the various Churches and Ecclesial Communities gathered here to celebrate the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul. I am also pleased to greet the members of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, and I offer them my best wishes for the fruitfulness of the plenary session to be held in these coming days. I also greet the students from the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, and the young recipients of study grants from the Catholic Committee for Cultural Collaboration with the Orthodox Churches, centred in the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Also present today are men and women religious from various Churches and Ecclesial Communities who have taken part in an ecumenical

meeting organized by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, in conjunction with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, to mark the Year for Consecrated Life. Religious life, as prophetic sign of the world to come, is called to offer in our time a witness to that communion in Christ which transcends all differences and finds expression in concrete gestures of acceptance and dialogue. The pursuit of Christian unity cannot be the sole prerogative of individuals or religious communities particularly concerned with this issue. A shared knowledge of the different traditions of consecrated life, and a fruitful exchange of experiences, can prove beneficial for the vitality of all forms of religious life in the different Churches and Ecclesial Communities.

Dear brothers and sisters, today all of us who thirst for peace and fraternity trustingly implore from our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ our one priest and mediator, and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Apostle Paul and all the saints, the gift of full communion between all Christians, so that “the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church” (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 2) may shine forth as the sign and instrument of reconciliation for the whole world. Amen.

ORE, 30 January 2015

# COMMEMORATION OF THE MARTYRDOM OF ARMENIANS

*April 2015*

## GREETING OF POPE FRANCIS BEFORE MASS IN ST PETER'S IN COMMEMORATION OF THE MARTYRDOM OF ARMENIANS

*12 April 2015*

*“Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it!”. The Pope said this on Sunday, 12 April, in the Vatican Basilica during the Mass celebrating the centenary of the martyrdom of the Armenians and proclaiming St Gregory of Narek a Doctor of the Church. At the start of Mass Pope Francis gave a greeting, of which the following is the English text.*

Dear Armenian brothers and sisters,  
Dear brothers and sisters,

On a number of occasions I have spoken of our time as a time of war, a third world war which is being fought piecemeal, one in which we daily witness savage crimes, brutal massacres and senseless destruction. Sadly, today too we hear the muffled and forgotten cry of so many of our defenceless brothers and sisters who, on account of their faith in Christ or their ethnic origin, are publicly and ruthlessly put to death – decapitated, crucified, burned alive – or forced to leave their homeland.

Today too we are experiencing a sort of genocide created by general and collective indifference, by the complicit silence of Cain, who cries out: “What does it matter to me? Am I my brother’s keeper?” (cf. *Gen 4:9; Homily in Redipuglia*, 13 September 2014).

In the past century our human family has lived through three massive and unprecedented tragedies. The first, which is widely considered “the first genocide of the twentieth century” (John Paul II and Karekin II, *Common Declaration*, Etchmiadzin, 27 September 2001), struck your own Armenian people, the first Christian nation, as well as Catholic and Orthodox Syrians, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Greeks. Bishops and priests, religious, women and men, the elderly and even defenceless children and the infirm were murdered. The remaining two were perpetrated by Nazism and Stalinism. And more recently there have been other mass killings, like those in Cambodia, Rwanda, Burundi and Bosnia. It seems that humanity is incapable of putting a halt to the shedding of innocent blood. It seems that the enthusiasm generated at the end of the Second World War has dissipated and is now disappearing. It seems that the human family has

refused to learn from its mistakes caused by the law of terror, so that today too there are those who attempt to eliminate others with the help of a few and with the complicit silence of others who simply stand by. We have not yet learned that “war is madness”, “senseless slaughter” (cf. *Homily in Redipuglia*, 13 September 2014).

Dear Armenian Christians, today, with hearts filled with pain but at the same time with great hope in the risen Lord, we recall the centenary of that tragic event, that immense and senseless slaughter whose cruelty your forebears had to endure. It is necessary, and indeed a duty, to honour their memory, for whenever memory fades, it means that evil allows wounds to fester. Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it!

I greet you with affection and I thank you for your witness. With gratitude for his presence, I greet Mr Serž Sargsyan, the President of the Republic of Armenia. My cordial greeting goes also to my brother Patriarchs and Bishops: His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians; His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia; His Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX, Patriarch of Cilicia of Armenian Catholics; and Catholicosates of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Patriarchate of the Armenian Catholic Church.

In the firm certainty that evil never comes from God, who is infinitely good, and standing firm in faith, let us profess that cruelty may never be considered God’s work and, what is more, can find absolutely no justification in his Holy Name. Let us continue this celebration by fixing our gaze on Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, victor over death and evil!

ORE, 17 April 2015

## MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS ON THE PROCLAMATION OF ST GREGORY OF NAREK AS A DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

*12 April 2015*

*On the occasion of the centenary of Metz Yeghern and the proclamation of St Gregory of Narek as Doctor of the Church, the Holy Father conveyed the following message to the Patriarchs and the President of the Armenian Republic at the end of Mass on 12 April in the Vatican Basilica.*

Dear Armenian Brothers and Sisters,

A century has passed since that horrific massacre which was a true martyrdom of your people, in which many innocent people died as confessors and martyrs for the name of Christ (cf. John Paul II and Karekin II, *Common Declaration*, Etchmiadzin, 27 September 2001). Even today, there is not an Armenian family untouched by the loss of loved ones due to that tragedy: it truly was “*Metz Yeghern*”, the “Great Evil”, as it is known by Armenians. On this anniversary, I feel a great closeness to your people and I wish to unite myself spiritually to the prayers which rise up from your hearts, your families and your communities.

Today is a propitious occasion for us to pray together, as we proclaim Saint Gregory of Narek a Doctor of the Church. I wish to express my deep gratitude for the presence here today of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, and His Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX, Patriarch of Cilicia of Armenian Catholics.

Saint Gregory of Narek, a monk of the tenth century, knew how to express the sentiments of your people more than anyone. He gave voice to the cry, which became a prayer, of a sinful and sorrowful humanity, oppressed by the anguish of its powerlessness, but illuminated by the splendour of God’s love and open to the hope of his salvific intervention, which is capable of transforming all things. “Through his strength I wait with certain expectation believing with unwavering hope that... I shall be saved by the Lord’s mighty hand and... that I will see the Lord himself in his mercy and compassion and receive the legacy of heaven” (Saint Gregory of Narek, *Book of Lamentations*, XII).

Your Christian identity is indeed ancient, dating from the year 301, when Saint Gregory the Illuminator guided Armenia to conversion and baptism. You were the first among nations in the course of the centuries to embrace the Gospel of Christ. That spiritual event indelibly marked the Armenian people, as well as its culture and history, in which martyrdom holds a preeminent place, as attested to symbolically by the sacrificial witness of Saint Vardan and his companions in the fifth century.

Your people, illuminated by Christ’s light and by his grace, have overcome many trials and sufferings, animated by the hope which comes from the Cross (cf. *Rom* 8:31-39). As Saint John Paul II said to you, “Your history of suffering and martyrdom is a precious pearl, of which the universal Church is proud. Faith in Christ, man’s Redeemer, infused you with an admirable courage on your path, so often like that of the Cross, on which you have advanced with determination, intent on preserving your identity as a people and as believers” (*Homily*, 21 November 1987).

This faith also accompanied and sustained your people during the tragic experience one hundred years

ago “in what is generally referred to as the first genocide of the twentieth century” (John Paul II and Karekin II, *Common Declaration*, Etchmiadzin, 27 September 2001). Pope Benedict XV, who condemned the First World War as a “senseless slaughter” (*AAS*, IX [1917], 429), did everything in his power until the very end to stop it, continuing the efforts at mediation already begun by Pope Leo XIII when confronted with the “deadly events” of 1894-96. For this reason, Pope Benedict XV wrote to Sultan Mehmed V, pleading that the many innocents be saved (cf. *Letter* of 10 September 1915) and, in the Secret Consistory of 6 December 1915, he declared with great dismay, “*Miserrima Armenorum gens ad interitum prope ducitur*” (*AAS*, VII [1915], 510).

It is the responsibility not only of the Armenian people and the universal Church to recall all that has taken place, but of the entire human family, so that the warnings from this tragedy will protect us from falling into a similar horror, which offends against God and human dignity. Today too, in fact, these conflicts at times degenerate into unjustifiable violence, stirred up by exploiting ethnic and religious differences. All who are Heads of State and of International Organizations are called to oppose such crimes with a firm sense of duty, without ceding to ambiguity or compromise.

May this sorrowful anniversary become for all an occasion of humble and sincere reflection, and may every heart be open to forgiveness, which is the source of peace and renewed hope. Saint Gregory of Narek, an extraordinary interpreter of the human soul, offers words which are prophetic for us: “I willingly blame myself with myriad accounts of all the incurable sins, from our first forefather through the end of his generations in all eternity, I charge myself with all these voluntarily” (*Book of Lamentations*, LXXII). How striking is his sense of universal solidarity! How small we feel before the greatness of his invocations: “Remember, [Lord,]... those of the human race who are our enemies as well, and for their benefit accord them pardon and mercy... Do not destroy those who persecute me, but reform them, root out the vile ways of this world, and plant the good in me and them” (*ibid.*, LXXXIII).

May God grant that the people of Armenia and Turkey take up again the path of reconciliation, and may peace also spring forth in Nagorno Karabakh. Despite conflicts and tensions, Armenians and Turks have lived long periods of peaceful coexistence in the past and, even in the midst of violence, they have experienced times of solidarity and mutual help. Only in this way will new generations open themselves to a better future and will the sacrifice of so many become seeds of justice and peace.

For us Christians, may this be above all a time of deep prayer. Through the redemptive power of Christ’s sacrifice, may the blood which has been shed bring about the miracle of the full unity of his disciples. In particular, may it strengthen the bonds of fraternal

friendship which already unite the Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church. The witness of many defenceless brothers and sisters who sacrificed their lives for the faith unites the diverse confessions: it is the ecumenism of blood, which led Saint John Paul II to celebrate all the martyrs of the twentieth century together during the Jubilee of 2000. Our celebration today also is situated in this spiritual and ecclesial context. Representatives of our two Churches are participating in this event to which many of our faithful throughout the world are united spiritually, in a sign which reflects on earth the perfect communion that exists between the blessed souls in heaven. With brotherly affection, I assure you of my closeness on the occasion of the canonization ceremony of the martyrs of the Armenian Apostolic Church, to be held this coming 23 April in the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin, and on the occasion of the commemorations to be held in Antelias in July.

I entrust these intentions to the Mother of God, in the words of Saint Gregory of Narek:

“O Most Pure of Virgins, first among the blessed,  
Mother of the unshakeable edifice of the Church,  
Mother of the immaculate Word of God, (...) Taking refuge beneath your boundless wings which grant us the protection of your intercession, we lift up our hands to you, and with unquestioned hope we believe that we are saved”.

*(Panegyric of the Theotokos)*

From the Vatican, 12 April 2015

FRANCIS

ORE, 17 April 2015

# VISIT TO ROME OF HIS HOLINESS MOR IGNATIUS APHREM II PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST

17-20 June 2015

## ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

19 June 2015

*During the meeting with His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, in the Vatican on 19 June, the Holy Father recalled the need to hasten their steps on their common journey to full communion. The following is a translation of the Pope's address given in Italian.*

Your Holiness, Your Beatitude, Dear Brothers,

It is a great joy to be able to welcome you here, near the Tomb of St Peter, so beloved in Rome and in Antioch. I extend my cordial welcome to your Holiness and to the distinguished Members of your Delegation. I thank you for your words of friendship and spiritual closeness, and I extend my greeting to your bishops, the clergy and all the faithful of the Syrian Orthodox Church. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!" (Rom 1:7).

The visit of Your Holiness strengthens the bonds of friendship and brotherhood which unite our Churches, the See of Rome and the See of Antioch. St Ignatius, teacher of unity among the faithful in Christ, in his Letter to the Magnesians, echoing the prayer Jesus said at the Last Supper, exhorts that there be "one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in charity", that all come together "as one temple of God, around one altar, that is Jesus Christ alone, who came forth from the one Father, and has returned to him united" (cf. 7:1-2).

When Patriarch Mar Ignatius Yacoub III and Pope Paul VI met here in Rome in 1971, they consciously launched what we might define as a "holy pilgrimage" toward the full communion between our Churches. Signing the Common Declaration on our common profession of faith in the mystery of the Incarnate Word, true God and true man, they determined the necessary founding dynamic for that path which we are walking together in obedience to the Lord's prayer for the unity of the disciples (cf. Jn 17:21-23). Thereafter, the encounters between Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka Iwas and St John Paul II, first in Rome and then in Damascus, marked new steps forward, introducing concrete elements of pastoral cooperation for the good of the faithful.

How many things have changed since those first meetings! Your Church, Your Holiness, has been a Church of martyrs from the very beginning and still is today, in the Middle East, where she continues to endure, together with other Christian communities and other minorities, the terrible affliction caused by war, violence and persecution. Such sorrow! So many innocent victims! In the face of all this, it seems that the powerful of this world are incapable of finding solutions.

Your Holiness, let us pray together for the victims of this brutal violence and of all the current hotbeds of war in the world. A special thought goes to Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Ibrahim and to Metropolitan Paul Yazigi of the Greek Orthodox Church, who were kidnapped together over two years ago. Let us also remember several priests and so many people, of various groups, deprived of freedom.

Let us also ask the Lord for the grace to always be ready to forgive and to be workers for reconciliation and peace. This is what vivifies the witness of martyrs. The blood of martyrs is the seed of unity of the Church and a tool for building the Kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of peace and justice.

Your Holiness, Your Beatitude, dear brothers, in this difficult moment of trial and pain, let us strengthen even more the bonds of friendship and fraternity between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church. Let us hasten our steps on the common path, keeping our gaze fixed on the day in which we shall celebrate our belonging to the one Church of Christ around the same altar of the Sacrifice and praise. Let us exchange the treasures of our traditions as spiritual gifts, for what unites us is much greater than what divides us.

I make my own the words of your beautiful Syrian prayer: "Lord, through the intercession of your Mother and of all the saints, sanctify us and our dear departed. May the memory of the Virgin Mary be a blessing for us; may her prayers be strength for our souls. Apostles, martyrs, disciples, and saints, pray for us, that the Lord may grant us his mercy". Amen.

ORE, 26 June 2015

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS MOR IGNATIUS  
APHREM II

19 June 2015

Your Holiness, my dear Brother in Christ,  
Your Eminences, Your Graces,  
Dearly beloved,

I greet you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One true God Who has called us to minister to His people in order to prepare for Him “a royal priesthood and a holy nation” (1 Peter 2: 9). We come to you from Damascus, the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world bringing with us the suffering of its people and their aspirations. The city which embraced the conversion and baptism of St. Paul is now crying for peace. We come to you on our first official visit to the Vatican to express the brotherly love and respect of one ancient apostolic church to another. We are glad to be accompanied by our beloved brother in Christ His Beatitude Mor Baselios Thomas I, Catholicos of India, and the entire delegation, bringing the love and greetings of the members of our Holy Synod which has just concluded its meetings in Damascus.

We are grateful to God Who enabled our two sister Churches to come closer together in recent decades. We recall the visit in 1971 of Patriarch Mor Ignatius Yacoub III to Pope Paul VI. Indeed, this was a historic visit because for the very first time since the controversies of the fifth century, an Orthodox Patriarch and the Bishop of Rome made a statement of faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that went as far as saying “there is no difference in the faith they profess concerning the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and became really man, even if over the centuries difficulties have arisen out of the different theological expressions by which this faith was expressed.” The two pontiffs were able to read the signs of the time and thus laid the foundation for practical cooperation that was expressed by the exchange of students, the mutual use of church buildings and other aspects of pastoral life.

In 1984, our predecessor Mor Ignatius Zakka I met with Saint Pope John Paul II and signed a common declaration whereby, for the first time in the history of Christianity since the split in the church, faithful of either church were permitted officially to receive communion in the other church, a courageous move that caused unease in certain quarters. Nonetheless, the road towards full unity in Christ entails taking such bold steps. Keeping the *status quo* does not help us move forward. This relationship between the two Pontiffs was further strengthened by the historical visit of Saint John Paul II to our patriarchal cathedral in Damascus during his apostolic visit to Syria in 2001. On that visit, Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I offered a chalice to Pope John Paul II and said to him “may we one day drink from the same cup”.

In this same spirit, we express our desire and readiness to look for new ways that will bring our Churches even closer to each other, paving the way for Antioch and Rome, the only two apostolic sees where St. Peter preached, to establish full communion.

Your Holiness,

This year marks the centennial of a Genocide that devastated our church and community more than any other of its kind. In 1915, more than half a million Syriac speaking Christians became victims of religio-ethnic cleansing in the former Ottoman Empire. Churches, monasteries and religious properties were destroyed or at best confiscated and transformed into private businesses. This Genocide has left a permanent scar on our Syriac people and left an unhealed wound in our consciousness. After 100 years of the beginning of the Syriac Genocide, we are still crying for justice and recognition. In this regard, we highly appreciate Your Holiness’s words on April 12 at St. Peter’s Basilica by naming things by their true name and courageously describing what happened to Armenians, Syriacs and Greeks as “the first Genocide in the twentieth century”, thus opening the way for others to do the same. We call this Genocide in our Syriac Aramaic language *Sayfo* meaning “the sword”. During our first Holy Synod, one day after our installation by the grace of God as Patriarch of Antioch, we took a decision to commemorate in 2015 the centennial of *Sayfo*. In doing so, we are led by two principles: justice and reconciliation. Our martyrs and survivors alike have been crying out for justice for one hundred years. The justice we seek is neither vengeance, nor hatred. It is remote from revenge. Rather, it builds on recognizing what took place as a genocide, following the footsteps of our Redeemer Who “when He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when he suffered, He did not threaten; but He trusted to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2: 23).

Reconciliation and healing are intrinsically connected with justice. Our wounds have not healed yet. Shedding light on these massacres and atrocities gives our people the opportunity to start healing the wounds with prayers, commemoration and other activities. At the same time, it gives our brothers and sisters, the descendants of the Ottomans, the opportunity to reconcile with their own past in order to establish lasting peace among the peoples of the region.

Today, the genocide continues targeting not only Christians but all those who love peace. The so-called Arab spring has brought upon us death, destruction and chaos. Christians in Mosul and the villages of the Nineveh Plains were expelled from their own homes. Just one day before we left Damascus on this visit, a missile hit the old part of Damascus, halfway between the place where St. Paul was baptized and where he was let down in a basket (cf. Acts 9: 25), causing many casualties, fear and uncertainty among the people.

Christians of the Middle East in particular have paid a high price. In Iraq, close to 150,000 Christians are still in refugee camps in the Kurdish region. In Syria, the two archbishops Mor Gregorius Youhanna Ibrahim and Boulos Yaziji who were abducted about 26 months ago, as well as the Syriac Catholic priest Fr. Jack Mourad who was recently abducted, are still missing. We continue to pray for their safe return and the return of all hostages.

Terrorism is not only affecting the Christians of the region, but also Muslims, Yezidis and others. Churches, mosques and other places of worship have been destroyed. Millennia-old cultural monuments were not spared either. All these destructive acts have caused panic among Christians and led hundreds of thousands to flee their ancestral homeland and seek refuge throughout the world, some of them perishing on their way seeking a better and more secure life.

While we greatly appreciate Your Holiness's continuous prayers for peace in the region and especially "beloved Syria" as you call it, we believe that the Vatican can initiate dialogue with certain European countries who may have influence on the regional governments that are directly or indirectly supporting and funding the terrorists in the region.

In Syria, both Christians and Muslims alike are tired of war and long for peace that is based on the principle of citizenship and equal rights. A peaceful resolution of the crisis will be in the interest of all. Establishing a safe haven with international protection for Christians of Iraq in the Nineveh Plain is widely supported by the majority of our people in Iraq.

Your Holiness, dear brother in Christ,

We thank God for our common Christian heritage and confession of Christ as Lord and Savior. We believe that His death, resurrection and ascension are at the basis of our Christian faith and are to be celebrated with joy. However, the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord on two different dates is a source of great discomfort and weakens the common witness of the church in the world. Hence, several proposals have

been put forward in recent history to arrive at a common date for Easter. In 1981, our Holy Synod of Antioch was motivated by the proposal put forward during the Vatican II Council and adopted a resolution that expressed the eagerness of our Church to celebrate the feast of the Resurrection on a fixed Sunday in April. Our predecessor of blessed memory, Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I, communicated the decision to the heads of sister churches. However, until this day an agreement is not reached. In this regard, we appreciate Your Holiness's comments concerning this matter and the fact that Your Holiness is considering to take the initiative to lead the efforts on this matter.

In closing, we live in a world where Christianity is still a minority and where the Church is faced with two extreme and opposite ideologies: religious extremism on the one hand, and secularism on the other. We urge our spiritual children to hold firm to their fundamental values and to show their determination, self-confidence and commitment to Christ, despite the temptations and many plaguing vices that govern this world. Indeed, there is a need for all Christians to work together to present a credible witness to our faith in the Risen Lord and to provide a cause for hope for our young people in a better future. The unity of the church of Christ remains the strongest source of hope for all.

We, the servants of the people of God, ought to intensify our efforts towards achieving a full communion among all Christ's followers and to work together towards alleviating the suffering of our broken humanity by being faithful to the message of Christ and His purpose for all of us, that we all may be one in Him and may have life in abundance.

Once again, we thank Your Holiness for receiving us and ask for your prayers on behalf of our suffering Middle East, assuring you, dear brother in Christ, of our humble prayers through the intercession of Yoldath Aloho, the ever Virgin Mary Mother of God, of our common father in apostolicity St. Peter and of our Syriac Martyrs of *Sayfo*. Amen.

# ENCYCLICAL LETTER *LAUDATO SI'* OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

*“An integral ecology” and a “global ecological conversion” are the two key phrases underlying Pope Francis’ Laudato Si’, the Second Encyclical of his Pontificate, after Lumen Fidei published in 2013. The text “on care for our common home” was presented in the Vatican New Synod Hall on Thursday morning 18 June. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, to whose ecological sensitivity the document refers explicitly, immediately thanked the Pontiff for emphasizing the need to reconcile with Creation, identifying the environmental issue as a common ground for commitment. We publish here below the Comment on the Encyclical by Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamon, who represented the Ecumenical Patriarch at the presentation ceremony.*

## THE EXISTENTIAL DIMENSION OF ECUMENISM: COMMENT BY METROPOLITAN IOANNIS ZIZIOULAS OF PERGAMON

### Introduction

I should like to begin by expressing my deep gratitude for the honour to be invited to take part in this event of launching the new Encyclical of His Holiness Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’*. I am also honoured by the fact that His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, has asked me to convey to you his personal joy and satisfaction for the issuing of the Encyclical. As some of you may already know, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been the first one in the Christian world to draw the attention of the world community to the seriousness of the ecological problem and the duty of the Church to voice its concern and try to contribute with all the spiritual means at its disposal towards the protection of our natural environment. Thus, back already in the year 1989, Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios issued an Encyclical to the faithful Christians and to all people of good will, in which he underlined the seriousness of the ecological problem and its theological and spiritual dimensions. This was followed by a series of activities, such as international conferences of religious leaders and scientific experts, as well as seminars for young people, Church ministers etc. under the auspices of the present Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, aiming at the promotion of an ecological consciousness among the Christians in particular and more widely in the community of men and women.

The issuing of the Encyclical *Laudato Si’* is, therefore, an occasion of great joy and satisfaction for the Orthodox. On behalf of them I should like to express our deep gratitude to His Holiness for raising his authoritative voice to draw the attention of the world to the urgent need to protect God’s creation from the damage we humans inflict on it with our behavior towards nature. This Encyclical comes at a critical moment in human history and will undoubtedly have a worldwide effect on people’s consciousness.

Those who read the Encyclical will be impressed by the depth and the thoroughness with which the ecological problem is treated and its seriousness is brought out, together with concrete

suggestions and proposals on how to act in order to face its consequences. There is in its pages food for thought for all: the scientist, the economist, the sociologist and above all the faithful of the Church. My own comments will be limited to the richness of theological thought and spirituality of the Encyclical. Time and space prevent me from doing full justice to the treatment of these aspects. I shall limit myself to the following points:

The theological significance of ecology;  
The spiritual dimension of the ecological problem;  
and The ecumenical significance of the Encyclical.

### 1. Theology and Ecology

What does ecology have to do with theology? In the traditional manuals of theology, there is hardly any place for ecology and the same is true for the academic curricula of the theological schools, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. The Encyclical devotes a whole chapter (ch. 2) to show the profound ecological implications of the Christian doctrine of creation. It points out that according to the Bible “human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself” (par. 66). This third relationship, i.e. with the earth, has been very often ignored by Christian theology to such an extent that the American historian Lynn White, in a now famous article in the periodical *Scientist* (1967), would accuse Christian theology for being responsible for the modern ecological crisis. For it is true that in Christian theology the human being has been so exalted above material creation as to allow humans to treat it as material for the satisfaction of their needs and desires. The human being has been de-naturalized and in its abuse and misuse of the biblical command to the first human couple – “increase and multiply and subdue the earth” (Gen. 1.28) – humanity was encouraged to exploit the material creation unrestrictedly with no respect for its integrity and even sacredness.

This attitude to creation did not only lead to a misuse of the biblical doctrine but at the same time contradicted fundamental principles of Christian faith. One of them is the faith in the Incarnation of Christ. In assuming human nature, the Son of God took over

material creation in its entirety. Christ came to save the whole creation through the Incarnation, not only humanity; for according to St. Paul (Rom. 8.23) “the whole creation groans in travail and is suffering” awaiting its salvation through humanity.

The other fundamental principle of Christian faith that has important ecological implications relates to the very heart of the Church, which is the Holy Eucharist. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church offers to God the material world in the form of the bread and the wine. In this Sacrament space, time and matter are sanctified; they are lifted up to the Creator with thankfulness as His gifts to us; creation is solemnly declared as God’s gift, and human beings instead of proprietors of creation act as its priests, who lift it up to the holiness of the divine life. This brings to mind the moving words of St. Francis of Assisi with which the Encyclical opens: “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth.” As St. Gregory Palamas and other Greek Fathers would put it, the whole of creation is permeated by God’s presence through His divine energies; everything declares God’s glory, as the Psalmist says, and the human being leads this cosmic chorus of glorification to the Creator as the priest of creation. This way of understanding the place and mission of humanity in creation is common to both Eastern and Western Christian tradition, and is of particular importance for the cultivation of an ecological ethos.

## 2. The Spiritual Dimension

As it emerges clearly from the Encyclical, the ecological crisis is essentially a spiritual problem. The proper relationship between humanity and the earth or its natural environment has been broken with the Fall both outwardly and within us, and this rupture is sin. The Church must now introduce in its teaching about sin the sin against the environment, the ecological sin. Repentance must be extended to cover also the damage we do to nature both as individuals and as societies. This must be brought to the conscience of every Christian who cares for his or her salvation.

The rupture of the proper relationship between humanity and nature is due to the rise of individualism in our culture. The pursuit of individual happiness has been made into an ideal in our time. Ecological sin is due to human greed which blinds men and women to the point of ignoring and disregarding the basic truth that the happiness of the individual depends on its relationship with the rest of human beings. There is a social dimension in ecology which the Encyclical brings out with clarity. The ecological crisis goes hand in hand with the spread of social injustice. We cannot face successfully the one without dealing with the other.

Ecological sin is a sin not only against God but also against our neighbor. And it is a sin not only against the other of our own time but also – and this is serious – against the future generations. By destroying our planet in order to satisfy our greed for happiness,

we bequeath to the future generations a world damaged beyond repair with all the negative consequences that this will have for their lives. We must act, therefore, responsibly towards our children and those who will succeed us in this life.

All this calls for what we may describe as an ecological asceticism. It is noteworthy that the great figures of the Christian ascetical tradition were all sensitive towards the suffering of all creatures. The equivalent of a St. Francis of Assisi is abundantly present in the monastic tradition of the East. There are accounts of the lives of the desert saints which present the ascetic as weeping for the suffering or death of every creature and as leading a peaceful and friendly co-existence even with the beasts. This is not romanticism. It springs from a loving heart and the conviction that between the natural world and ourselves there is an organic unity and interdependence that makes us share a common fate just as we have the same Creator.

Asceticism is an unpleasant idea in our present culture, which measures happiness and progress with the increase of capital and consumption. It would be unrealistic to expect our societies to adopt asceticism in the way St. Francis and the Desert Fathers of the East experienced it. But the spirit and the ethos of asceticism can and must be adopted if our planet is to survive. Restraint in the consumption of natural resources is a realistic attitude and ways must be found to put a limit to the immense waste of natural materials. Technology and science must devote their efforts to such a task. There is a great deal of inspiration and help that can be drawn from the Encyclical itself in this respect.

Finally, spirituality must penetrate our ecological ethos through prayer. The Encyclical offers some beautiful examples of how to pray for the protection of God’s creation. From the prayers cited at the end of the Encyclical, I find the following extract moving:

O God, bring healing to our lives,  
that we may protect the world and not prey on it  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and  
destruction.  
Touch the hearts  
of those who look only for gain  
at the expense of the poor of the earth.  
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature  
as we journey towards your infinite light.

At this point I should like to mention that the Ecumenical Patriarchate decided as early as 1989 to devote the 1st of September of each year to praying for the environment. This date is according to the Orthodox liturgical calendar, going back to the Byzantine times, the first day of the ecclesiastical year.

The liturgical service of the day includes prayers for creation and the Ecumenical Patriarchate commissioned a contemporary hymnographer from Mount Athos to compose special hymns for that day. The 1st of September each year is now devoted by the Orthodox to the environment. Might this not become a date for such prayer for all Christians? This would mark a step towards further closeness among them.

This brings me to my last comment on the Papal Encyclical, namely its ecumenical significance.

3. The Ecumenical Significance of the Encyclical  
There are in my view three dimensions to ecumenism. The first we may call ecumenism in time, an expression frequently used by one of the greatest Orthodox theologians of the last century, the late Fr. Georges Florovsky. By this we mean the effort of the divided Christians to unite on the basis of their common Tradition, the teaching of the Bible and the Church Fathers. This is the object of the theological dialogues which are taking place in the Ecumenical Movement of our time and it seems to be the predominant form of ecumenism.

At the same time an ecumenism in space is also practiced through various international institutions, such as the World Council of Churches and similar ecumenical bodies which bring together the divided Christians so that the different cultural contexts in which they live may be taken into consideration in the search for unity. This has brought together Christians from Asia, America, Europe, Latin America etc – an expression of the universality of the Christian Church.

To these two dimensions which have dominated the ecumenical scene for the last hundred years we must add, I think, a third one which is usually neglected, namely what I would call an existential

ecumenism. By that I mean the effort to face together the most profound existential problems that preoccupy humanity in its entirety – not simply in particular places or classes of people. Ecology is without doubt the most obvious candidate in this case.

I believe that the significance of the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'* is not limited to the subject of ecology as such. I see in it an important ecumenical dimension in that it brings the divided Christians before a common task which they must face together. We live at a time when fundamental existential problems overwhelm our traditional divisions and relativize them almost to the point of extinction. Look, for example, at what is happening today in the Middle East: do those who persecute the Christians ask them to which Church or Confession they belong? Christian unity in such cases is *de facto* realized by persecution and blood – an ecumenism of martyrdom.

The threat posed to us by the ecological crisis similarly bypasses or transcends our traditional divisions. The danger facing our common home, the planet in which we live, is described in the Encyclical in a way leaving no doubt about the existential risk we are confronted with. This risk is common to all of us regardless of our ecclesiastical or confessional identities. Equally common must be our effort to prevent the catastrophic consequences of the present situation. Pope Francis' Encyclical is a call to unity – unity in prayer for the environment, in the same Gospel of creation, in the conversion of our hearts and our lifestyles to respect and love everyone and everything given to us by God. We are thankful for that.

ORE, 19 June 2015

# FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JOINT WORKING GROUP BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

*Centro Pro Unione*  
*Rome, 23 June 2015*

*On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Joint Working Group between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, the Holy Father sent a message to Reverend Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. The Pope's message was read aloud on Tuesday afternoon, 23 June, by Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, during a commemorative conference held in Rome. The following is the text of the Pope's message followed by the greetings of Reverend Dr Fykse Tveit and Cardinal Koch and the interventions by Reverend Monsignor John A. Radano, Adjunct Professor of Systematic Theology at Seton Hall University, Reverend Dr Diane C. Kessler, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, and The Most Reverend Jonas Jonson, Bishop Emeritus of the diocese of Strängnäs, Church of Sweden.*

## MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JOINT WORKING GROUP BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

To the Reverend Dr Olav Fykse Tveit  
General Secretary of the World Council of Churches

The fiftieth anniversary of the Joint Working Group between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches is an occasion of thanksgiving to Almighty God for the meaningful ecumenical relationship which we enjoy today. So too, it is a moment to thank the Lord for all that the ecumenical movement has achieved since its beginning over one hundred years ago, inspired by a longing for the unity which Christ intended for his body, the Church, and by an emerging sense of sorrow for the scandal of division between Christians.

Since its inauguration in 1965, the Joint Working Group has fostered the necessary conditions for a greater common witness of the Catholic Church and the Churches and Ecclesial Communities of the World Council of Churches. Reflecting on these past fifty years, we should be encouraged by the collaboration which the Joint Working Group has promoted, not only in ecumenical issues, but also in the areas of interreligious dialogue, peace and social justice, and works of charity and humanitarian aid. The Joint Working Group should not be an inward-looking forum. Rather, it must become ever more a “think-tank”, open to all the opportunities and challenges facing the Churches today in their mission of accompanying suffering humanity on the path to the Kingdom, by imbuing society and culture with Gospel truths and values.

In my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I noted that realities are more important than ideas (cf. no. 233). The Joint Working Group must be oriented to addressing the real concerns of the Churches throughout the world. In this way, it will be better suited

to proposing collaborative steps that not only draw the Churches closer together, but also ensure that they offer an effective *diakonia* suited to the people's needs.

In fulfilling this task, the Joint Working Group distinguishes itself by its own character and aims. The nine reports produced thus far bear witness to the growing understanding and appreciation of the bonds of brotherhood and reconciliation which, in the context of the changing landscape of Christianity in the modern world, sustain Christians in their common witness and evangelizing mission. We must recognize, though, that in spite of the many ecumenical achievements of the past half century, Christian mission and witness still suffer due to our divisions. Disagreements on various subjects – in particular anthropological, ethical and social issues, as well as issues related to the understanding of the nature and conditions of the unity we seek – demand further sustained efforts. Our dialogue must continue! I encourage the Joint Working Group to further its discussion on crucial ecumenical issues and, at the same time, to promote ways for Christians to testify together to the real, though imperfect, communion shared by all the baptized. May we always trust that the Holy Spirit will continue to assist and guide our journey, often in new and sometimes unexpected ways.

This anniversary similarly is an opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who, these past fifty years, have tirelessly served the cause of Christian unity and advanced the joyful proclamation of the Gospel (cf. Mt 28:18-20). Let us join together in imploring our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to grant us the gift of full visible unity among all Christians, so that the Church will ever more be a sign of hope to the world and an instrument of reconciliation for all peoples.

FRANCIS

ORE 26 June 2015

GREETING OF THE WCC GENERAL SECRETARY  
REVEREND DR OLAV FYKSE TVEIT

To the Repairers and the Restorers

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, dear colleagues  
and friends, sisters and brothers in Christ,

*“Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of the streets to live in.” Isaiah 58:12.*

A Joint Working Group: This is a modest name for a significant undertaking. To be identified by the task to work might not immediately bring somebody to glorious titles or to the celebrities' list. However, work gives purpose and meaning to our lives, and to be a worker is a matter of dignity. It represents a privilege to use gifts and talents for something useful for others. So, actually it sounds like something solid, practical and productive: A Joint Working Group. It even gives connotations to the apostolic mentioning of being the co-workers in the Lord. And it resonates with the words of the Prophet: “You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets to live in.” These are the most honourable titles as the ecumenist: Repairer and restorer. Solid and honest work is needed to bring anything that matters forward, to repair what is broken, to make life safe and pleasant in the house and to restore the means of communications and life's viable common spaces.

The results of ordinary work are often not glorified as victory but are even more significant if they bring forward the roads we walk, the bridges that carry us over the dividing fjords, or the tunnels that take us through insurmountable mountains – to use images from my homeland, Norway. Work takes time for anything that is long-lasting.

Therefore, we are grateful and even proud of 50 years of a working group between these great major ecumenical instruments in the world, The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches. This is something to commemorate and to celebrate together. Many thanks to Your Eminence, Cardinal Kurt Koch, and the staff of the PCPCU, for the preparations of this meaningful event, marking the 50th anniversary of a body that is not so well known in the world, but has been of utmost importance for cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the members of the World Council of Churches. Likewise, many thanks for the warm welcome by the co-moderators of the JWG, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin and Metropolitan Nifon of Targoviste. I would like to thank also Fr James Puglisi for hosting this event at the Centro Pro Unione. We are back to the birthplace of the JWG since it was here (as we have heard) that the observers to the Second Vatican Council met and contributed their insights to the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* and other important

texts of the Council. Pope John XXIII announced it as an ecumenical council. A tree is known by its fruits. This Joint Working Group is definitely one of them.

The results that grew out of this beginning of a new era in ecumenical relationships are here now for the benefit of those we represent. The streets and roads must be maintained. That will only happen if they are used regularly. It is our responsibility to foster relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the fellowship of member churches which is the WCC, and to use the significant ways we have to address issues of community, of cooperation, of common interests of shared concerns, or even issues of controversy or conflict.

In doing so, we continue to work for the visible unity of the Church in response to Jesus' prayer that they all may be one so that the world may believe.

Looking at the present state of the ecumenical landscape and the world at large, we have to confess that divisions among Christians are there, that we are not sharing the gifts of the Triune God and the fruits of the works of our hands through the holy Eucharistic fellowship. This is a reality when the world needs real signs of communion across any dividing line or wall, and signs of sharing of God's purpose of life in communion. This is a reality when we should contribute to living together in justice and peace in a world divided by economic inequalities, nationalism, ethnic conflicts or even racism in more or less subtle forms. Unity must be visible to carry its full meaning as the bond of fellowship. Visible Church unity is required to fill our role as Church, as the first fruit of the new creation in Christ, a sign of the one humanity participating in the full life of the Triune God.

However, it is also a reality that there are many dimensions of this visible unity in our lives as churches, in our studies of our common roots of faith, in our sharing of the life and work of our churches, and in facing the urgent realities of today together, through the “existential ecumenism” Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon talked about in his response to the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. We are far beyond where we were in 1965, both theologically and practically. The theological efforts and the work on practical and significant issues in our common ministry for unity must supplement one another. As a World Council of Churches we use the metaphor of the way to speak about our common faith, life and ministry as a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

We are first of all called to be servants and deacons, bringing together what is broken, and heal where it is needed. This requires serious theological dialogue, deep and solid personal relationships, serious efforts to move something together, and new initiatives for those who need the churches speaking and acting together for their rights and their life in peace, shalom. The whole ecumenical work, with advocacy, prayer, mission, reflections on our roots of faith and our traditions, ecumenical formation, promoting just communities of women and men, addressing the need

for a sustainability and integrity of Creation; all of this and more are our joint work as deacons of unity, the “repairers” and “restorers”. The unity agenda remains at the heart of all our efforts for common witness and contributions to more justice and peace for people and creation.

We are indeed grateful for the new momentum for our common efforts to manifest our common faith in God the creator, Liberator and Life-giver through last week’s publication of the Papal encyclical ‘*Laudato Si*’. The title reminds us of Saint Francis’ *Canticle of the Sun*, his prayer praising God for creation. At the heart of all is our gratitude for God’s love and grace which is the origin of God’s creation and was revealed to us in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is why we continue to praise God even in the face of violence and destruction. It is not some form of ideology or activism that compels us to witness for justice and peace, for people and creation, but our faith in the Triune God of all life. This is why we care for earth as our common home as Pope Francis calls us to do, with his encyclical, affirming what we have done in our respective churches and in the WCC initiatives over many years.

It is heartening to see how we now unite also in the work for climate justice in the process leading towards the UN Climate Change Conference later this year in Paris. It’s like a fresh wind for all who will participate in the pilgrimages for climate justice churches are calling for. We are deeply indebted to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I. Let us today also remember all he has done to motivate and push the churches and the WCC to protect creation in taking a stance for climate justice and the conservation of biodiversity, for more than two decades. He made it crystal clear that “a crime against nature is a crime against ourselves and a sin against God.”

As the WCC we have taken initiatives to make Christians and representatives of other faith communities engage together in the care of creation. It is contributing in its own way to greater unity and the common witness of the churches. We cannot underestimate how important it is that by now all major traditions of Christianity have embraced their responsibility for the earth as our common home that we share with each other and all God’s creatures. We are recognizing our common destiny and responsibilities and we share in the vision that God will finally restore the beauty of all creation as it was meant to be, and overcome injustice, violence and war in the way of God’s true justice and true peace.

In response to this vision that holds together the unity of the churches, the unity of humankind and of all creation, the WCC Busan assembly in 2013 encouraged all people of good will to join in a pilgrimage of justice and peace. Frequently Pope Francis speaks of the unity on the way that will grow with our mutual commitment and accountability in following Jesus. And often he reminds us that following Jesus implies not to be afraid of the powers that be, and even not to fear violence and death. Today we are shocked at

the new examples of martyrdom. The martyrs of faith are signs of the unity that grows and breaches all.

Expressing our gratitude for the common journey of the JWG over the last 50 years, we need to be aware of this deeper theological reading of our context when we embark on a new phase of our cooperation. What we do cannot have, is business as usual. It must be an expression of our faith and a witness to the love of God revealed in Christ. I hope and pray that our faith in the love and presence of the Triune God will guide all new members of the JWG who start our common work with this meeting in Rome, repairing breaches and restoring streets to live in. Amen.

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#### SPEECH OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL KURT KOCH PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY

Dear Secretary General,  
Dear Guests,  
Dear Co-Moderators and Members of the Joint Working Group,

It is my sincere pleasure to greet you all on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity on this auspicious occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC). In a special way I would like to greet our hosts – the Centro Pro Unione – and to thank its Director, Father Professor James Puglisi, and his staff for receiving us today with such hospitality in this exceptional venue. As we have heard from Father Puglisi’s words, the history of the foundation of the JWG was very much related to this place and the very room where we are meeting today.

This anniversary of the Joint Working Group reminds us that there is a long and evocative history of cooperation between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, tracing its origins to the time of the Second Vatican Council. It was the result of an outstanding commitment of the World Council of Churches to the cause of Christian unity from its creation in 1948 and an extraordinary opening of the Catholic Church towards the ecumenical movement inspired by Vatican II. This spectacular shift in the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the ecumenical movement was an immediate result of a new self-understanding that the Church gained during the Council. The vision of Catholic ecclesiology proposed in Conciliar documents, especially in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* and the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* – both promulgated at the end of the third session of the Council on 21 November 1964 – opened the way to a

new appreciation of non-Catholic traditions. Through its various documents the Council expressed a clear conviction that the Church was not only an earthly institution with apparent external borders but also and first of all a mystical reality to which, in various ways, all Christians belonged through faith and baptism. This clear recognition of an inner ecclesiological value of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities which were outside the visible communion of the Catholic Church led to a new configuration of the ecumenical movement itself. At the time of the Council, the Catholic Church committed itself in a new and irrevocable way to the cause of Christian unity. For both Conciliar Popes, as well as for the majority of Conciliar Fathers, it was absolutely clear that the ecumenical movement could not be just some sort of accidental “appendix” added to the Church’s millennial tradition. The genuine desire of the Council was to integrate promoting Christian unity into all that the Church is and does; to make it an organic part of the Church’s life and work. The Decree on Ecumenism provided some necessary guidelines for this new challenge that the Catholic Church was about to face. It begins with a clear statement that “the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council” (UR 1), then provides the doctrinal principles of ecumenism (chapter I) and describes some possible forms of collaboration (chapter II).

Only a few months later, the first meeting of the Joint Working Group was held at the Ecumenical Institute at Château de Bossey in Switzerland – the international centre for encounter, dialogue and academic formation of the World Council of Churches. The foundation of the Joint Working Group was one of the first expressions of the new Catholic commitment to the cause of Christian Unity. Since this first meeting in the Spring of 1965, it has met regularly to discuss matters of common interest and to promote cooperation between the Catholic Church and the Churches and Ecclesial Communities gathered in the World Council of Churches. The Joint Working Group has distinguished itself by its own character and aims. According to the original mandate, it is a consultative body which has no authority in itself, but which initiates, evaluates and sustains collaboration between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, remaining flexible in the style of collaboration, always trying to discern the will of God in the contemporary ecumenical situation. When we look at the nine reports produced so far we can discern that the Joint Working Group has remained faithful to this mandate. Concentrating on current issues and ad hoc initiatives, it has always been able to propose new programmes and concrete steps in order to strengthen the bonds of unity between the two parent bodies. This practical collaboration has been accompanied by many significant theological studies on such important ecumenical issues like Reception or the Spiritual roots of Ecumenism or Youth – just to mention those from the last working period. Evoking these various aspects

of the work of the Joint Working Group vividly testifies to the long road that has been already travelled together.

The Golden Anniversary that we are celebrating invites us first of all to reflect upon and to give thanks to God for the many fruits that have been reaped in this half-century. In a significant and enduring way, the Joint Working Group has contributed to the change of mentality of the partners on both sides: the indifference and sometimes even the open hostility that caused profound wounds and generated apparently irreparable ruptures in the past have been overcome and a process of the healing of memories has begun. It needs to be stressed that the Joint Working Group has also significantly helped make known the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in Churches and Ecclesial Communities represented in the World Council of Churches.

These past achievements should motivate members of the new mandate to continue this work at a time when Christians face new ecumenical challenges. We all are aware of the fact that in spite of so many significant ecumenical accomplishments of the last five decades, Christians still remain divided, a fact which continues to be perceived as a scandal in the eyes of the world. There is still a lot to be done not only on the level of doctrinal dialogue but also in the field of practical collaboration between Christian Communions. I would like to encourage the Joint Working Group to continue discussion on critical issues and at the same time to explore new ways of testifying together to our real even though still incomplete unity. Do not surrender in the face of new challenges, but rather renew and strengthen your ecumenical enthusiasm, never ceasing to believe that the Holy Spirit continues to assist and guide you in new and sometimes unpredictable ways. Through projects that you will pursue during this new mandate you will undertake new steps on the way towards full and visible unity of Christians in life and witness, faith, ministry and the sacraments as well as in service to the world.

As it was stressed during the last Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan in 2013, we are pilgrims of unity, searching together for justice and peace for the world and for the Church! According to the Holy Scripture, a pilgrimage is a journey of faith in order to offer thanks, to atone for wrong-doing, to ask for healing, or to seek enlightenment. This biblical vision of pilgrimage offers an insightful image of the ecumenical movement as such and of the Joint Working Group itself. In fact, the search for the genuine unity of the Church is our common journey on which we are invited to receive and accept each other with our differences, to recognize our failings towards each other and to ask for forgiveness, to share with others what can be recognized as our particular gifts and to receive from others what they have to share with us. The Joint Working Group is an inestimable ecumenical tool that helps Christians from different traditions to continue this pilgrimage together. And as we journey together, we

must not forget what Saint Paul wrote to his Christian brothers and sisters in Rome:

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality (Rm 12 : 9-13).

This spirit of solidarity should always accompany and nurture the work of the Joint Working Group as it begins now its 10th mandate after 50 years of fruitful work. We are encouraged to seek a serene encounter with others, to understand one another, to grow in love and truth, to accept and listen to one another. In this way, we already begin to experience the unity to which we aspire. Unity grows along the way as we walk together as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

Pilgrims are people who know where they are going and why. Our goal cannot be anything less than the unity of the Church for which Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father on the last night of his earthly life (cf. Jn 17:21). At the same time, the pilgrim remains open to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, who blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going (Jn 3 :8). As we walk together, we should not be afraid to be surprised and sometimes even disturbed by the Holy Spirit.

I am deeply convinced that with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, through mutual learning and brotherly collaboration our Churches and Ecclesial Communities can continue to grow in the communion which already unites us.

Dear brothers and sisters, on this 50th Anniversary of the Joint Working Group, let us ask together from our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, the gift of full visible unity between all Christians, so that the Church can shine among all peoples as the sign and instrument of reconciliation for the world. Amen.

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## THE JOINT WORKING GROUP ON ITS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY, 1965-2015: AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

JOHN A. RADANO\*

For this commemoration of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 1965-2015, I have been asked to give an historical introduction of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of

Churches (JWG).<sup>1</sup> I will make this presentation in three sections. First a brief Introduction identifying the "origin and nature" of the JWG. The second, "Promoting Unity", illustrates both the fast and intense start to this new relationship, as well as its fifty years of collaboration. The third speaks of "The Historical Significance of the JWG."

### I. INTRODUCTION: ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE JOINT WORKING GROUP

The Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), is a unique, ecumenical instrument, an effective partnership of two very diverse ecclesial bodies. The WCC today is an international fellowship of some 350 independent churches (Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and some Pentecostal churches) nationally organized, together representing some 560 million people; its members do not take direct juridical responsibility for WCC studies, actions and statements. The Roman Catholic Church is one church, the largest in the Christian world, comprising 1.2 billion people, with a universal mission and structure of teaching and governance as an essential element of its identity.<sup>2</sup>

While only one aspect of the ecumenical movement, for fifty years, through the JWG, the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches have together served the one ecumenical movement, promoted the goal of visible unity in faith, sacramental life and mission, supporting many activities to foster this goal. During fifty years, the JWG has published nine substantial reports and fifteen significant study documents. A consultation held ten years ago, on the JWG's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary already pointed then to its importance, saying that the very fact of the establishment and continued cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches for 40 years must be considered one of the significant achievements of the modern ecumenical movement. The slow but persevering establishment of a

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\* Msgr. John A. Radano served the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City 1984-2008, and participated in the JWG 1988-2012. He is currently Adjunct Professor in the School of Theology, Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, USA.

1. I would refer the reader to the excellent concise history written by Father Tom Stransky, "The History of the RCC/WCC Joint Working Group," which was published in the JWG's Seventh Report (1998), and again in its Eighth Report (2005).

2. Cf. Fr. Thomas Stransky, "The History of the RCC/WCC Joint Working Group," in *Joint Working group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Eighth Report 1999-2005*, Geneva-Rome 2005. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005, p. 40. (Hereafter: Eighth Report).

relationship in which the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church have found in one another a trusted partner has been perhaps the most enduring achievement of the past four decades.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Background and Beginnings of the JWG*

With previous agreement in principle on the part of the WCC and the Secretariat For Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU),<sup>4</sup> the WCC Central Committee meeting in Enugu, Nigeria, 12-21 January 1965, received and accepted the proposal of a Joint Working Group between the RCC and the WCC. In February 1965, Cardinal Augustin Bea, SPCU President, visited the WCC headquarters to bring news of the formal acceptance by the Roman authorities of this proposal of a JWG.<sup>5</sup> The first meeting took place in May, 1965 at Bossey, Switzerland. The first two JWG reports were published in 1966 and 1967, and document a strong beginning, a wide range of collaboration even starting in 1965.

#### *Early Contacts*

The strong beginning is partly explained by Important contacts which took place from the 1930s to the 1950s, between Catholic ecumenists with Protestant and Anglican ecumenists such as W. A. Visser 't Hooft, Marc Boegner, Oliver Tomkins, some of whom eventually would be closely related to the WCC. The latter held a number of Catholic ecumenists in high regard, especially Fr. Yves Marie Joseph Congar, OP, and Fr. Paul Couturier. Visser 't Hooft, who would become the first General Secretary of the WCC when it was founded in 1948, had first met Congar in 1934,<sup>6</sup> and worked with him in different ways over the years.

These contacts paid off in an early Catholic contribution to the WCC, to the Central Committee's important 1950 Toronto Statement. A confidential meeting organized in September, 1949, at the Istina Centre in Paris,<sup>7</sup> between ten WCC theologians and ten Catholic theologians among whom were Yves Congar, OP, and Jérôme Hamer, OP, became, as Visser 't Hooft writes, "an important stage in the preparation of the statement on the nature of the World Council which

was submitted to and adopted by the Central Committee of the Council in Toronto in 1950."<sup>8</sup>

In the early 1950s, General Secretary Visser 't Hooft met and collaborated with Msgr. Johannes Willebrands, co-founder in 1952 of the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions. The CCEQ unofficially gave support to the WCC during the 1950s by providing Catholic reflection on theological issues of importance to the WCC. Willebrands was its main organizer and Congar was a leading drafter of those reflections.<sup>9</sup>

#### *The Years 1960-1965: Just Before and During Vatican II*

The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity was established in 1960 with Augustin Cardinal Bea as President and Willebrands as Secretary. During 1960-1961, when Vatican II was in formation, and 1962-1965 when Vatican II itself was in session, a number of important contacts between WCC and RCC leaders prepared the way for the JWG in 1965. Roman Catholic observers participated in the August 1960 Faith and Order Commission meeting at St. Andrew's, Scotland. Msgr. Willebrands, the new Secretary of the SPCU, participated at the August 1960 WCC Central Committee meeting at St. Andrew's. In September, 1960, Cardinal Bea and General Secretary Visser 't Hooft, along with Willebrands, met privately for the first time, setting the stage for developments which took place a short time afterwards.<sup>10</sup> Stransky, in his JWG History indicates that "The initial visible expression of collaboration between the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) was the exchange of officially delegated observers."<sup>11</sup> In 1961 the SPCU delegated, for the first time, five observers to the WCC's third Assembly in New Delhi, and then the WCC sent two observers, Dr Nikos Nissiotis and Lukas Vischer to the four sessions of Vatican II.<sup>12</sup>

In 1963, the SPCU arranged for New Testament scholar Fr. Raymond Brown to give a major address at the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order in Montreal,<sup>13</sup> the first time a Roman Catholic speaker had given a major address at a WCC sponsored event. Five official Catholic observers also attended, and there were a number of other Catholic participants as

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3. Cited in *Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches Ninth Report 2007-2012, Geneva-Rome 2013*. Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2013, p. 19. (Hereafter: Ninth Report).

4. In 1988, the Secretariat's name was changed to Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU)

5. Lukas Vischer, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church," Chapter 12 of *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2/ 1948-1968, The Ecumenical Advance*, Edited by Harold E. Fey, Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1970, p. 340. (Hereafter: HEM 2).

6. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1987, p. 68.

7. Mauro Velati, *Una Difficile Transizione: Il cattolicesimo tra unionismo ed ecumenismo (1952-1964)*, Istituto per le scienze religiose—Bologna, testi e ricerche di scienze religiose, nuova serie 16: Società Editrice Il Mulino, 1996, p. 50.

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8. Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, pp. 319-321, quote 320. Also, Lukas Vischer, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church," HEM 2, p.320.

9. Cf. Vischer, in HEM 2, pp. 320-321.

10. Their work together over the next years was reflected in the volume: Augustin Cardinal Bea and Willem A. Visser 't Hooft, *Peace Among Christians*, translated by Judith Moses. New York: Association Press and Herder and Herder, 1967. The book received the Peace Prize of the German Publisher's Association.

11. "The History of the RCC/WCC Joint Working Group," Eighth Report, p. 38.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

well.<sup>14</sup> A few years afterwards, Oliver Tomkins illustrated the rapid ecumenical growth taking place, commenting that Montreal 1963 was the “first occasion on which the Roman Catholic impact on the World Council was fully felt. Never before had the Roman Catholic consultants played such a full and vigorous part in our discussions....Roman Catholic sympathy was evident in all parts of the Conference’s work; but notably in the commission on ‘Tradition and traditions’ the Faith and Order movement itself had obviously moved into the territory where some of the bitterest conflicts of the Reformation and Counter-reformation were being freshly appraised, even if the celebrated ‘sola traditione’ did not finally get an imprimatur.”<sup>15</sup> In 1963 two SPCU observers also participated in the first world conference of the WCC’s Division of World Mission and Evangelism (DWME) in Mexico City.<sup>16</sup>

With many serious contacts underway, Cardinal Bea proposed an unofficial meeting between representatives of the SPCU and the WCC, which took place on April 15, 1964 in Milan.<sup>17</sup> It was a limited meeting led by Cardinal Bea and General Secretary Visser ‘t Hooft, along with key staff.<sup>18</sup> It paved the way for closer contacts and relationships, and “for the first time the possibility of setting up joint working parties was considered.” At that time three different work groups were envisioned: one to consider principles of future cooperation, a second to study theological questions, a third to deal with practical matters. Discussions continued in the WCC. The results of the Milan talks were presented to a very representative group related to the WCC, and the idea of the joint working parties found general acceptance. The WCC Executive Committee reached agreement on this plan, and the General Secretary was authorized to work out details in further talks. “This was done during the Third Session of the Council. The World Council’s observers met twice with Bishop Willebrands and other representatives of the Secretariat for Unity. The plan was also presented personally to the Pope.”<sup>19</sup> Going ahead depended on Vatican II’s approval and promulgation of the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which happened on November 21, 1964.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Oliver S. Tomkins, “Some Convergent and Divergent Elements in Recent Statements of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches,” paper given at the fourth meeting of the Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, November 1966. Papers of Thomas Stransky (Archives of the Paulist Fathers), Box 50.2.j., p. 2.

16. Stransky, “The History of the RCC/WCC Joint Working Group,” p. 38. They were Jorge Mejia and Thomas Stransky.

17. Lukas Vischer, “The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church,” *HEM* 2, p. 339.

18. On the Catholic side were also Bishop Johannes Willebrands, Father Jérôme Hamer, and Father Pierre Duprey. WCC members included the two permanent observers at Vatican II (Lukas Vischer and Nikos Nissiotis). *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

The JWG was then established in the events in 1965 in Enugu in January and in Geneva in February, mentioned above. It would have fourteen members, six from the Roman Catholic side, and eight from the WCC. A more modest plan than the original three working groups was eventually agreed on.<sup>20</sup> The new JWG’s first meeting took place in May, 1965 at Bossey, Switzerland and the second in November, 1965 in Ariccia (Rome).

#### *Nature and Character of the JWG*

As to its nature and character, the JWG, according to its original 1966 mandate, is to interpret the trends in the development of the ecumenical movement and “to explore possibilities of dialogue and collaboration, to study problems jointly, and to report to the competent authorities of either side.” It is an instrument of collaboration between the two partners, “a consultative forum that ‘has no authority in itself but reports to its parent bodies’....Thus the JWG has an advisory function and serves as an instrument for promoting cooperation between the RCC and the WCC. The JWG receives its mandate every seven years from its parent bodies---the WCC Assembly and the PCPCU,” and at the end of each mandate, it “submits to its parent bodies a detailed report on its activities.”<sup>21</sup>

The question of RCC membership in the WCC was studied early, but membership has never materialized. Therefore the relationship between the two found in the Joint Working Group has all the more importance. But this relationship is more than mere collaboration. Pope Benedict XVI in 2006 described the relations between the WCC and RCC as a “solid partnership.”<sup>22</sup> Earlier, Pope Paul VI had described the relations between the RCC and the WCC as one of “fraternal solidarity.”<sup>23</sup> Cardinal Willebrands, President of the SPCU, recalled this in his letter to General Secretary Phillip Potter concerning the Fifth JWG Report,<sup>24</sup> while also recalling Potter’s comment to the Central Committee in 1976 that the relations between the RCC and the WCC “have been far more intense than with many member churches.”<sup>25</sup> Potter’s comment, wrote Willebrands, “confirms my own belief that it does not do justice to describe the relationship as one of mere collaboration. The reality of it was better captured by Pope Paul VI when he spoke of it as one of ‘fraternal solidarity’ with all the positive connotation of these

20. *Cf. Ibid.*, p. 340.

21. Eighth Report, IV, 1 Character and Nature of the JWG, p. 17.

22. Pope Benedict XVI’s message to the 9<sup>th</sup> WCC Assembly at Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 14-24, 2006.

23. In the Pope’s letter to the Fifth Assembly of the WCC 1975. This was recalled by Cardinal Willebrands in his letter to Philip Potter concerning the Fifth Report. See note 24.

24. “Letter of Cardinal Willebrands, July 4<sup>th</sup> 1983,” Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Vatican City *Information Service* (Hereafter: *IS*), 53 (1983): 119-121, here 119.

25. Potter’s comment to the Central Committee in 1976, in *Ecumenical Review* XXVIII n.4, p. 401, cited by Willebrands in his letter to Potter, *Ibid.*, p. 119.

words, including not only collaboration but also common reflection and prayer, inspired by the words of Christ 'that all may be one.' They express our common calling to full communion in faith and love. Hence our relation should be profound and of a spiritual nature, in the hope that it may lead us to a common understanding of the Church as 'a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race,...the sacrament of this saving unity' (LG 9)".<sup>26</sup>

## II. PROMOTING UNITY

### A. *Fast and Intense Start to a New Relationship*

The fact that important contacts and collaboration had developed before the JWG began, made it possible for the JWG to promote collaboration quickly on many fronts. The new JWG met 22-24 May 1965 at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland,<sup>27</sup> and again on 17-20 November 1965 in Ariccia (Rome), Italy. As could be expected, this relationship needed to be clarified in a number of ways. At the same time, a number of jointly sponsored [WCC and RCC] meetings on significant issues were also taking place in 1965, some before the JWG's first meeting and some afterwards. The first JWG report documents a number of these meetings. The extent of activity also reflected the commitment of both partners to this new ecumenical opportunity.

The first JWG report, following its first two meetings in 1965, was published on February 16, 1966.<sup>28</sup> The second report, after the JWG's third and fourth meetings, was published in August 1967.<sup>29</sup> One can see even in the first two JWG reports that collaboration had begun or was proposed on a great range of important issues needing attention for the reconciliation of separated Christians, and the well-being of the Church. The items proposed for dialogue also reflected the classical issues around which the ecumenical movement

had gathered in the first half of the twentieth century, such as common prayer and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Mission, Faith and Order, many questions that could be described as "Life and Work" such as Church and Society, Christian Education and others. In a certain sense the range of issues recorded in the first two JWG reports comprises much of the agenda the JWG has worked on over the decades until today, and is reflected in subsequent reports.

Two meetings early in 1965 apparently had some influence on Vatican II documents still under discussion which would be promulgated later that year. These included a conference on Church and Society organized by the WCC's Department of Church and Society and the SPCU in Geneva 28-31 March, 1965. It provided an opportunity for discussion of the work on the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. According to Lukas Vischer, "[t]he contacts with the various groups responsible for the drafting of the text had been especially close from the beginning. The fact that the World Council had worked in almost all the areas which the constitution was to deal with made it seem advisable to seek discussion with it. The World Council's observers were given many opportunities to comment on the various draft texts of the document. The consultation in Geneva placed these contacts on a broader footing."<sup>30</sup> The First JWG report indicates that "The report that was presented to us encourages us to pursue the cooperation," and notes that Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (promulgated in December, 1965) "contains important elements in this respect," and notes that the WCC is preparing a World Conference on Church and Society for 1966. A second consultation is already being organized.<sup>31</sup>

WCC's Division of World Mission and Evangelism and the SPCU jointly organized a first consultation on missions on 5-10 April, 1965 at Crêt-Bérard, Switzerland. The report of its discussion of questions of missionary activity, indicating that there are different areas open for possible collaboration in the future, was sent to the JWG. "Further studies will however be necessary in order to examine the ways opened up by the Council's Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, promulgated at the end of the fourth session."<sup>32</sup> According to Lukas Vischer, the meeting on missions "undoubtedly helped indirectly to give the conciliar Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity the strongly ecumenical flavor which characterizes it."<sup>33</sup> According to Leslie Newbiggin, "The consultation opened up many lines of study concerning both the substance of the gospel we proclaim and the

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26. Willebrand's letter, pp. 119-120.

27. WCC members included: Rev. Dr W.A. Visser 't Hoofft (WCC Geneva), Rev. Archpriest Vitaly Borovoy (WCC, Geneva), Rev Dr R.H.E. Espy (National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, New York, USA), Dr N.A. Nissiotis (Ecumenical Institute, Celigny [Geneva], Switzerland), Professor Dr E. Schlink (Heidelberg, Germany), the Rt. Rev. O.S. Tompkins (Bishop of Bristol, England), Father Paul Verghese (WCC, Geneva), Rev. Dr Lukas Vischer (WCC, Geneva). RCC members included: Most Rev. J.G.M. Willebrands (SPCU, Rome), Most Rev. Thomas Holland (Bishop of Salford, Manchester, England), Msgr. William W. Baum (Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical Affairs, Washington, D.C.), Msgr. Carlo Bayer (Caritas Internationalis, Rome, Italy), Rev. Pierre Duprey, W.F. (SPCU, Rome), Rev. Jérôme Hamer, OP (Convento Santa Sabrina, Rome).

Appendix I to the First Report. See Note 28 below.

28. *First Official Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches*, IS 1 (1967): 18-24; and the WCC's *Ecumenical Review* (=ER) (April, 1966): 243-255. (Hereafter: First Report).

29. *Second Official Report of the Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches*, IS 3(1967): 28-36; and, ER (October 1967):461-467. (Hereafter: Second Report).

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30. Lukas Vischer, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church," *HEM* 2, p. 342.

31. First Report, no. 10, IS 1(1967):20, ER, April 1966, p. 248.

32. First Report, no. 9, IS 1 (1967):20. The report also expressed concerns about tensions in missionary areas, for example, proselytism, and indicated some ways of dealing with those tensions.

33. Vischer in *HEM II*, p.342.

manner in which it is to be proclaimed. It had some effect upon the final shape of the Vatican decree *Ad gentes*, and it has laid the foundations for further consultation and collaboration.”<sup>34</sup>

Concerning the laity, the First JWG report reported that two meetings had taken place between the Roman Catholic Permanent Committee for International Congresses of the Lay Apostolate (COPECIAL), and the WCC’s Departments on the Laity. Despite different theological approaches, they found fairly broad agreement on questions concerning the apostolate of the laity and their training. The discussions led to the following conclusion, among others, as reported from a meeting at Gazzada-Varese, Italy, 7-10 September, 1965: “While differences of faith must be respected, we must not do separately any aspect of laity training which we can do as well or better together.”<sup>35</sup>

A similar desire for joint action on issues concerning women was expressed by a group of women invited to a meeting held October 22-24, 1965, at Vicarello-Bracciano, Italy, and jointly organized by the WCC’s Department of Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, and by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Participants, lay women, deaconesses and religious, hoped that further gatherings could be arranged. Subjects suggested for discussion included the re-evaluation of the role of unmarried women, changes in the role of the family, part-time or full-time work for the married woman, possibilities of service open to women in church institutions, and possibilities of collaboration between women of different confessions in the celebration of the “Women’s World Day of Prayer” and in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.<sup>36</sup> Further meetings took place in 1966 and 1967.<sup>37</sup>

The JWG organized two meetings on the question of joint worship at ecumenical gatherings, in Rome on October 16<sup>th</sup> and November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1965. The report of the two meetings, entitled “Joint Worship at Ecumenical Gatherings,” was published as Appendix II of the First JWG Report.<sup>38</sup> The participants in these two meetings, listed at the beginning of the report, were some of the most experienced ecumenists of the time.<sup>39</sup> The report’s Introduction gives seven points explaining the theological meaning of joint worship, and a second

section, “Prayers and worship at ecumenical gatherings” distinguishes four different forms of worship, and then suggests when each might be used. The report’s Introduction refers to the sources used by each side in developing this report. The WCC contributed to it out of the experience it has in this respect, having “adopted some recommendations regarding these types of services. The Roman Catholic Church has enunciated some principles in the Decree on Ecumenism and is elaborating further directives concerning this subject which in the near future will give more guidance to the members of the Roman Catholic Church.”<sup>40</sup> In regard to the latter the Introduction also points to further directives that would be coming (referring to the Ecumenical Directory, Part I of which would be published by the SPCU in 1967).

The first two reports listed many other important topics which would be discussed over the years, including the Bible, the date of Easter, liturgy, problems of proselytism, religious liberty, bilateral conversations, national and local councils, youth, doctrine and practice of baptism, theology of marriage and mixed marriage, medical work.

#### B. *50 years of Collaboration, Fraternal Solidarity, and Partnership*

After a fast beginning, the Joint Working Group, for fifty years, has continued to study many important questions such as those just mentioned and others. It has encouraged ecumenical developments. It has published nine reports, the first in 1966, the ninth in 2013, and fifteen study documents over the same period. All nine reports discuss major areas which have been the focus of attention in the modern ecumenical movement since its beginning a century ago, as already mentioned. and a host of other specific issues also vital for Christian life, which are new. The reports also show new developments in many areas.

In its nine reports thus far, as well as its study documents, the JWG has kept pace with the evolution of the ecumenical movement. The reports also show an evolution in JWG practice. For example, as described in the Fifth Report, the first three reports “had simply recorded what had been done in study and collaboration. The Fourth Report ... also looked ahead to what should and could be done. This Fifth Report is presented in the same spirit”,<sup>41</sup> as have been the others from that time. Also new was that the Fourth Report (1975) analyzed theological perspectives on “Common ground,” shared by the RCC and the WCC, focusing on *communion*. In the course of the ten years of the JWG’s existence, three perspectives which “have gained increasing importance (and) should guide the planning for the future,” included: the “existing communion” that exists between those who believe in Christ and are

34. Leslie Newbigin, “Mission to Six Continents,” Chapter 7 in *HEM II*, p.196. He states that this meeting was in May, but it was in April.

35. First Report, no. 11, *IS* 1(1967):20.

36. First Report, no. 12, *IS* 1 (1967):20. Cf. Second Report, no. II, 3,b, *IS* 3 (1967): 31.

37. Second Report, no II, b, *IS* 3(1967): 31.

38. First Report, Appendix II, “Joint Worship at Ecumenical Gatherings,” *IS* 1(1967):22-24.

39. Roman Catholic: Mgrs Joseph Baker and Henry Davis, Father Emmanuel Lanne, OSB, Father John Long, SJ, Father George Mejia, and Father Thomas Stransky, CSP; World Council of Churches: Bishop Thomas Mar Athanasios, Canon John Findlow, Professor Nikos Nissiotis, Pastor W. Norgren, Professor Albert Outler, Professor J.K.S. Reid, Bishop Karekin Sarkissian and Pastor Lukas Vischer. “Joint Worship at Ecumenical Gatherings,” First Report, Appendix II, p. 22.

40. First Report, *Ibid.*, p. 22.

41. *Fifth Report of the Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches*, *IS* 53 (1983):104-119, here 104. (Hereafter: Fifth Report).

baptized in his name, “the need for common witness” and “the call to renewal.”<sup>42</sup>

#### *Relationships on Many Levels*

Relationships have also developed between the WCC and RCC on many levels. We can only illustrate with a few examples from some primary areas of collaboration over the decades. These include, first of all, the common work of the PCPCU and the Commission on Faith and Order, since 1966 until now, to provide materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Prayer for unity is fundamental for the ecumenical movement.

Since 1968, Catholic theologians have participated as full members of the Commission on Faith and Order and have continually been deeply involved in Faith and Order work, in all the major studies. The JWG Ninth Report (2013) was very specific about the lively Catholic participation in recent Faith and Order work:

The PCPCU representatives to the standing commission continued to make significant contributions to the work of F&O. Fr. William Henn has been the principal drafter of the text on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. Fr. Frans Bouwen gave important leadership as one of the vice-moderators of the Commission, as well as the co-moderator of the study project on moral discernment in the churches. Professor Myriam Wijlens was a member of the sub-committee that proposed a restructuring of the Commission. Fr. Gregory Fairbanks was an observer at the United and Uniting Churches consultation in November 2008 in Johannesburg. Catholic members of the Plenary Commission made significant contributions to the 2009 meeting of the Faith and Order Plenary Commission. One of the keynote speakers was Sister Ha Fong Maria Ko. Fr. Jorge Scampini presented a paper at a panel discussion on ecclesiology.<sup>43</sup>

Efforts at cooperation in matters relating to Church and Society began early and continue. In 1968 the WCC and the new Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace sponsored a successful interdisciplinary conference on development in Beirut. Its success gave impetus to the JWG proposal in 1968 for a joint committee on society, development and peace (SODEPAX) based in Geneva, which fostered and supported local and national initiatives of this kind.<sup>44</sup> This creative experiment was concluded by the sponsors in 1980. Many other common efforts have been undertaken successfully, though in fact, “the JWG has yet to find the proper structured ways of collaboration in social thought and action.”<sup>45</sup>

There has been common work in mission in a variety of ways. The reports trace the specific

participation of Catholics with WCC structures, and its importance. The third report (1970) stated that three Roman Catholics from the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the SPCU and SEDOS (a Working party of various missionary orders) were appointed as consultants to the WCC’s Division of World Mission and Evangelism. Roman Catholics have also participated in the work of the Department on Studies in Mission and Evangelism.<sup>46</sup> The fifth report (1983) noted that “for several years a number of Roman Catholic missionary orders which work with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples” have established a consultative relationship with the WCC’s CWME. “They have also sent observer consultants to attend the meetings of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. This collaboration has been particularly important for RC participation in the world missionary Conference of CME at Melbourne in 1980, as well as for the study of *Common Witness* [1981] initiated by the Joint Working Group.<sup>47</sup> Much other cooperation has taken place. And, especially important, from 1984, for several decades, the PCPCU had provided a Catholic consultant, initially from a mission sending Congregation of Women, to serve the WCC Mission Unit in Geneva.

Cooperation in ecumenical education has taken place in many ways. Of particular importance, for decades the PCPCU has provided a Catholic Professor for the Bossey Ecumenical Institute. The PCPCU has also hosted the Bossey Institute in Rome for a week at the end of its semester, providing a variety of contacts and opportunities for the students and faculty to understand many features of the Catholic Church, and its center in Rome.

This brief survey only touches on the extensive cooperation described by the reports in these and many other areas. The sixth report (1984-1990) could speak of “patterns of relationships” for that period in this way:

Twelve RC Theologians are full members of the Faith and Order Commission. Seven others participate as consultants in the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). An RC representative is on the Bossey Board. For a number of years now, three Roman Catholics have worked on the WCC programme staff: in CWME, Bossey and JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation). Various forms of contact and working relationships have developed also between other WCC sub-units and Vatican offices, and missionary societies. There has been useful and continual mutual exchange of information, of newly published documents and of staff visits. Catholic consultants and observers have participated in a series of WCC conferences, meetings, consultations and seminars.

42. *Fourth Official Report of the Joint Working Group (RCC/WCC)*, IS 30 (1976):18-26, here pp. 18-19. (Hereafter: Fourth Report).

43. Ninth Report, p. 10.

44. Stransky, “History”, in Eighth Report, p. 41.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

46. *Third Official Report, Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches*, IS 14 (1971):13-23, here 15. (Hereafter: Third Report)

47. Fifth Report IS 53 (1983):104-119, here 113.

Many member churches of the WCC and the RCC have close relationships on regional and national levels in taking part in and contributing to ecumenical organizations.”<sup>48</sup>

Over the years, joint staff meetings have also taken place between different Vatican offices and corresponding WCC units. To give one example, the seventh Report (1990-1998) noted that the WCC’s Office for Interreligious Relations (OIRR) and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) annually hold a joint meeting. Besides information sharing the meetings offer an opportunity to examine developments in interreligious relations, assess initiatives for dialogue and reflect on future orientations and priorities. The PCID and OIRR invite each other to take part in their respective activities as well as in the meetings of their advisory bodies.”<sup>49</sup> During this period, the two offices undertook three projects; one led to publishing a study document, “Reflections on Interreligious Marriage” (1997); another explored “Interreligious Prayer and Worship.” A third, in light of the conflict in the Middle East, focused on Jerusalem. A process initiated by the Lutheran World Federation, involving the PCID, the OIRR and the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, co-sponsored two colloquia on Jerusalem. The first, on the spiritual significance of Jerusalem for Jews, Christians and Muslims, took place in Glion, Switzerland, 1993. Jewish, Christian and Muslim participants came mainly from Israel/West Bank-Gaza. The second, in Thessaloniki, Greece, took place in 1996. The attempts of this colloquium to imagine the future of Jerusalem were unsuccessful. The brief description of this project summarizes by saying, “although the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians has been initiated, there is still a long way to go before a just and lasting peace is achieved.”<sup>50</sup>

All of these relationships, and there are many others, are described in reports of the JWG.

#### *Strong and Continuing Support by Leadership*

Over the years the Joint Working Group has had the continuing strong support of the highest leadership of the sponsors. WCC general secretaries have visited Rome, leaders of the PCPCU and popes have visited Geneva, and both sides have supported the efforts of the JWG. For example, when Paul VI visited Geneva in 1969, he expressed support of the JWG’s efforts, as did St. John Paul II when he visited in 1984. In 1974 the strong collaboration in Mission was reflected when WCC General Secretary Philip Potter was invited to give a major address at the Synod of Bishops meeting in Rome on the Synod’s theme of Evangelization. It was the first time that a non-Catholic was invited to address

a meeting of the Synod. John Paul used opportunities to give strong support over many years to Faith and Order, referring to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)* on numerous occasions, and mentioning the WCC and Faith and Order in the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (1995). He supported the JWG’s common work in ecumenical education, meeting with and speaking to the Bossey Students and faculty each year when they spent a week in Rome, either in private audience or, later, in his general audience. On the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2008, in recognition of the many years of joint preparation of the WPCU by the PCPCU and the Faith and Order Commission, the WCC General Secretary Samuel Kobia was invited to participate in the closing ceremony of the WPCU with the celebration of Vespers at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, presided over by Pope Benedict XVI. The General Secretary addressed Pope Benedict and those gathered for worship.<sup>51</sup>

#### *Study Documents*

Over 50 years, the JWG has also prepared study documents for use of the churches in promoting unity. It does this “in order to discern the will of God in the contemporary ecumenical situation, and to offer its own reflections in studies,”<sup>52</sup> and not to compete with documents of Faith and Order or other agencies. The range of studies is impressive. Since these JWG studies are the focus of another presentation in this commemoration, I will simply mention them here, in three categories: studies concerning ecumenism, studies concerning mission, proselytism, common witness, and studies on important theological themes.

First, studies concerning ecumenism include those on (a) Dialogue: (1) *Ecumenical Dialogue* (1967),<sup>53</sup> (2) *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue, A JWG Study*<sup>54</sup>; on (b) Formation: *Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions* (1993);<sup>55</sup> on (c) Worship and Ecumenical Spirituality: (1) *Joint Worship at Ecumenical Gatherings* (1966),<sup>56</sup> (2) *Be Renewed in the Spirit. The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism*,<sup>57</sup> on (d) Ecumenical Councils: “*Inspired By the Same Vision*” *Roman Catholic Participation in National and Regional Councils of Churches, A JWG Study*,<sup>58</sup> on (e) Ecumenical Reception: (1) *Reception; Key to Ecumenical Progress* (2013),<sup>59</sup> (2) *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue* (2005) (includes a substantial section on Reception)<sup>60</sup>, (3) *Ecclesiological and*

48. *The Sixth Report of the Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, IS 74*(1990):61-62. (Hereafter: Sixth Report).

49. Seventh Report, “Interreligious Dialogue,” p. 18.

50. These three joint projects described in *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

51. Ninth Report, p. 6.

52. Stransky, “History,” Eighth Report, p. 39.

53. Attached to Second Report, *IS 3* (1967): 33-36.

54. Appendix D, Eighth Report.

55. Appendix D, Seventh Report.

56. Appendix II, First Report.

57. Appendix B, Ninth Report.

58. Appendix E, Eighth Report.

59. Appendix A, Ninth Report

60. Appendix D, Eighth Report.

*Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism A JWG Study*, (2005) (involves reception of BEM).<sup>61</sup>

Second, there are studies concerning mission, proselytism, common witness: (a) *Common Witness and Proselytism*,<sup>62</sup> (b) *Common Witness*, 1981, (c) *The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness*.<sup>63</sup>

Third, there are studies on important theological themes: (a) *Joint Study on Catholicity and Apostolicity* (1971),<sup>64</sup> (b) *The Church: Local and Universal* (1990),<sup>65</sup> (c) *The Notion of "Hierarchy of Truths" – An Ecumenical interpretation*,<sup>66</sup> (d) *Eccelesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism A JWG Study*,<sup>67</sup> (e) *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues* (1998),<sup>68</sup> (f) *The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Ecumenical Perspectives on the 1991 Canberra Statement on Unity*, Study Document requested by the Joint Working Group (1993).<sup>69</sup>

The JWG reports and the study documents show the important contribution being made by the JWG to the ecumenical movement.

### III. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JWG

From its beginning, in the activities described above, the JWG has been documenting developments which will later be seen as aspects of ecumenical history, as is suggested in sections of JWG reports which describe "Collaboration between the WCC and the RCC" and/or "Collaboration through the Joint Working Group." Since many centuries before the birth of the ecumenical movement more than a century ago have marked the history of divisions among Christians, the ecumenical developments fostered by the JWG and other aspects of the ecumenical movement have begun to shape new relationships which will later be chronicled as a history of the movement fostering reconciliation among Christians.

#### *The JWG in The History of the Ecumenical Movement*

The historical significance of the JWG itself is already reflected in two volumes of the WCC's extensive *History of the Ecumenical Movement*: Volume 2 covering 1948-1968, as well as in Volume 3 covering 1968-2000. The authors of four chapters of Volume 2 refer to the JWG. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, describing the general ecumenical development since 1948, speaks of the "new situation"

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61. Appendix C, Eighth Report.

62. Appendix II, Third Report.

63. Appendix C, Seventh Report.

64. Appendix III, Third Report. For text see *One in Christ*, 1970, N. 3.

65. Appendix A, Sixth Report, Also, Faith And Order Paper No. 150, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990, pp. 1-15.

66. Appendix B, Sixth Report. Also Faith and Order Paper No. 150, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990, pp. 16-24.

67. Appendix C, Eighth Report.

68. Appendix B, Seventh Report.

69. *The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Ecumenical Perspectives on the 1991 Canberra Statement on Unity. A Study Document requested by the Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches*, Ed. Günther Gassmann and John A. Radano, 1993. Faith and Order Paper No. 163, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993.

created in 1960 when Pope John XXIII created the Secretariat For Promoting Christian Unity. "An important result of the new situation was the creation of a Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC. During the short time of its existence this group has already shown its usefulness as a platform for discussion of common concerns. Its reports have been well received by the Central Committee of the WCC and by the Vatican authorities."<sup>70</sup> Eugene Carson Blake, writing on "Uppsala and Afterwards" goes further. The Uppsala Assembly received and approved "very important reports of the Joint Working Group."<sup>71</sup> The story revealed in these two official JWG reports, now approved by the highest authority of both the RCC and the WCC, is one of almost unbelievable progress and development in a very short time.

Consultation and co-operation has rapidly developed in all the major areas of work of the World Council: mission, service, international affairs, youth activity, faith and order, and development activity. The ecumenical story revealed in these two reports is not finished; it has hardly begun. The recognition and approval of 'more dynamic' relationships between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church suggests that the next five years will be as excitingly new as the last. This is not to conceal or cover up the ever present difficulties of learning to work together, or to say that no setbacks will take place. The reports assume that there is only one ecumenical movement and that it is the common task of all Churches and Councils to co-operate in that one movement. This is a revolution which we have witnessed in our time.<sup>72</sup>

At the same time, Blake makes clear that the Uppsala Assembly took action to encourage the JWG to continue to give attention to the question of the membership of the Roman Catholic Church in the WCC.<sup>73</sup>

Frederick Nolde, writing on ecumenical action in international affairs, notes that the Joint Working Group which was established in 1965 listed among subjects to be considered "practical consideration in the fields of philanthropy, social and international affairs." The WCC and the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, he says, "are now formally consulting and acting together. The way is thus being opened to the cooperation of two great Christian communities and, perhaps eventually, to cooperation with all men of good will, whether they profess another faith or a faith other than Christian."<sup>74</sup>

Lukas Vischer focuses more directly on the RCC and its relationship to the WCC. He gives a concise

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70. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, "The General Ecumenical Development since 1948," Chapter 1, *HEM* 2, p. 16.

71. Eugene Carson Blake, "Uppsala and Afterwards," Chapter 15, *HEM* 2, p.415.

72. *Ibid.*, p.441.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 442.

74. O. Frederick Nolde, "Ecumenical Action in International Affairs," Chapter 10, *HEM* 2, p. 284.

description of steps leading to the JWG taken over several years, including contributions of particular persons to that process.<sup>75</sup> He speaks of the JWG's importance in helping "much more intensive" relationships to be cultivated.<sup>76</sup> He gives a concise treatment of JWG work including the frequency of its meetings in those early days, the questions that needed to be clarified including that of the possible membership of the RCC in the WCC, the reports it presented to the parent bodies, the range of areas given attention, the tasks undertaken by the JWG.<sup>77</sup>

Authors of Volume 3 of the *History of the Ecumenical Movement*, covering from 1968-2000,<sup>78</sup> who wrote about the JWG were able to see it from a longer perspective. References to the JWG are made in four chapters. In Chapter 4, "The Unity We Share, The Unity We Seek," focusing on Faith and Order, author Melanie May refers to two JWG contributions in this regard. As Faith and Order study began increasingly to focus on a common understanding of the apostolic faith, one of the earliest consultations concerning this study was a joint meeting in 1978 between Faith and Order and the JWG. It drafted a document "Towards a confession of the common faith" which addressed the difficult issue of plural, even contradictory confessional traditions among the churches. The result centred attention on the *regula fidei* (rule of faith) transmitted through the centuries, in relation to which time- and place-bound expressions of faith must be measured.<sup>79</sup> This was helpful when, as the process continued in Faith and Order, The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) became the foundation of a new study project. This eventually led to the important F&O text *Confessing the One Faith: an Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, WCC 1991.<sup>80</sup> May also makes reference to the JWG treatment on moral issues, among the most difficult issues facing the churches, referring indirectly to the important JWG study on this matter.<sup>81</sup>

In Chapter six, "From Missions to Mission", Birgitta Larsson and Emilio Castro, writing about the necessity of the churches over the last forty years to address the issue of common witness and proselytism, and the difficulties the churches experience in this matter, point to the important JWG study documents aimed at helping the churches deal with this matter.

75. Lukas Vischer, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church," Chapter 12, *HEM 2*, pp. 338-340.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 342.

77. *Ibid.*, pp. 349-351.

78. *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume 3, 1968-2000*, edited by John Briggs, Mercy Oduyoye and George Tsetsis. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004. (Hereafter: *HEM 3*)

79. Melanie May, "The Unity We Share, The Unity We Seek," *HEM 3*, p. 89.

80. *Cf. Ibid.*, p. 89, n9.

81. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99. The JWG study which developed, but which she does not mention by name is *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions*. Appendix B, Seventh Report, 1998.

Starting with *Common Witness and Proselytism* (1970), it included also *Common Witness* (1981) which showed a number of new initiatives in this field from various places. Concerns of new developments in proselytism after the political changes in Eastern Europe in the 1990s led the JWG to produce another study text, *The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness*.<sup>82</sup>

In chapter eight, "Ecumenical Formation," Ulrich Becker, in his rich treatment of this subject, starts by citing the JWG study *Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions* (1993), first, to define the concept of ecumenical formation as "an ongoing process of learning within the various local churches and world communions,"[no.9].<sup>83</sup> He quotes further from other numbers:

As a process of learning, ecumenical formation is concerned with engaging the experience, knowledge, skills, talents and the religious memory of the Christian community for mutual enrichment and reconciliation... [no.11]. The language of formation and learning refers to some degree to a body of knowledge to be absorbed.

That is important; but formation and learning require a certain bold openness to living ecumenically as well...[no. 12]. Ecumenical formation takes place not only in formal educational programs but also in the daily life of the church and the people.[no. 13].<sup>84</sup>

Having cited these passages from the JWG study document, he puts his presentation in the perspective presented there: "It is in this broad understanding that the term 'ecumenical formation' is used here, covering all programs, publications and other activities of the ecumenical movement, whether or not terms like 'ecumenical education', 'education for ecumenism', 'ecumenical learning', 'ecumenical theological education', 'ecumenical training', and so on are used."<sup>85</sup>

George Tsetsis mentions the JWG in Chapter 18, concerning the significance of regional ecumenism. Referring to the question of councils of churches, which has long been of interest to the JWG, he notes a contribution of the JWG on that issue, an insight coming from a 1982 consultation on "The Significance and Contribution of the Councils of Churches in the Ecumenical Movement" which it sponsored. The consultation "rightly remarked that councils of churches are instruments designed to help the churches move from 'co-existence' through 'cooperation' to deeper 'commitment'. It went further, by characterizing these councils as provisional 'structures of *koinonia*' which can

82. Birgitta Larsson and Emilio Castro, "From Missions to Missions," *HEM 3*, pp. 144-145.

83. Ulrich Becker, "Ecumenical Formation," Chapter 8, *HEM 3*, p. 175. He cites this JWG text as published in the *Ecumenical Review*, 45, 4, 1993, p. 490. It is also published as Appendix D in the Seventh Report.

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Ibid.*

enable the churches to make 'irreversible steps' in their common ecumenical pilgrimage."<sup>86</sup>

#### IV. CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

The JWG has made strong contributions to traditional ecumenical areas, and must continue to do so. But it has also noted the changing ecumenical landscape and responds to it. To mention just a few items, in its Eighth and Ninth Reports it referred to the development of the Global Christian Forum<sup>87</sup> stressing new cooperation and contacts with Pentecostals/Evangelicals which has now become very important. The WCC helped initiate the GCF, and the PCPCU has supported it with the understanding that it does not take away from the importance of the WCC, and the ecumenical work of seeking visible unity in faith.

"Interfaith dialogue and cooperation", and the difficult problems of "Religiously motivated violence", are issues which have become ever more important in recent times. As described in the Ninth Report, a new development took place when the RCC (PCID), the WCC and the WEA (World Evangelical Alliance) together, for the first time, published an important paper entitled *Christian Witness in a Multireligious World: Recommendations for Conduct*. Its recommendations suggest practical ways of engaging in mission while showing sincere respect for neighbors of other faiths.<sup>88</sup> This can open new opportunities for interfaith dialogue.

Finally, important for the ecumenical future is the responsibility of building on the achievements of the past. The Ninth Report's study document "Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress" took account of the centenary of the ecumenical movement celebrated in 2010, in order to assess, through the lens of ecumenical reception, the accomplishments of the ecumenical movement during that century. That study pointed to many great achievements. It reminds us that a great challenge for the ecumenical movement, and thus for the continuing work of the JWG, is to find ways to receive and to build on the great achievements of a century of ecumenism, and in that way, to assist the churches in growing towards unity.

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#### MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE JOINT WORKING GROUP: IMPORTANT TEXTS AND THEIR IMPACT

REVEREND DR DIANE C. KESSLER\*

My task is to explore achievements of the Joint Working Group (JWG) through texts issued in its nine reports.<sup>1</sup> Yet to fully appreciate their impact, this assessment needs to be placed in a broader context. The JWG has provided an essential channel of communication between representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches who, by virtue of their relationships developed over fifty years, trust each other as sisters and brothers in Christ. This is especially crucial when, as is the case in any family, tensions surface. On this basis alone, the purpose is being fulfilled. It points to the importance of sustained relationships as these bodies live out their commitment toward full, visible Christian unity.

One of the means the JWG has used to communicate has been the release of studies. I counted fourteen.<sup>2</sup> A challenge for the JWG, as for all churches, is communication — how its work is "received" by those for whom it is intended. In theory, the intended audiences are the parent bodies<sup>3</sup>, and through them, all the churches, their clergy and members, as well as bi- and multi-lateral dialogues and ecumenical organizations. In practice, the most appropriate audiences vary. In the Catholic Church, when deemed fitting by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian

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\* Revd. Dr Diane C. Kessler, United Church of Christ, USA. Former Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches. She also served as a member of the JWG responsible for overseeing the relationship between the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church (1999-2006) and has co-chaired a study on Roman Catholic participation in national Council of Churches and regional ecumenical organizations.

1. Reports were issued in 1966, 1967, 1971, 1975, 1982, 1990, 1998, 2005, 2013. The first meeting was held in 1965.

2. Common Witness and Proselytism: A Study Document, 1970; Common Witness (Commission on World Missions and Evangelism Series 1) 1982; The Church: Local and Universal (1990); The Notion of "Hierarchy of Truths": An Ecumenical Interpretation (1990); The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Ecumenical Perspectives on the 1991 Canberra Statement on Unity (1993); The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions (1998); The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness (1998); Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions (1998); Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism (2005); The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue (2005); "Inspired by the Same Vision": Roman Catholic Participation in National and Regional Councils of Churches (2005); Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress (2013); Be Renewed in the Spirit: The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism (2013); and The Church in the Life of Youth and Youth in the Life of the Church (2013).

3. The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

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86. George Tsetsis, "The Significance of Regional Ecumenism," Chapter 18, *HEM* 3, p.466.

87. Eighth Report, pp. 6-7, Ninth Report, pp. 4, 20.

88. Ninth Report, p. 15.

(PCPCU), decisions are forwarded to local “churches” (dioceses) for implementation. The World Council of Churches (WCC) commends to its churches. This may be a distinction without a difference, since in either venue, matters can be appropriated or ignored, based on inclination and need.

Thus, the question of impact needs to be refined. Unlike the WCC Faith and Order Commission’s best seller *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, the JWG can’t point to the number of books sold for a convenient way to assess impact. Thus, I felt like I was clutching at clouds as I tried to answer the question about results. The information I have gathered is representative, not comprehensive. And yet, a survey of these studies shows that the clouds I tried to grasp have some discernible shapes. I am grateful to people whom I consulted and who helped give texture to this text.<sup>4</sup> JWG studies have been used in bi- and multi-lateral dialogues. They have become the basis for engagement in local ecumenical settings. They have been used to foster Roman Catholic participation in councils of churches. They have been referred to by scholars in countless articles, bibliographies, and classroom settings.

One of the sobering drags that hampers their reception is the situation in which many churches find themselves: namely, institutional self-absorption based on diminishing financial and human resources, internal crises, and fear of decline (either real or perceived) in some (though not all) regions; and the related disincentive to promote ecumenical education. These situations are beyond the control of the JWG. They call for realistic expectations, but also for strategic thinking about creative ways to function within this environment. Appropriate criteria for evaluating achievements include the following: Who was the intended audience? Did the study reach them? To what degree did it inform their actions? What enabled this to happen? If challenges arose, what were they and why? What can the JWG learn from this for future work? At the conclusion of my remarks, I will offer a few recommendations about creative strategies.

#### AN ANALYSIS OF IMPORTANT TEXTS

Although any typology is inexact, I have placed the studies in four categories: those arising from theological and ecclesiological concepts developed in faith and order dialogues and addressed by the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism; those addressing specific challenges faced by churches; those cultivating an ecumenical disposition; and those fostering ecumenical engagement.

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4. I am deeply grateful to the following people with whom I consulted about this topic: Thomas F. Best, Alkiviadis Calivas, Laura Everett, Thomas Fitzgerald, Mark Heim, Dagmar Heller, Michael Kinnamon, James Miller, Vito Nicastro, Lewis Patsavos, John Radano, Ronald G. Roberson, CSP, Michael Root, Teresa Rossi, William G. Rusch, Tom Ryan, CSP, Mary Tanner, John Thomas, Lydia Veliko, and Anton C. Vrame, and Robert Welsh.

Using this typology, the studies fall into the following groups:

*Theological and ecclesiological concepts:* The Church: Local and Universal (1990); The Notion of “Hierarchy of Truths”: An Ecumenical Interpretation (1990); and The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Ecumenical Perspectives on the 1991 Canberra Statement on Unity (1993);

*Specific challenges:* Common Witness and Proselytism (1971); Common Witness (Commission on World Missions and Evangelism Series 1) 1982; and The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness (1998); The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions (1998); and “Inspired by the Same Vision”: Roman Catholic Participation in National and Regional Councils of Churches (2005);

*Cultivation of an ecumenical disposition:* Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions (1998); Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism (2005); Be Renewed in the Spirit: The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism (2013); and The Church in the Life of Youth and Youth in the Life of the Church (2013);

*Process of ecumenical engagement:* The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue (2005); and Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress (2013).

#### THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Because understandings of “The Church: Local and Universal” (1990) are critical to achieve unity, a study was commissioned by the JWG for its Sixth Report.<sup>5</sup> Authors pointed to “ecumenical convergence seen today on these notions of the church.” This convergence presaged fruitful development in communion ecclesiology. It included an exploration of what the local church is — “the place where the church of God becomes concretely realized”<sup>6</sup>, and what it is not — “not a free-standing, self-sufficient reality.”<sup>7</sup> It offered helpful insights in how churches of the “Catholic” tradition, and Reformation and Free churches, diverged in understanding how authority is exercised in local settings, and observed that the ecumenical movement has fostered a deeper understanding of universality.<sup>8</sup>

The complete text was included in *Growth In Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*.<sup>9</sup> It was referred

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5. Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Sixth Report (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), pp. 23-37.

6. *Op. cit.*, p. 27, par. 14.

7. JWG Sixth Report, p. 27, par. 13.

8. JWG Sixth Report, p. 28, par. 18.

9. Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, editors, *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998* (Geneva:

to in the report following the third phase of the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue on sacramentality and justification,<sup>10</sup> and in the common statement following the tenth round of the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue.<sup>11</sup> According to Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald, on the faculty of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, it has been cited in North American Orthodox/Roman Catholic dialogues. Mary Tanner said that, in addition to being referred to in Faith and Order's most recent text on "The Church Towards a Common Vision," it also "had not a little influence in the ARCIC conversations on 'Church as Communion' and 'The Gift of Authority.'"<sup>12</sup> The text also has been used in classes on ecclesiology and in summer courses on ecumenical and interreligious relations at the Centro Pro Unione. Michael Kinnamon mentioned the study in his book *Can a Renewal Movement Be Renewed?*<sup>13</sup>

The phrase "hierarchy of truths" first appeared in the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism. "The Notion of 'Hierarchy of Truths': An Ecumenical Interpretation" (1990)<sup>14</sup> developed the meaning of the metaphor used in the Decree, explored its use in Christian history and said it could be "a useful principle in *theological methodology and hermeneutics*."<sup>15</sup> It continued, "By better understanding the ways in which other Christians hold, express and live the faith, each confessional tradition is often led to a better understanding also of itself, and can begin to see its own formulations of doctrine in a broader perspective."<sup>16</sup> It located the various positions of churches on the doctrine of justification in relation to the 'foundation' of faith.<sup>17</sup>

When writing on the subject for the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Tom Stransky said that W.A. Visser 't Hooft recommended, and John Paul II concurred, that the subject merited exploration. This exchange prompted the study, reportedly the first

ecumenical text on the subject. Stransky footnoted it in his article.<sup>18</sup> The study also was included in *Growth In Agreement II*.<sup>19</sup> Insights also found their way into many Faith and Order discussions and bi-lateral dialogues, among them, the tenth round of the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue.<sup>20</sup> Faith and Order member Mark Heim said that, prior to the study, the phrase had evoked different interpretations for Catholics and Protestants. The study defused this difficulty.

"The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Ecumenical Perspectives on the 1991 Canberra Statement on Unity" (1993) was commended for publication by the JWG as a contribution to the 1993 Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order at Santiago de Compostela.<sup>21</sup> It was one of the preparatory texts for the Conference. The introductory essay, by Gunther Gassmann and John A. Radano, placed the Canberra statement in historical perspective. It explored the WCC's 1961 New Delhi position on the nature of unity, listed elements of visible unity, and noted a developing interest in different models of unity.<sup>22</sup> The writers said that the Canberra statement preserved continuity with earlier statements, but also added new elements."<sup>23</sup> Then the text discussed these elements, including an understanding of unity as "an ecclesiology of communion." The writers said "The focus here on koinonia/communion ecclesiology reflects in large part the contribution of Roman Catholic involvement in the ecumenical movement especially after the Second Vatican Council."<sup>24</sup> The study also included five perspectives on the WCC's Canberra Statement: Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, and United-Reformed. The text has been used by WCC staff and other ecumenical leaders as they interpret how *koinonia* has evolved as a dominant understanding of unity. It was used by the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches in the USA when they addressed the subject.

In commenting on all these studies, Prof. Michael Root told me that they "have given a kind of benchmark that others can use for orientation. They define issues and terms in generally agreed ways. In ecumenical discussions, that is important...".

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WCC Publications; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), pp. 862-875.

10. *Op. cit.*, 43. "Church and Justification: Wurzburg, Germany, 11 September 1993", Sec. 3.4.3 pp. 509-511. It was quoted three times in the section on Roman Catholic understandings of the local church.

11. See "The Church as Koinonia of Salvation: Its Structures and Ministries," A Common Statement of the Tenth Round of the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, p. 7, par. 21, fn.33. found on the website of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ([www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)), Ecumenical Inter-Religious Relations, Bilateral Conversations, Roman Catholic Church, The Church as Koinonia of Salvation.

12. E-mail correspondence from Mary Tanner to the author, 6/2/15.

13. Michael Kinnamon, *Can A Renewal Movement Be Renewed? Questions for the Future of Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014).

14. JWG Sixth Report, pp. 38-45.

15. JWG Sixth Report, p. 45 par. 38.

16. JWG Sixth Report, p. 44 par. 36.

17. JWG Sixth Report, p. 43 par. 32.

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18. Nicholas Lossky et. al., editors, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002),

"Hierarchy of Truths," p. 519.

19. *Growth In Agreement II*, pp. 876-883.

20. "Church as Koinonia..." p. 7, par. 21, fn. 33.

21. Gunther Gassmann and John A. Radano, eds., *The Unity of the Church As Koinonia: Ecumenical Perspectives on the 1991 Canberra Statement on Unity* (Geneva: WCC Publications) Faith and Order Paper No. 163.

22. *Op.cit.*, p. 5.

23. *The Unity of the Church*, p. 6.

24. *The Unity of the Church*, p. 7.

## SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

The problem of proselytism and the search for responsible common witness were so pressing that they were addressed three times by the JWG: first in 1970, again in 1982 in cooperation with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, and in 1995 in a text titled “The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness”. The 1970 text defined proselytism as “whatever violates the right of the human person, Christian or non-Christian, to be free from external coercion in religious matters, or whatever in the proclamation of the Gospel, does not conform to the ways God draws free men [sic] to himself in response to his calls to serve in spirit and in truth.”<sup>25</sup> Sections of that document were included in an anthology of ecumenical texts edited by Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope.<sup>26</sup>

In 1998, seven years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the JWG responded to concerns voiced by representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church in WCC Central Committee meetings. That text identified situations which “invite urgent ecumenical attention. . . within the climate of newly found religious freedom, e.g. in Central and Eastern Europe. . .”; also in new missionary movements; and in the developing world “in which proselytizing efforts take advantage of people’s misfortunes. . .”<sup>27</sup> The text included a sobering list of activities to be avoided,<sup>28</sup> examined sources of tension,<sup>29</sup> and offered eight recommendations for steps forward.<sup>30</sup> The study was used by the WCC’s Unit II for its text *Towards Common Witness*.<sup>31</sup>

Because both the 1970 and the 1995 text also dealt with religious freedom<sup>32</sup> and the rights of minority communities, all three texts are as relevant today as they were when they were written. According to Mark Heim, a member of the Faith and Order Commission, the 1982 text continues to be valued as a reference point for an ecumenical understanding of Christian witness; it is “some ground we don’t have to re-hash.” Heim also said that it frequently was mentioned “in restaurants and bars” in conversations with Pentecostal and evangelical participants at Santiago de Compostela. He recalled a

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25. Documentary Supplement, Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Third Official Report, p. 19 par. 8.4.

26. See Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope, editors, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (Geneva: WCC Publications and Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), Chapt. VI: Mission and Evangelism: Toward Common Witness throughout the Earth, pp. 384-387.

27. The Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Seventh Report, Geneva-Rome 1998 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), p. 44 par. 2.

28. JWG Seventh Report, p. 47 par. 19.

29. JWG Seventh Report, pp. 47-48, pars. 21-30.

30. JWG Seventh Report, p. 49.

31. JWG Seventh Report p. 16 par. 4.

32. JWG Seventh Report, pp. 46-47 III pars. 15-17.

particular point of tension in plenary when, in response to concerns raised by Russian Orthodox representatives, Pentecostal delegate Cecil “Mel” Robeck stood up and said “It’s me you’re talking about.” He proceeded to refer to the JWG study, and said it was helpful that work already had been done on the subject. The complete 1995 text was included in the PCPCU’s *Information Service*<sup>33</sup> and in *Growth In Agreement IB*<sup>34</sup>.

Another text addressing specific challenges is *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions* (1998), in the Seventh Report. When I re-read this text, I highlighted almost every sentence. If anything, the chasm between perspectives on some moral issues has grown and the capacity to have respectful dialogue has lessened, both within and among churches. This diminishes the strength of Christian witness.

The text explored the sources of divisions, noted variations among churches in methods for moral decision-making, and offered guidelines. If churches do not find constructive ways to deal with their conflicts, the study warned that “Christians will continue often to caricature one another’s motives, reasonings and ways of behaviour, even with abusive language and acts. Dialogue should replace diatribe.”<sup>35</sup> Guideline No. 10 asserted that “When the dialogue continues to reveal sincere but apparently irreconcilable moral positions, we affirm in faith that the fact of our belonging together in Christ is more fundamental than the fact of our moral differences. The deep desire to find an honest and faithful resolution of our disagreements is itself evidence that God continues to grace the *koinonia* among disciples of Christ.”<sup>36</sup>

The text was used during the Faith and Order study process on moral discernment in the churches. It is referred to by Tom Stransky in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* in a footnote to his entry on the “Hierarchy of Truths”.<sup>37</sup> The complete text was included in the PCPCU’s *Information Service*<sup>38</sup> and in *Growth In Agreement II*.<sup>39</sup> When I was executive director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, I used the text both in an ecumenical meeting of religious leaders, and as preparatory reading for the board of directors before they weighed into several months of dialogue in anticipation of a public referendum on physician assisted suicide.

Another document addressing specific challenges, “Inspired by the Same Vision”: Roman Catholic Participation in National and Regional Councils of Churches (2005) looked at “the nature,

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33. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service 91* [1996/I-II], pp. 77-83.

34. *Growth In Agreement II*, pp. 891-899.

35. JWG Seventh Report, p. 32 par. 3.

36. JWG Seventh Report, p. 42 VI. Guidelines 10.

37. *Dictionary*, p. 519.

38. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service N. 84* [1993/III-IV], pp. 176-180.

39. *Growth In Agreement II*, pp. 900-910.

extent and quality of participation by the Catholic Church” in councils and regional ecumenical organizations. When it was written, regional councils in the Middle East, Oceania and the Caribbean had full Roman Catholic membership; and of approximately 120 national councils of churches, Catholics were members in seventy. Divided into eight sections, the study explored the questions “What works well? What is not working well? Why?”<sup>40</sup>

It quoted from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity’s “Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism 1993,” which noted issues to be considered when exploring membership: “the system of representation, voting rights, decision-making processes, manner of making public statements, and the degree of authority attributed to common statements (169).”<sup>41</sup> From this list, a discerning reader can glean a range of neuralgic issues that surface in councils. The text dealt forthrightly with problems, ways to avoid them and, if necessary, work through them. It also suggested alternatives to full participation if membership was not warranted.

The process the JWG employed to develop this text contributed to its use. The questions (What works well? What doesn’t? and Why?) were posed to a national gathering of state council of churches executives in the United States before the drafting began. This both helped to frame the issues, and to develop interest in the outcome. The same technique was used again when an early draft was presented to a meeting of national council general secretaries in Geneva. The drafters solicited their participation in a study and response process. Councils requesting the draft were from Austria, Britain and Ireland, France (the Protestant Federation of France translated the text from English into French), India, Norway, the Slovak Republic, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland and Tanzania. After the text was published, it was distributed at a subsequent meeting of national council of churches general secretaries, some of whom shared it with members of their governing boards for discussion. The complete text was included in the PCPCU’s *Information Service*<sup>42</sup> and in *Growth In Agreement III*.<sup>43</sup>

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40. Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Eighth Report, Geneva-Rome 1999-2005 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), p. 21.

41. JWG Eighth Report, pp. 98-99.

42. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity *Information Service* N. 117 [2004/IV], pp. 214-230.

43. Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA, eds., *Growth In Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, and Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), pp. 531-558.

## CULTIVATION OF AN ECUMENICAL DISPOSITION

Ecumenical professionals understand how helpful it is to work with colleagues who know the history, theory, and practice of the ecumenical movement. Yet generations of ecumenically illiterate clergy are being trained, with harmful effects that ripple throughout the churches. Church leaders are aware of this problem and are trying to address it. The JWG study “Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions” (1998) acknowledged this deficit. The study was mindful of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity’s “Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism.” The Directory has a whole chapter on “Ecumenical Formation in The Catholic Church,” including recommendations for a course outline.<sup>44</sup> The JWG text has been widely used: by teachers at The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, by academics at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, by WCC staff in the programme on Ecumenical Theological Education, as well as in *Ecumenical Review* articles dealing with the subject. It was included in the PCPCU’s *Information Service*<sup>45</sup> and in *Growth In Agreement II*.<sup>46</sup> It is referred to by Ulrich Becker in the article on “Ecumenical Learning” in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*.<sup>47</sup> When I searched the world-wide web for “ecumenical formation,” numerous links to the WCC, its members, and the Catholic Church appeared. Although not easily accessed, the JWG study is among “Documents related to the WCC Programme “Education and Ecumenical Formation” under “Resources.”<sup>48</sup>

“The Church in the Life of Youth and Youth in the Life of the Church” (2013), prepared for the JWG’s Ninth Report, sought to promote cooperation among youth, generously defined as people between eighteen and thirty-five years,<sup>49</sup> and to discover “how youth belong, or discover the need to belong, to the church family.”<sup>50</sup> Using electronic networking, the drafters circulated a six page text to explore the phenomenon of “believing without belonging.”<sup>51</sup> The process, itself,

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44. *Pontificium Consilium ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam, Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (Vatican City, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1993), III. Ecumenical Formation in the Catholic Church, pp. 37-56. “A Specific Course in Ecumenism,” pars. 79-80, pp. 48-49.

45. *Information Service* N. 84 [1993/III-IV], pp. 176-180.

46. *Growth In Agreement II*, pp. 884-890.

47. *Dictionary*, p. 379.

48. It also appears at [www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-article](http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-article). Or see <https://www.google.ch/search?q=JWG+formation+ecumenical&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=de&client=safari>.

49. Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Ninth Report, 2007-2012 (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2013), p. 141 par. 6.

50. JWG Ninth Report, p. 139.

51. JWG Ninth Report, p. 147, par. 27 & 28.

engaged a wider circle of people about this concern. The study was included in the PCPCU's *Information Service*.<sup>52</sup> It will appear in *Growth In Agreement IV* when that book is published.

The purpose of the study titled "Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism" (2005)<sup>53</sup> was "to assist the churches to recognize what has been accomplished, and build on it."<sup>54</sup> This text didn't fit neatly into my typology. Most of the study explored the growing ecumenical convergence on baptism, remaining differences, and ecclesiological implications. But because it concluded with pastoral and practical recommendations, I have placed it in this section on cultivating an ecumenical disposition.

The text listed ecumenical agreements where mutual understanding of baptism was the key basis for those achievements.<sup>55</sup> Yet it also drew attention to two ecclesiological issues that need resolution: the need for a common understanding of the apostolic faith<sup>56</sup> and "questions of the nature and purpose of the church and its role in the economy of salvation."<sup>57</sup>

The study urged churches to increase the visibility of achievements. It offered several suggestions: ecumenical instruments such as councils of churches should refer to baptism in their theological basis;<sup>58</sup> common statements expressing mutual recognition and common baptismal certificates could be developed in local settings;<sup>59</sup> churches should consider "sending and receiving representatives to be present or take part in each other's baptismal celebrations..., [and consider] reclaiming major Christian festivals such as Easter, Pentecost, Epiphany as common times for the celebration of baptism...."<sup>60</sup>

The study was written in tandem with Faith and Order. Thus, it provided direct, real-time, mutual enrichment. The JWG study also brought into relief particular concerns voiced by Catholic representatives—namely, about the use of alternative wording instead of the traditional Trinitarian baptismal formula, and with "the admission of persons to the Eucharist before baptism..."<sup>61</sup>.

The full text was included in the PCPCU's *Information Service*<sup>62</sup> and in *Growth In Agreement III*.<sup>63</sup> It has been used in classroom settings. It has been quoted in other books dealing with the subject, such as *Baptism*

*Today* edited by Thomas F. Best,<sup>64</sup> and *Baptized into Christ: A Guide to the Ecumenical Discussion on Baptism*, by Dagmar Heller.

The study "Be Renewed in the Spirit: The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism" (2013) had two goals: to remind Christians of the spiritual impulse at the heart of the ecumenical movement, and to offer practical ways that churches could nurture that impulse. "After defining the terms 'spirituality' and 'ecumenism' (words that popular culture often uses without sufficient clarity), this study explores the theological basis for spiritual ecumenism; considers practices of piety, prayer, and worship that nurture these spiritual roots; highlights how God in Christ through the Holy Spirit breathes new life into Christians through examples among the saints and transforming encounters with Christians of other traditions; and offers some concrete ideas for ways in which this spiritual foundation can be appropriated more fully in local settings."<sup>65</sup>

Practical recommendations were offered in five categories: (1) opportunities to pray together — such as finding fresh ways that participants could engage with each other during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity;<sup>66</sup> (2) opportunities for ecumenical witness — such as making use of ecumenical visitations to place a human face on the ecumenical movement;<sup>67</sup> (3) opportunities to offer ecumenical hospitality — on occasions of rites of passage, and through attention to preparatory planning where ecumenical guests will be present.<sup>68</sup> Of particular interest was the recommendation "that educational travel should be used as a means to involve Christians from different traditions in encounters dedicated to promoting dialogue and an exchange of spiritual gifts";<sup>69</sup> (4) opportunities for programmatic engagement — through shared Bible study and careful attention to the ecumenical impulse underlying joint mission projects;<sup>70</sup> and (5) opportunities for ecumenical education — by encouraging academic staff to draw explicitly on the spiritual roots of ecumenism.<sup>71</sup>

The text was included in the PCPCU's *Information Service*.<sup>72</sup> It will be included in *Growth In Agreement IV*. An article about the "practical fruits" was

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52. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity *Information Service* No. 143 [2014/I], pp. 97-103.

53. JWG Eighth Report, pp. 45-72.

54. JWG Eighth Report, p. 19.

55. JWG Eighth Report, see pars. 25-29.

56. JWG Eighth Report, p. 58 par. 56.

57. JWG Eighth Report, p. 58 par. 57.

58. JWG Eighth Report, pp. 68-69, par. 102.

59. JWG Eighth Report, p. 69, par. 103.

60. JWG Eighth Report, p. 69, par. 104.

61. JWG Eighth Report, p. 70, par. 109 (10).

62. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* No. 117 [2004/IV], pp. 188-204.

63. *Growth In Agreement III*, pp. 559-586.

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64. Thomas F. Best, ed., *Baptism Today: Understanding, Practice, Ecumenical Implications*: Faith and Order Paper. No. 207 (World Council of Churches Publications, A Pueblo Book: Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2008). See p. vii, and articles by Paul Fidler (p. 79) and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (p. 214).

65. JWG Ninth Report, p. 23.

66. JWG Ninth Report, p. 131 A.

67. JWG Ninth Report, p. 132-133 B.

68. JWG Ninth Report, pp. 133-134 C.

69. JWG Ninth Report, p. 24.

70. JWG Ninth Report, p. 134 D.

71. JWG Ninth Report pp. 134-135 E.

72. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* No. 143 (2014,I), pp. 80-96.

included in the journal *Ecumenical Trends*,<sup>73</sup> published by the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute. That article was widely distributed at the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC in Busan. Teresa Rossi said that she has made this text required reading in her introductory class on ecumenism.

#### PROCESS OF ECUMENICAL ENGAGEMENT

Ecumenical dialogue was first addressed by the JWG in 1967. Both bi- and multi-lateral dialogues have flourished since then, and new factors, such as a heightened emphasis on confessional identity, have surfaced. Thus, the subject was revisited in 2005 in a study on “The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue”.<sup>74</sup> The text explored the theological basis of dialogue, listed a number of principles for constructive engagement, and contained an insightful section on the spirituality and practice of ecumenical dialogue.<sup>75</sup> It spoke about the importance of examining “the historical and socio-economic factors affecting doctrinal issues”,<sup>76</sup> observing that “Dialogue with Christians from whom we are divided requires examining how our identity has been constructed in opposition to the other, i.e how we have identified ourselves by what we are not. To overcome polemical constructions of identity requires new efforts to articulate identity in more positive ways, distinguishing between confessional identity as a sign of fidelity to faith, and confessionalism as an ideology constructed in enmity to the other.”<sup>77</sup> It concluded with two case studies.

The full text was included in the PCPCU’s *Information Service*<sup>78</sup> and in *Growth In Agreement III*.<sup>79</sup> Ecumenical leaders have used it when a new dialogue is launched, or to bring new members on board. It is required reading in the Centro Pro Unione’s summer introductory course on ecumenism.

“Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress (2013)”<sup>80</sup> defined reception as “the process by which the churches make their own the results of all their encounters with one another, and in a particular way the convergences and agreements reached on issues over which they have historically been divided.”<sup>81</sup> The study was organized in five sections, each of which concluded with learnings and recommendations. It described various approaches to reception that reflected ecclesiological differences. It explored ways that

reception has enabled churches to take steps toward overcoming divisions. It identified continuing challenges. And it highlighted how ecumenical formation contributes to successful reception.

The study included a section with details about process.<sup>82</sup> If someone wants to understand how reception works in each of the communions, this text provides a thumbnail, unvarnished description. It also illustrates how complex, varied, time-consuming, and labor-intensive the process is—and this only at official levels of reception. Without focused determination, it will not happen.<sup>83</sup> The study provided a detailed overview of positive steps that have been taken.<sup>84</sup> And it offered examples of situations when reception has been problematic. It pointed to “an ecumenical overload of texts and response processes—and this at a time when many churches face declining resources, both human and financial, with which to support their ecumenical engagement.”<sup>85</sup>

Because this is among the most recently published JWG studies, it still is too early to determine its impact, but Teresa Rossi said that she had shared the text with all members of the Pentecostal/Roman Catholic dialogue. The study was included in the PCPCU’s *Information Service*.<sup>86</sup> It will be included in *Growth In Agreement IV*.

#### HOW TO INCREASE THE IMPACT OF JWG TEXTS

This survey provides an opportunity to look at what contributes to the reception of the JWG’s offerings. Drafters should think about this at the beginning of any study.

So what can we learn? Here are some observations.

- If a study addresses a pressing problem that is keenly felt by many people, offering helpful insights, it will be used. The JWG’s work on proselytism and common witness illustrates this.
- When a study is motivated by a pressing problem, be sure that the stakeholders are given copies and encouraged to discuss it.
- When representatives from the intended audience are strategically engaged in preparing a text, their ownership of the results will increase. The study on Roman Catholic participation in councils of churches is a good case for this approach.
- The role of ecumenical leaders who are familiar with these studies is crucial in their use, whether in meetings, classrooms, dialogues, or publications. WCC and PCPCU staff and ecumenical scholars are essential keepers and transmitters of this knowledge. They can point the way. But each member of the

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73. Diane C. Kessler, “Spiritual Roots, Practical Fruits: Insights from One Study in the Joint Working Group Ninth Report,” *Ecumenical Trends*, Vol. 42, No. 9, October 2013, pp. 6/134 to 8/136, and 14/142.

74. JWG Eighth Report, pp. 73-89.

75. JWG Eighth Report, pp. 79-80, pars. 37-42.

76. JWG Eighth Report, p. 81, par. 52.

77. JWG Eighth Report, p. 80 par. 40.

78. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* No. 117 [2004/IV], pp. 204-214.

79. *Growth In Agreement III*, pp. 587-604.

80. JWG Ninth Report, pp. 41-102.

81. JWG Ninth Report, p. 43 par. 1.

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82. JWG Ninth Report, pp.56-63, pars. 36-53.

83. JWG Ninth Report, p. 63 par. C.1.

84. JWG Ninth Report, pp. 64-89.

85. JWG Ninth Report, p. 91 par. 123.

86. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity *Information Service* No. 143 [2014/I], pp. 51-79.

JWG should see him/herself as an ecumenical ambassador, spreading the word about work that had been done.

- Once a study has been accepted by the parent bodies, people should be assigned to draft a news release or write an article about it in an ecumenical journal. This will increase the number of eyeballs on the text. Those who can influence programs for ecumenical events could suggest that it be included as a workshop or plenary topic. In North America, for example, this could be the annual gatherings of the North American Academy of Ecumenists or the National Workshop on Christian Unity.
- The world-wide web provides access to texts for researchers, academics, students, and the just plain curious. Although the study on ecumenical formation is available on the web, it took me a half an hour to find it. That's too long. WCC and the PCPCU staff should be sure that texts are in easily accessible search engines.
- Council of churches staff are allies. If regularly briefed on what is available, they will know where a particular study might be helpful. For example, when the National Council of Churches in the USA's Faith and Order Commission was beginning work on communion ecclesiology, the general secretary told them about "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia."

When preparing this paper, I was reminded about how valuable it is to gather people from various Christian traditions, cultures, and experiences, competent in their fields, to work on a particular question and share the results. I also was impressed once again by the high quality and continuing relevance of these texts. And when I consulted ecumenical colleagues about them, it had an unintended but happy consequence — namely, it reminded them of resources they had overlooked or forgotten, if they ever knew about them.

Thus, I have two related recommendations. The JWG and its parent bodies should make these documents available to fresh audiences. In a departure from Biblical imagery, put the old wine in new wine-skins. Market the studies again in some fresh way. This should involve both traditional approaches and the latest technology. In addition, to facilitate easy access, the reports should be grouped in one location on each of the parent bodies' websites.

It is heartening to see how over time — probably far too much time from the perspective of impatient and aging ecumenists — ideas have given birth to new initiatives and progress has occurred. In other words, as long as the churches are faced with the need for reconciliation in both church and world, there's work to be done, and the Joint Working Group is an essential element in this quest.

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## A PERSONAL TESTIMONY BY BISHOP JONAS JONSON\*

### JOINT WORKING GROUP 50 YEARS

In the years after my retirement as a diocesan bishop, I have spent some time writing ecumenical history including a biography of the founder of the Life and Work movement Nathan Söderblom. This summer 90 years have passed since the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work was held in Stockholm in 1925. With a clear vision and incredible perseverance the Swedish Archbishop Nathan Söderblom succeeded in bringing the churches of the Reformation and a number of Eastern Orthodox churches together for a joint contribution to peace and social justice. This happened after the immense devastation of World War I. The modern ecumenical movement was born in response to human disaster. Söderblom truly believed in spiritual ecumenism not infringing on confession, ecclesial structures or liturgical expression. Respecting the individuality of churches, his concept of unity was spacious and non-dogmatic. Authentic spirituality centred on the cross of Christ would unite all believers for common action. Life and Work became a cornerstone in an ecumenical venture, which turned the churches from enmity and divergence toward mutuality and convergence. Any demand for superiority or uniformity was rejected; what he strived for was free cooperation for peace and justice, all for the life of the world.

The Roman Catholic Church had also been invited to participate but declared its *non possumus*, and provoked by Stockholm 1925 and the Faith and Order conference in Lausanne 1927 Pope Pius XI in 1928 promulgated the encyclical letter *Mortalium Animos* on "Fostering true religious union". Its attitude was uncompromising, rejecting all efforts to bring about an ecumenical dialogue. People involved with ecumenism were accused not only of error; they distorted the true idea of religion, and thus rejected it. Only one way forward was offered: a return to the Catholic Church and an unconditional subordination to Rome. Söderblom responded with humble conviction that a church should recognize the catholicity of the other and cooperate even if they were not fully united. His extensive dialogue with Fr. Max Pribilla, SJ, clarified the positions but as Söderblom passed away in 1931 the debate never reached any conclusion. This was long before Vatican II with its Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1962) dramatically changed the ecumenical scene.

As we are gathered for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Joint Working Group almost a century later, many of us would affirm Söderblom's deeply grounded spiritual ecumenism and his plea for practical cooperation in spite of ecclesial diversity. In the years since *Mortalium Animos* the world has changed and so have indeed the churches. I remember my own bishop returning from the Council, where he was one of the

Lutheran observers, telling us what was in the making. Then and there my own ecumenical journey started, culminating with participation in the Joint Working Group. Today we could not even imagine the mutual condemnations in the 1920s, even less understand how it was at all possible not to meet and build both personal and ecclesial relations.

In the ecumenical process the Joint Working Group has played a key role. It was not always very visible and much publicized, but this official commission, humbly named as if were of an informal group, has continuously measured the ecumenical temperature and served as a laboratory for ecumenical dialogue and cooperation. The structured and sustained relationship between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church has been documented in nine reports. They are now ecumenical history and a manifestation of both vision and venture, problems and prospects, commitment and convergence. The Joint Working Group has been, if not a trail blazing operation, an indispensable instrument for furthering the call to visible unity.

During its eight mandate (1999-2005) I had the privilege of serving as co-moderator together with Archbishop Mario Conti of Glasgow. There was a certain mistrust on both sides. The Catholic Church had chosen not to participate fully in the JPIC process (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation) leading up to the convocation to Seoul. In many of the Protestant churches there was a re-affirmation of confessional identity. Among the Orthodox, criticism of ecumenical involvement was mounting. American conservative evangelicalism was gaining ground at the expense of more ecumenical mainline Protestantism.

At the same time a number of decisive events and developments took place both in the Catholic Church and in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches. With the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), Pope John Paul II had given rich nourishment and a renewed vision to the whole ecumenical movement. The Jubilee Year 2000 provided opportunities for deep spiritual sharing, both at the opening of the Holy Door, the ecumenical commemoration of the witnesses of faith in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and at the beginning of the third millennium. Although the document *Dominus Jesus* (2001) cooled much ecumenical enthusiasm, a consultation at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Joint Working Group strongly affirmed both dialogue and cooperation. For the World Council of Churches this period was marked by the reflection on "A Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC", an attempt at reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement as a whole, the creation of a

Global Christian Forum including Christian communities outside the Council, and not least of a renewal of structured relationships with the Orthodox churches. At times severe internal problems in the Catholic Church as well as the World Council of Churches spilled over into our deliberations and caused sharp words, but mutual trust and theological integrity stood the test. There was, to be sure, much frustration in the group, but when our report finally was presented to the parent bodies, we were all both proud and grateful.

It is the task of the Joint Working Group to follow ecumenical developments, encourage new initiatives, analyse and act whenever Christian unity could be strengthened in the life, liturgy and teaching of the church. The Joint Working Group has on many occasions encouraged its parent bodies more bravely to explore creative possibilities and to propose new steps and programmes. Over the years there has been substantial cooperation in many areas, but the fact remains that the Joint Working Group has dealt more with what could be defined as matters of Faith and Order rather than Life and Work. The agenda has been too narrow and the ecumenical approach not comprehensive enough. With the great and inspiring encyclical of Pope Francis on the environmental crisis, *Laudato Si'*, a new platform for wide and committed cooperation has been offered, as environmental concerns have been on the agenda of the World Council of Churches for decades and since many years a priority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. As the General Secretary Olav Fykse Tveit put it: "This encyclical proves to all that these are matters at the heart of our Christian faith, and that we as Christians should address them together as issues of justice and peace. This is the time to focus on our shared responsibility as beings, and the way we as churches should support those who are ready to make the required changes." I would add that the encyclical opens for joint theological reflection on integral ecology and the holy sacraments as signs of holiness, healing and wholeness in the wounded world. Ecumenical energy and commitment has been ceasing in large segments of Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christianity. The environmental crisis is a man-made disaster of immense proportions. It urgently calls for common theological reflection and joint action as did the devastation of human culture one hundred years ago.

After fifty years of sharing information, building mutual trust and strengthening the foundation for common action, the Joint Working Group will face new challenges and make an even greater contribution to the fulfilment of the ecumenical calling. Spiritual ecumenism could liberate Christians for a vision even greater than the visible unity of the church; what is asked for is no less than a full recognition of the unity and integrity of God's creation.

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\* Jonas Jonson Emeritus Bishop of the diocese of Strängnäs of the Church of Sweden. Actively participated in the life and work of the WCC for more than 50 years. Co-Moderator of the JWG during its eighth mandate, 1999-2005.

# VISIT TO ROME OF A DELEGATION FROM THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE FOR THE FEAST OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

26–29 June 2015

*Reaching full unity, “represents one of my main concerns”, the Pope said in an audience granted Saturday morning, 27 June, to a delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which came to Rome for the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul. Accompanied by the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Kurt Koch, they were received by the Pope in the Private Library of the Apostolic Palace. Members of the delegation were Metropolitan Ioannis of Pergamon, Metropolitan Maximos of Sehyria and Protopresbyter Heikki Huttunen, bearing a message from the Ecumenical Patriarch. The Pope gave an address, of which we publish the English text here below followed by the message of Patriarch Bartholomew.*

## ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

27 June 2015

Dear Brothers in Christ,

It is with joy and heartfelt friendship that I greet you and welcome you to Rome on the feast of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, principal patrons of this Church. Your presence at the celebrations of our feast testifies once again to the deep relationship between the sister Churches of Rome and Constantinople, foreshadowed by the bond which unites the respective patron Saints of our Churches, the Apostles Peter and Andrew, brothers in blood and faith, united in apostolic service and martyrdom.

I recall with gratitude the warm welcome given to me at the Phanar of my beloved brother, Bartholomew, by the clergy and faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, on the feast of Saint Andrew last November. The ecumenical prayer on the vigil of the feast, and then the Divine Liturgy in the Patriarchal Church of Saint George, offered us the possibility of together praising the Lord and asking him with one voice for that day to draw nearer when full, visible communion between Orthodox and Catholics may be re-established. The embrace of peace exchanged with His Holiness was an eloquent sign of that fraternal charity which encourages us along the path of reconciliation, and which will enable us one day to participate together at the altar of the Eucharist.

Attaining that goal, towards which we have set out together in trust, represents one of my main concerns, for which I do not cease to pray to God. I hope, therefore, that opportunities may increase for meeting each other, for exchange and cooperation among Catholic and Orthodox faithful, in such a way that as we deepen our knowledge and esteem for one another, we may be able to overcome any prejudice and misunderstanding that may remain as a result of our long separation. It is my desire that we may be able to

face, in truth but also with a fraternal spirit, the difficulties which still exist. In this way, I wish also to renew my support for the important work of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The problems which we may encounter in the course of our theological dialogue must not lead us to discouragement or resignation. The careful examination of how in the Church the principle of synodality and the service of the one who presides are articulated, will make a significant contribution to the progress of relations between our Churches.

Dear brothers, as preparations for the Pan-Orthodox Synod are intensifying, I assure you of my prayers and that of many Catholics, that these extensive efforts may come to fruition. I trust also in your prayers for the Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church, on the theme of the family, which will take place here in the Vatican this coming October, at which we are looking forward also to the participation of a fraternal delegate from the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

With regard to agreement and cooperation on the most urgent issues, I am pleased to recall that in the recent conference that presented my Encyclical *Laudato si'* on care for our common home, the Patriarch Bartholomew sent you, dear Metropolitan John, to address the conference on this occasion.

I renew my gratitude for your presence and for your cordial expressions of closeness. I ask you to convey my fraternal greeting to His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew and to the Holy Synod, together with my most heartfelt appreciation for having desired to send eminent representatives to share our joy. Please pray for me and for my ministry.

“Peace to all of you that are in Christ!” (1 Pt 5:14).

ORE, 3 July 2015

LETTER FROM HIS ALL-HOLINESS  
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW  
TO HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

To His Holiness and Beatitude Pope Francis of Senior Rome: rejoice in the Lord.

Once more, the joyous day is dawning for the venerable feast and sacred remembrance of the chief Apostles Peter and Paul, who were martyred for Christ's sake in the see of Your Church. Wherefore, we hasten to concelebrate and commemorate with You again this year through our formal delegation in accordance with the long-established blessed custom.

We retain in our heart, like a precious treasure, the recollection of our recent personal encounters with Your Holiness both in Jerusalem and Rome, which further renewed and sealed our fraternal bonds, while also affirming our desire to continue on the path toward our full union and communion desired by the Lord. Thus, in the Holy City during this past May we were deemed worthy together to venerate the sacred place where the leader of our faith, our Lord Jesus Christ, taught, suffered, was buried and arose from the dead, even as we honored the fiftieth anniversary of the historical meeting there of our late predecessors Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, whose bold initiatives opened up the period of rapprochement and reconciliation for our Churches.

Moreover, our meeting in Rome, through the gracious initiative and invitation of Your Holiness at the beginning of this month, for the purpose of together contributing - with the Presidents of Israel and Palestine - to the prevalence of peace in a region of the Middle East torn apart by conflict, was profoundly and personally moving, while at the same time

conveying a message of our Lord's peace and love to a contemporary world that so thirsts for this.

For all these things, we again express our sincere gratitude to Your Holiness together with our wholehearted prayer that the Lord may strengthen You with His grace and power in order that You may for many years continue Your invaluable leadership and service in our modern world, inspiring everyone with the virtues of Your personality and love toward God and humanity.

May the celebrated chief Apostles Peter and Paul intercede to God for His Church and the whole world guiding and encouraging us along the way of truth and love "until we all attain to the unity of the faith ... speaking the truth in love in order that we might grow in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ." (Eph. 13-15)

These congratulatory and festive feelings will be conveyed to Your Holiness by our delegation - led by His Eminence Metropolitan John of Pergamon, accompanied by His Excellency Archbishop Job of Telmessos and the Very Reverend Archdeacon John Chryssavgis - representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate and ourselves during the celebrations of the Thronal Feast of Your Church.

In communicating these sentiments with Your Holiness in a spirit of deep love, we embrace You fraternally in the Lord, and remain with love and special esteem in Him.

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate; on June 24th,  
2014

Your Holiness' beloved brother in Christ  
+ Bartholomew of Constantinople

ORE, 3 July 2015

# ECUMENICAL NEWS

## INTERNATIONAL REFORMED-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

*Ghent (Belgium), 22-28 February 2015*

The fifth meeting of the fourth phase of international dialogue between the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity took place 22-28 February 2015 at the Carmelite Center, Ghent, Belgium. The PCPCU and the WCRC are especially grateful to two generous Belgian benefactors for sponsoring the meeting. The two teams were also privileged to be hosted for dinner by Bishop Luc Van Looy and the interchurch council of Ghent; and to pray evening prayer prepared by the interchurch council of Bruges in the 'Ecumenical Chapel' followed by a dinner with Bishop Johan Bonny, representing the Belgium Bishop's conference, members of the Monastery of Chevetogne, and the interchurch council of Bruges.

The overall theme of this phase, which is scheduled to be completed by 2017, is *Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an agent for Justice*. Bishop Kevin Rhoades, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in Indiana, USA, and Rev. Dr Martha Moore-Keish, of the Columbia Theological Seminary, in Decatur, Georgia, USA, co-chair this dialogue on behalf of the Catholic Church and the World Communion of Reformed Churches respectively. The secretaries for the co-chairs are Rev. Dr Douwe Visser, Executive Secretary for Theology, Mission and Communion for the WCRC and Msgr. Dr Gregory J. Fairbanks of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Reformed participants for this meeting included Rev. Dr Reinerio Arce-Valentin (Cuba); Rev Dr Marina Ngursangzeli Behera (India); Dr Christopher Dorn (USA); Rev. Dr Benebo Fubara-Manuel (Nigeria); Rev. Dr George Hunsinger (USA); Dr George Sabra (Lebanon) and Rev. Dr Lindsay Schlüter (Scotland). Reformed observers were Rev. Viktória Kóczyán (Hungary) and Rev. Fundiswa Kobo (South Africa).

The Catholic participants were Dr Peter Casarella (USA); Dr Peter De Mey (Belgium) ; Rev. Dr William Henn, OFM cap. (USA/Italy) and Rev. Dr Jorge Scampini, OP (Argentina). Dr Annemarie Mayer (Germany) was unable to attend.

The two teams discussed three papers on topics related to the overall theme. Dr Peter Casarella presented a paper on "Natural Law in our Traditions", Rev. Dr Jorge Scampini presented a paper on "Sacramentality" and Dr George Hunsinger addressed the topic "The Church as Witness and Sacrament". Significant time was spent on initial drafts for the final report, prepared by Rev. Dr William Henn and Dr Christopher Dorn.

There have been three previous phases of dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU). These phases resulted in the reports: "The Presence of Christ in Church and World" (1970-1977); "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church" (1984-1989); and "Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God" (1998-2005). The World Communion of Reformed Churches was born through the merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council in June 2010.

## MALINES CONVERSATIONS GROUP MEETING

*Chestnut Hill (MA, USA), 22-26 March 2015*

An international group of eight Anglican and seven Catholic theologians, representing eight countries and four Anglican provinces, met from 22-26 March at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, USA. Known as "The Malines Conversations Group," participants continued their wide-ranging deliberations on various aspects of Anglican-Catholic sacramental, liturgical and practical theology which they had begun two years ago at the Benedictine Monastery of Chevetogne in Belgium. Like the original Malines Conversations of the 1920s hosted by the then Archbishop of Malines-Bruxelles Cardinal Mercier, this is an informal dialogue and not officially sponsored by the Anglican and Catholic Churches, though it has been organized in consultation with and has received the blessing of both the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Lambeth Palace.

Last year, the group met in Canterbury and London, and was joined by its co-patrons, retired Archbishop of Malines-Bruxelles Cardinal Godfried Danneels, and former Archbishop of Canterbury the Most Revd and Rt. Hon. The Lord Williams of Oystermouth, each of whom gave presentations. This year, US-based bishops and scholars included Archbishop Joseph Tobin, CSsR, of Indianapolis, Bishop Catherine Waynick of the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis, distinguished Orientalist Fr. Robert Taft SJ FBA, Fr. John Baldovin SJ of the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, and Professor Karen Westerfield Tucker of Boston University. The Group was hosted by Fr. William Leahy SJ, President of Boston College, and graciously received by the Cowley Fathers at the Monastery of St John the Evangelist in Cambridge, and the Episcopal Church of the Advent on Beacon Hill. The Malines Conversations Group includes five members of ARCIC including one of its co-chairs, and two members of the IARCCUM coordinating committee including one of its co-chairs.

This year's full conversations explored contemporary Anglican-Roman Catholic relations through the broad lens of Sacramentality, considering the world, the Word, the Eucharist, the Church and ministry. Other topics included joint presentations on the sacramentality of scripture, and discussions relating to apostolicity, history and authority.

At the recommendation of those responsible for coordinating ecumenical relations in the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, the Malines Conversations Group remains in close communication and collaboration with both the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) and the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM). The number of participants is intentionally limited, to allow for detailed conversation, and for the growth of friendship which characterized the first Malines Conversation.

The Group's Steering Committee is chaired by The Revd. Dr Thomas Pott, OSB of the Monastery of Chevetogne, along with The Revd. Dr James Hawkey of Westminster Abbey, and the Revd. Dr Keith Pecklers, SJ, of the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome.

A fourth meeting is scheduled for April, 2016.

Members present in 2015:

*Anglican Participants:* The Revd. Dr Jennifer Cooper, College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, UK; The Revd. Dr James Hawkey, Westminster Abbey, London, UK; The Revd. Dr Simon Jones, Chaplain of Merton College, Oxford, UK; Archbishop David Moxon, co-Chair of ARCIC III, Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the Holy See and Director of the Anglican Centre, Rome, Italy, Archbishop Emeritus of New Zealand; The Revd. Dr Michael Nai-Chiu Poon, member of ARCIC III, Singapore; Canon David Richardson OBE, Melbourne, Australia; Canon Dr Nicholas Sagovsky, member of ARCIC III, London, UK; The Reverend Austin K. Rios, Rector of St Paul's within the Walls, Rome, Italy.

*Catholic Participants:* Bishop Donald Bolen, Co-Chair of IARCCUM, Saskatoon, Canada; The Revd. Anthony Curren, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, co-Secretary of ARCIC III; Professor Joris Geldhof, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium; Dr Maryana Hnyp, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium; The Revd. Professor Keith Pecklers, SJ, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy; The Revd. Professor Thomas Pott, OSB, Monastery of Chevetogne; Ateneo Sant'Anselmo, Rome, and Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy; The Revd. Cyrille Vael, OSB, Monastery of Chevetogne.

ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC  
INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION (ARCIC III)  
*Villa Palazzola (Province of Rome), 28 April-4 May 2015*

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) is the official body appointed by the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion to engage in theological dialogue in order that they may come into visible unity and full ecclesial communion. It held the fifth meeting of its current phase (ARCIC III) in an atmosphere of shared prayer and friendship at Villa Palazzola, the summer residence of the Venerable English College in Rome, 28 April-4 May 2015. Members of the Commission are grateful to the staff of Villa Palazzola for the warm welcome extended to them.

The mandate for this third phase of ARCIC is both to promote the reception of the previous work of the Commission by presenting this as a corpus and to explore "The Church as Communion, local and universal, and how in communion the local and universal Church come to discern right ethical teaching". To this end the Commission's work centred on examining two draft texts which had been prepared by sub-committee drafting groups since its previous meeting in Vuleka Centre, Botha's Hill, South Africa.

The first of these draft texts considered was material to present the five agreed statements of ARCIC II so that they can be received by the respective Communion. This consists of individual introductions to each statement, whose text is included, and a brief consideration of the responses each document engendered, short essays concerning theological method and themes running through the documents, suggesting directions for future work. This work has made good progress and it is hoped that it will shortly be ready for publication.

The second text considered was a draft document responding to the ecclesiological element of the mandate, that is, an examination of the structures of our two traditions which facilitate communion within and among the local and regional and universal dimensions of the Church.

On Thursday 30 April the Commission travelled to Rome for a private audience with Pope Francis. The Pope encouraged the Commission in its work, and in the context of contemporary persecution of Christians noted, "There is a strong bond that already unites us which goes beyond all divisions." Archbishop Bernard Longley thanked Pope Francis for the inspiration and leadership given by both him and Archbishop Justin Welby, "especially by your common commitment to seek justice for those who suffer exploitation or neglect." Archbishop David Moxon cited the draft ARCIC II volume, and acknowledged with gratitude Pope Francis's emphasis on the preaching of the Gospel, the simplicity of his personal lifestyle, his stress on ministry to the poor and marginalized, the positive role he has played in

international reconciliation. He concluded by saying that all of these have “played their part in commending the ministry of the Bishop of Rome to Christians throughout the world”.

Later that day they celebrated the Eucharist at the Anglican Centre in Rome, which generously hosted the Commission for lunch and for two working sessions, during which it heard a paper on *sensus fidei* (the sense of faith) of all the baptised, and case studies on slavery. From there the group visited the Venerable English College, where presentations of the Commission’s work were made to the student body with time for questions and answers. Members then participated in Vespers and much appreciated the opportunity to join students and staff for dinner.

On Friday 1 May members welcomed Bishop Mark Santer and Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, Co-Chairs at the last time ARCIC met at Palazzola. The special guests led an informal session in which they recounted some of the narrative of ARCIC II under their leadership. They remained until the end of the meeting.

The Commission welcomed Canon John Gibaut as the new Anglican Co-Secretary, succeeding Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan. The Commission also extended its thanks to Fr Norman Tanner SJ, who participated as a consultant.

The next meeting will take place near Toronto in May 2016, when the Commission will take up a reworked draft of an ecclesiological statement comparing the instruments of communion of each tradition.

Members of ARCIC III present at the meeting:

*Co-Chairs:* The Most Revd Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham, England; The Most Revd Sir David Moxon, Archbishop of Canterbury’s Representative to the Holy See.

*Roman Catholics:* The Revd Robert Christian OP; St Albert Priory, Oakland, California, USA; The Revd Canon Adelbert Denaux, Professor Em. Brugge, Belgium; Most Revd Arthur Kennedy Auxiliary Bishop of Boston, USA; Professor Paul D. Murray Durham University, England; Professor Sister Teresa Okure SHCJ Catholic Institute of West Africa, Nigeria; Professor Janet E. Smith Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit, Michigan, USA; The Revd Professor Vimal Tirimanna CSsR Alphonsianum University, Rome, Italy; The Very Revd Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB Ampleforth Abbey, England.

*Anglicans:* Dr Paula Gooder The Church of England; The Rt Revd Dr Christopher Hill The Church of England; The Rt Revd Nkosinathi Ndwandwe The Anglican Church of Southern Africa; The Revd Canon Dr Nicholas Sagovsky The Church of England; The Revd Canon Dr Peter Sedgwick The Church in Wales; The Revd Dr Charles Sherlock The Anglican Church of Australia.

*Consultant:* The Revd Father Norman Tanner SJ Roman Catholic Church.

*Staff:* The work of the Commission is supported by the two Co-Secretaries: The Revd Canon Dr John Gibaut (Anglican Communion Office) and The Revd Anthony Curren (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity); and by The Revd Neil Vigers (Anglican Communion Office) and Ms Silvana Salvati (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity).

## CATHOLICS AND DISCIPLES OF CHRIST COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE

*Bethany (West Virginia, USA), 19-24 June 2015*

The Third Session of the Fifth Phase of the Disciples of Christ-Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue took place in Bethany, West Virginia, from the 19-24 June 2015. The general theme for the present phase of Dialogue is “Christians Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist”. After an introductory meeting (Nashville, January 2014), the Commission approached the topics related to what it means to be “Formed by the Eucharist” discussing the following: “The Structure of Liturgies among Catholics and Disciples” (Rome, June 2014) and “The Significance of Eucharistic Catechesis - ‘Knowing by Doing’ “ (Bethany, WV, June 2015). The overall goal of the dialogue, which started in 1979, is the full visible unity between the two communions.

The Disciples Co-Chair of the Dialogue is Rev. Dr Newell Williams, President of Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University [TCU], Fort Worth, TX, USA. The Catholic Co-Chair of the Dialogue is the Most Reverend David L. Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, WI, USA.

Papers were prepared by Rev. Dr James Duke for the Disciples, “Formed by the Eucharist: Knowing by Doing” and Msgr. Michael Clay, D. Min. for the Catholics, “The Significance of Eucharistic Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church”. Two biblical papers were given, “Bread of Heaven, Food for Formation: Exodus 16 in its Literary Setting” presented by Rev. Dr Meryll Blair (Disciples) and “The Bread of Life Discourse: John 6” presented by Dr Mary Coloe, pbvm, (Catholic). According to the agreed proposal, the Commission will devote its next sessions to the topic “Transformed by the Eucharist” starting with “The Eucharist and Relationships within the Church” (Calgary, 2016). The days began and concluded with prayer together led alternatively by Disciples and Catholics.

Meeting at historic Bethany College established by Alexander Campbell, one of the founders of the Disciples of Christ, has been very meaningful for the dialogue itself. The participants became acquainted with one of the places at the origins of the Disciples of Christ and joined the local Disciples of Christ congregation at the Sunday Lord’s Supper Service held

in the Old Meeting House built by Alexander Campbell. Later in the week, the Commission attended Solemn Vespers presided over by the Most Reverend Michael Bransfield, Catholic Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston, at the Cathedral of Saint Joseph, with the participation of Rev. Thaddaeus Allen, Regional Minister of the Disciples of Christ, together with Disciples of Christ leaders and pastors as well as local Catholic ecumenical leaders. The Commission appreciates the warm hospitality of Rev. Thaddaeus Allen, and all the Disciples' community who facilitated our time together.

At the end of the meeting, Rev. Williams affirmed, "These days at Bethany, supported by the gracious hospitality of West Virginia Disciples and Roman Catholics, have helped this International Commission for Dialogue to grow in our understanding of the similarities and differences in our practice of the Eucharist, or what Disciples commonly call the Lord's Supper, and to identify issues related to our ultimate goal of a common Disciples-Roman Catholic celebration of the Eucharist."

According to Bishop Ricken, "This meeting, the third in a series of six annual meetings, has been a real experience of growth in mutual understanding and respect. The dialogues help us to understand the meaning behind our liturgical practices and the educational/formational preparation for worship. It is always an enriching and a challenging experience."

The members from the Disciples of Christ are: Rev. Dr Newell Williams, Brite Divinity School, TCU, Fort Worth, USA, Co-Chair; Rev. Dr Robert Welsh, Council on Christian Unity, Indianapolis, USA, Co-Secretary; Rev. Dr Thomas Best, Belmont, USA; Rev. Dr Merryl Blair, Stirling Theological College, University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia; Rev. Dr James O. Duke, Brite Divinity School, TCU, Fort Worth, USA; Rev. Angel Luis Rivera, Latin America and Caribbean Executive, Global Ministries, Indiana/Puerto Rico and Rev. Dr David M. Thompson, Cambridge, UK.

The members of the Catholic team are: Most Reverend David L. Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, WI, USA, Co-Chair; Rev. Msgr. Juan Usma Gómez, Bureau Chief of Western Section, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City/Colombia, Co-Secretary; Msgr. Michael Clay, D. Min., School of Theology and Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America, USA; Dr Mary Coloe, pbvm, University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia; Mr. Julien Hammond, Ecumenical Officer, Archdiocese of Edmonton, Canada; Rev. Joseph T. Shenosky, S.T.D., Vice-Rector, Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, USA; and Rev. Michael G. Witzcak, S.L.D., School of Theology and Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America, USA.

# COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE  
DELEGATION OF THE CONFERENCE OF  
EUROPEAN RABBIS

20 April 2015

*“Every Christian must be firm in deploring all forms of anti-Semitism, and in showing their solidarity with the Jewish people”. Pope Francis highlighted this on Monday morning, 20 April, to the Conference of European Rabbis. “Today, in Europe”, the Pope said, “it is more important than ever to emphasize the spiritual and religious dimension of human life. In a society increasingly marked by secularism and threatened by atheism, we run the risk of living as if God did not exist”. The following is the English text of the Holy Father’s address.*

Dear Friends,

I welcome you, members of the delegation of the Conference of European Rabbis, to the Vatican. I am especially pleased to do so, as this is the first visit by your organization to Rome to meet with the Successor of Peter. I greet your President, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, and I thank him for his kind words.

I wish to express my sincere condolences on the death last evening of Rabbi Elio Toaff, former Chief Rabbi of Rome. I am united in prayer with Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni – who would have been here with us – and with the entire Jewish Community in Rome. We gratefully remember this man of peace and dialogue who received Pope John Paul II during his historic visit to the Great Synagogue of Rome.

For almost fifty years, the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community has progressed in a systematic way. Next 28 October we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, which is still the reference point for every effort we make in this regard. With gratitude to the Lord, may we recall these years, rejoicing in our progress and in the friendship which has grown between us.

Today, in Europe, it is more important than ever to emphasize the spiritual and religious dimension of human life. In a society increasingly marked by secularism and threatened by atheism, we run the risk of living as if God did not exist. People are often tempted to take the place of God, to consider themselves the criterion of all things, to

control them, to use everything according to their own will. It is so important to remember, however, that our life is a gift from God, and that we must depend on him, confide in him, and turn towards him always. Jews and Christians have the blessing but also the responsibility to help preserve the religious sense of the men and women of today, and that of our society, by our witness to the sanctity of God and human life. God is holy, and the life he has given is holy and inviolable.

Anti-semitic trends in Europe these days are troubling, as are certain acts of hatred and violence. Every Christian must be firm in deploring all forms of anti-semitism, and in showing their solidarity with the Jewish people (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 4). Recently we marked the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the concentration camp which has come to be synonymous with the great tragedy of the *Shoah*. The memory of what took place there, in the heart of Europe, is a warning to present and future generations. Acts of hatred and violence against Christians and the faithful of other religions must likewise be condemned everywhere.

Dear friends, I heartily thank you for this very significant visit. I extend my best wishes to your communities, with the assurance of my closeness and prayers. And, please, do not forget to pray for me.

*Shalom alechem!*

ORE, 24 April 2015

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE  
CHIEF RABBI OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF  
ROME ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR ELIO  
TOAFF, CHIEF RABBI EMERITUS OF ROME

20 April 2015

*On learning of the death of Rabbi Elio Toaff, the Pope sent a letter with his condolences to the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Riccardo Di Segni, on 20 April. The following is a translation of the message written in Italian.*

I wish to express my heartfelt participation in the mourning of the relatives and the Capital’s entire Jewish community on the passing of Rabbi Elio Toaff, distinguished spiritual leader of the Jews in Rome.

As a leading figure in Jewish history and Italian society in recent decades, he was able to gain mutual respect and appreciation due to his moral authority, as well as his profound humanity.

I recall with gratitude his generous commitment and sincere willingness to promote dialogue and fraternal relations between Jews and Catholics, which witnessed a significant moment during his memorable meeting with St John Paul II at the Synagogue of Rome.

I raise prayers to the Most High, rich in love and faithfulness, that He may welcome him into His Kingdom of peace.

*From the Vatican, 20 April 2015*

ORE, 24 April 2015

TO MEMBERS OF THE B'NAI B'RITH  
INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION

*Hall of the Popes, 25 June 2015*

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to greet you during your visit to the Vatican. My predecessors met with delegations of *B'nai B'rith International* on several occasions, and today I offer you my welcome with renewed respect and affection.

Your organization has enjoyed relations with the Holy See since the promulgation of the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*. This document constituted a milestone on the path of mutual knowledge and esteem between Jews and Catholics, based on the great spiritual patrimony that, thanks be to God, we share in common.

Looking back on these fifty years of regular dialogue between the Catholic Church and Judaism, I cannot help but thank the Lord for the great progress that has been made. Many initiatives fostering reciprocal understanding and dialogue have been undertaken; above all a sense of mutual trust and appreciation has developed. There are many areas in which we as Jews and Christians can continue to work together for the good of the peoples of our time. Respect for life and creation, human dignity, justice and solidarity unite us for the development of society and for securing a future rich in hope for generations to come. In a particular way, we are called to pray and work together for peace. Unfortunately, there are many countries and regions of the world that live in situations of conflict – I think in particular of the Holy Land and the Middle East – and that require a courageous commitment to peace, which is not only to be

longed for, but sought after and built up patiently and tenaciously by everyone, especially believers.

During these moments together, I wish to recall with heartfelt gratitude all those who have fostered friendship between Jews and Catholics. I particularly want to mention Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II. Saint John saved many Jews during the Second World War, met with them numerous times, and greatly desired a conciliar document on this theme. Regarding Saint John Paul, his various historical gestures remain very much alive in our memories, such as his visit to Auschwitz and to the Great Synagogue of Rome. With the help of God, I wish to walk in their footsteps, encouraged too by the many beautiful encounters and friendships I enjoyed in Buenos Aires.

May the Almighty and Eternal One bless our dialogue abundantly, especially during this year in which we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, so that our friendship may always grow deeper and bear abundant fruit for our communities and the entire human family. Thank you.

ORE, 26 June 2015

TO MEMBERS OF THE “INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL  
OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS”

*Clementine Hall, 30 June 2015*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased that your meeting is taking place this year in Rome, the city where the Apostles Peter and Paul are buried. For all Christians, both Apostles are an important point of reference: they are like “pillars” of the Church. Here in Rome, we also find the most ancient Jewish community in Western Europe, whose origins can be traced to the time of the Maccabees. Christians and Jews therefore have lived together in Rome for almost two thousand years, even though their relations in the course of history have not been without difficulty.

The development of an authentic fraternal dialogue has been made possible since the Second Vatican Council, following the promulgation of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*. This document represents a definitive “yes” to the Jewish roots of Christianity and an irrevocable “no” to anti-Semitism. In celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, we are able to see the rich fruits which it has brought about and to gratefully appraise Jewish-Catholic dialogue. In this way, we can express our

thanks to God for all the good which has been realized in terms of friendship and mutual understanding these past fifty years, as his Holy Spirit has accompanied our efforts in dialogue. Our fragmented humanity, mistrust and pride have been overcome thanks to the Spirit of Almighty God, in such a way that trust and fraternity between us have continued to grow. We are strangers no more, but friends, and brothers and sisters. Even with our different perspectives, we confess one God, Creator of the Universe and Lord of history. And he, in his infinite goodness and wisdom, always blesses our commitment to dialogue.

Christians, all Christians, have Jewish roots. Because of this, since its inception, the *International Council of Christians and Jews* has welcomed the various Christian confessions. Each of them, in its own way, has drawn near to Judaism, which in its time, has been distinguished by diverse trends and sensibilities. The Christian confessions find their unity in Christ; Judaism finds its unity in the Torah. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh in the world; for Jews the Word of God is present above all in the Torah. Both faith traditions find their foundation in the One God, the God of the Covenant, who reveals himself through his Word. In seeking a right attitude towards God, Christians turn to Christ as the fount of new life, and Jews to the teaching of the Torah. This pattern of theological reflection on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity arises precisely from *Nostra Aetate* (cf. no. 4), and upon this solid basis can be and must developed yet further.

In its reflection on Judaism, the Second Vatican Council took account of the ten theses of Seelisberg, formulated in that same Swiss town. These theses are closely linked to the founding of the *International Council of Christians and Jews*. We can say that there was already in embryonic form an initial concept of cooperation between your organization and the Catholic Church. This cooperation was officially inaugurated after the Council, and especially after the establishment of our *Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews* in 1974. This Commission of the Holy See always follows your organization's activities with great interest, in particular the annual international meetings, which offer a notable contribution to Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Dear friends, I thank all of you for this visit and I wish you well for your meeting. May the Lord bless you and keep you in his peace. I ask you please to pray for me. And I invite you all together to ask for the blessing of God our Father. I will say it in my mother tongue.

*[English translation of the Spanish prayer]*

May the Lord bless you and keep you:

the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you:

the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace (cf. Num 6:24-26).

Amen.

ORE, 3 July 2015

# DOCUMENTATION SUPPLEMENT

## WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2016

### LETTER OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY TO THE ECUMENICAL COMMISSIONS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES AND OF THE SYNODS OF THE ORIENTAL CATHOLIC CHURCHES

On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, I am pleased to send you the enclosed resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2016. These materials have been prepared by an international committee comprising representatives from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, working from material provided by an ecumenical group representing the Christian Churches of Latvia.

The biblical theme which provides the focus for the material is our common mission as described in the First Letter of St Peter 2: 9, *Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord*. As Christians we share a real, though incomplete communion through baptism, which gives us a common identity as God's children and a common mission to give witness to the work of grace.

Starting from the ancient baptismal font which now stands at the very centre of Riga's Lutheran Cathedral, and which dates from the time of Latvia's great evangelist, St Meinhard, the Christians of Latvia reflected upon their own history. Certainly it is a history marked by war and ideological conflict. But it is also a story of grace. The grace of the Gospel and of baptism has made us, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Peter 2:9). Latvia's Christians challenge us to ask how we witness to this story of grace, and how we can overcome the scandal of division and conflict – a stumbling block to many – in order that together we

can bring the grace of the Gospel, God's word of love, to those so desperate to hear it.

The materials include an introduction to the theme, an ecumenical worship service, a selection of readings and reflections for the eight days of the Week of Prayer octave, and an account of the ecumenical context of Latvia. The resources can be drawn upon in many ways, and are intended for use not only during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, but throughout the year 2016. The materials are also available online, and in translation, at:

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni) (Ecumenismo spirituale a livello mondiale).

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity requests that you bring these resources to the attention of those responsible for coordinating Prayer for Christian Unity events. We strongly encourage the regional or local adaptation of the material, so that it may effectively address the local social and cultural context. It is also hoped that the material will be adapted and made available to young people, youth groups and associations. This process will provide a further valuable opportunity for collaboration between Christians at the local level.

With every good wish, and in appreciation of your efforts for the cause of Christian Unity, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,

✠ Brian Farrell  
*Secretary*

## IMPORTANT

This is the **international** version of the text  
of the Week of Prayer 2016

Kindly contact your local Bishops' Conference or Synod of your Church  
to obtain an adaptation of this text for your local context

*Resources for*

**THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**  
*and throughout the year*  
**2016**

Called to proclaim  
the mighty acts of the Lord  
*(cf. 1 Peter 2:9)*

*Jointly prepared and published by*  
The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity  
The Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches

*Scripture quotations: The scripture quotations contained herein are from The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989, 1995, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used with permission. All rights reserved.*

# TO THOSE ORGANIZING THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

## THE SEARCH FOR UNITY: THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

The traditional period in the northern hemisphere for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is 18-25 January. Those dates were proposed in 1908 by Paul Wattson to cover the days between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul, and therefore have a symbolic significance. In the southern hemisphere where January is a vacation time churches often find other days to celebrate the week of prayer, for example around Pentecost (suggested by the Faith and Order movement in 1926), which is also a symbolic date for the unity of the Church.

*Mindful of the need for flexibility, we invite you to use this material throughout the whole year to express the degree of communion which the churches have already reached, and to pray together for that full unity which is Christ's will.*

## ADAPTING THE TEXT

This material is offered with the understanding that, whenever possible, it will be adapted for use in local situations. Account should be taken of local liturgical and devotional practice, and of the whole social and cultural context. Such adaptation should ideally take place ecumenically. In some places ecumenical structures are already set up for adapting the material; in other places, we hope that the need to adapt it will be a stimulus to creating such structures.

## USING THE WEEK OF PRAYER MATERIAL

- For churches and Christian communities which observe the week of prayer together through a single common service, an order for an ecumenical worship service is provided.
- Churches and Christian communities may also incorporate material from the week of prayer into their own services. Prayers from the ecumenical worship service, the "eight days", and the selection of additional prayers can be used as appropriate in their own setting.
- Communities which observe the week of prayer in their worship for each day during the week may draw material for these services from the "eight days".
- Those wishing to do bible studies on the week of prayer theme can use as a basis the biblical texts and reflections given in the eight days. Each day the discussions can lead to a closing period of intercessory prayer.
- Those who wish to pray privately may find the material helpful for focusing their prayer intentions. They can be mindful that they are in communion with others praying all around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ's Church.

# BIBLICAL TEXT FOR 2016

*1 Peter 2:9-10*

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2016

Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord

*(cf. 1 Peter 2:9)*

## BACKGROUND

The oldest baptismal font in Latvia dates from the time of the great evangeliser of Latvia, St Meinhard. It was originally located in his Cathedral in Ikšķile. Today it stands at the very centre of the Lutheran Cathedral in the country's capital, Rīga. The placement of the font so near to the Cathedral's ornate pulpit speaks eloquently of the relationship between baptism and proclamation, and the calling shared by all the baptised to *proclaim the mighty acts* of the Lord. This calling forms the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity for 2016. Inspired by two verses from the First Letter of St Peter, members of different churches in Latvia prepared the resources for the week.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Christianity was first brought to Eastern Latvia in the 10th century by Byzantine missionaries. However, most accounts date Latvia's Christian origins to the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the evangelising mission of St Meinhard, and later of other German missionaries. The capital, Rīga, was one of the first cities to adopt Luther's ideas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Moravian missionaries (Herrnhut Brethren) revived and deepened Christian faith throughout the country. Their descendants were to play a central role in laying the foundations for national independence in 1918.

The past, with its various periods of conflict and suffering, has had noticeable consequences for church life in Latvia today. It is a sad fact that the use of force by some early missionaries and crusaders misrepresented the essence of the Gospel. Over the centuries, the land of Latvia has been a religious and political battleground for various national and confessional powers. Changes in political dominance in different parts of the country were often reflected in changes in people's confessional affiliation too. Today, Latvia is a crossroads where Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox regions meet. Because of this

unique location, it is home to Christians of many different traditions, but no single one of them is dominant.

Latvia first existed as a state from 1918 until 1940, in the wake of the First World War and the fall of the Russian and German empires. The Second World War and the decades that followed with their totalitarian anti-Christian ideologies – atheistic Nazism and Communism – brought devastation to the land and people of Latvia, right up to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. During those years, Christians were united in common witness to the Gospel - even to the point of martyrdom. The Bishop Sloskans' Museum in Latvia records this common witness, listing martyred Christians from the Orthodox, Lutheran, Baptist and Catholic Churches. Christians discovered their participation in the royal priesthood mentioned by St Peter through enduring torture, exile and death because of their faith in Jesus Christ. This bond of suffering created deep communion among Christians in Latvia. Through it, they discovered their baptismal priesthood, through which they were able to offer their sufferings in union with the sufferings of Jesus, for the good of others.

The experience of singing and praying together – including the National Anthem, *God Bless Latvia* – was crucial to Latvia regaining its independence in 1991. Fervent prayers for freedom were offered in many churches throughout the city. United in song and prayer, unarmed citizens built barricades on the streets of Riga and stood shoulder to shoulder in defiance of the Soviet tanks.

However, the totalitarian darkness of the 20<sup>th</sup> century estranged many people from the truth about God the Father, his self-revelation in Jesus Christ and the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. Thankfully, the post-Soviet period has been one of renewal for the churches. Many Christians come together for prayer in small groups and at ecumenical services. Conscious that the light and grace of Christ have not penetrated and transformed all the people of Latvia, they want to work and pray together so that the historical, ethnic and ideological wounds which still disfigure Latvian society may be healed.

## THE CALL TO BE GOD'S PEOPLE

St Peter tells the early Church that in their search for meaning prior to encountering the Gospel they were *not a people*. But through hearing the call to be God's *chosen race* and receiving the power of God's salvation in Jesus Christ, they have become *God's people*. This reality is expressed in Baptism, common to all Christians, in which we are born again of water and the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5). In Baptism we die to sin, in order to rise with Christ to a new life of grace in God. It is an ongoing challenge daily to remain aware of this new identity in Christ.

*How do we understand our common call to be "God's people"?  
How do we express our baptismal identity as a "royal priesthood"?*

## HEARING OF GOD'S MIGHTY ACTS

Baptism opens up an exciting new journey of faith, uniting each new Christian with God's people throughout the ages. The Word of God – the Scriptures with which Christians of all traditions pray, study and reflect – is the foundation of a real, albeit incomplete, communion. In the shared sacred texts of the Bible, we hear of God's saving acts in salvation history: leading his people out of slavery in Egypt, and *the great mighty act* of God: the raising of Jesus from the dead, which opened new life to all of us. Furthermore, prayerful reading of the Bible leads Christians to recognise the *mighty acts* of God also in their own lives.

*In what ways do we see and respond to God's "mighty acts": in worship and song, in work for justice and peace?*

*How do we treasure the Scriptures as the living Word, calling us to greater unity and mission?*

## RESPONSE AND PROCLAMATION

God has chosen us not as a privilege. He has made us holy, but not in the sense that Christians are more virtuous than others. He has chosen us to fulfil some purpose. We are holy only insofar as we are committed to God's service, which is always to bring his love to all people. Being a priestly people means being in service to the world. Christians live this baptismal calling and bear witness to God's *mighty acts* in a variety of ways:

*Healing wounds:* Wars, conflicts and abuses have wounded the emotional and relational lives of the people of Latvia and many other countries. God's grace helps us to beg forgiveness for the obstacles which prevent reconciliation and healing, to receive mercy, and to grow in holiness.

*Searching for truth and unity:* Awareness of our common identity in Christ calls us to work towards answering the questions that still divide us as Christians. We are called, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, to share our experiences and so discover, that in our common pilgrimage, Jesus Christ is among us.

*An Active Commitment to Human Dignity:* Christians who have been brought *out of darkness* into the *marvellous light* of the Kingdom recognise the extraordinary dignity of all human life. Through common social and charitable projects we reach out to the poor, the needy, the addicted and the marginalised.

*As we consider our commitment to Christian unity, for what should we beg forgiveness?*

*Knowing the mercy of God, how do we engage in social and charitable projects with other Christians?*

## INTRODUCING THE REST OF THE MATERIALS

The ecumenical Celebration uses the symbols of a Bible, a lighted candle and salt to express visually the *mighty acts* that we are called, as baptised Christians, to proclaim to the world. Both salt and light are gospel images that Jesus uses in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 5:13-16). They describe our Christian identity: *You are the salt... You are the light...* And they describe our mission: *salt of the earth... light of the world...*

Salt and light are images of the what it is that Christians have to give the men and women of our times: we take a word from God that gives flavour to life, which can so often seem bland and empty; and we take a gracious word that guides and helps people to see and understand themselves and their world.

Representatives of a variety of ecumenical projects in Latvia were asked to reflect on the chosen theme and the experience of their work. Their reflections form the basis of the materials offered for the eight days of the Octave.

## THE PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2016

The preparatory work on the theme for this year's week of prayer material was undertaken by a group of representatives from different parts of Latvia, brought together at the invitation of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Riga, the Most Reverend Zbigņevs Stankevičs.

Gratitude is extended in particular to:

Ms Anda Done (Lutheran Church)

Mr Levi Ivars Graudins (Latvia House of Prayer for All Peoples)

Ms Zanna Hermane (Vertikale Television, Sunday Morning Christian Programme)

Mr Nils Jansons (Chemin Neuf Community)

Sr Rita Refalo (Religious of the Pro Sanctitate Movement)

Ms Velta Skolmeistere (Catholic Youth Centre of the Archdiocese of Riga)

Ms Gunta Ziemele (Catholic Youth Centre of the Archdiocese of Riga)

The texts proposed here were finalized during a meeting of the International Committee nominated by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The members of the Committee joined with representatives of the Latvian Churches in September 2014 at the Riga Metropolitan Roman Catholic Seminary. They extend very heartfelt

thanks to Mgr Pauls Kļaviņš for generously hosting the meeting, and to the staff and students of the seminary for their kind hospitality. In particular they wish to thank Fr Aivars Lācis and Fr Kārlis Miķelsons who facilitated their work and visits. The participants were generously accompanied and guided on a visit to the Island of St Meinhard on the Daugava River near Ikšķile with ruins of the first Cathedral (consecrated in 1186), the Lutheran and Catholic Cathedrals of Rīga, and St Saviour's Anglican Church in Old Rīga. These visits proved to be invaluable in the production of the text.

## ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE WORSHIP

The Latvian writing group suggests that representatives from different churches enter carrying a Bible, a lighted candle (which may be a Paschal or Easter Candle) and a bowl of salt. They further suggest that each of these symbols is provided by a different congregation. The Bible should be placed on the lectern for the readings, and the salt and candle may be placed either by the lectern, as they are symbols of God's Word, or by the font, as they are signs of our baptismal calling.

A basket of small candles should also be set on the sanctuary so that after the homily members of the congregation can light individual candles from the flame carried in at the beginning of the service.

Although no hymns have been indicated, the Latvian writing group suggest Trinitarian hymns. They also suggest that the responses Kyrie Eleison and Christe Eleison be sung. During the Liturgy of the Word a short congregational response is provided in the text. The introduction to the readings uses the expression, "explosion of love", which comes from the founder of the Pro Sanctitate movement, Guglielmo Giaquinta. This movement is active in Latvia and its members contributed to the preparation of this celebration.

*After the service:*

A Latvian symbol of hospitality is bread, particularly black bread. When people move to a new home friends will often present a loaf of bread with salt sprinkled on top in the shape of a cross as a sign of blessing. The Latvian writing group invite Christians around the world to imitate this gesture of hospitality in their time of fellowship after the service.

### ORDER OF SERVICE

Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord  
(cf. 1 Peter 2:9)

L: Leader

A: All

R: Reader

## I. GATHERING

### Processional hymn

*Those leading the celebration enter and may carry a Bible, light and salt.*

### Words of welcome

L: Dear friends in Christ, as we gather together in this service of prayer for unity, we thank God for our Christian dignity and vocation, described in the words of St. Peter: “*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*”. We pray this year with the Christians of Latvia, who have prepared this service in the hope that we may grow in our communion with our Lord Jesus Christ and with all our brothers and sisters aspiring to unity (cf. 1 Peter 2:9).

## II. PRAYERS FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

L: Holy Spirit, gift of the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, dwell in us all, open our hearts and help us to listen to your voice.

**A: Holy Spirit, come upon us.**

L: Holy Spirit, Divine Love, source of unity and holiness, show us the love of the Father.

**A: Holy Spirit, come upon us.**

L: Holy Spirit, Fire of Love, purify us, removing all the divisions in our hearts, in our communities and in the world, and so make us one in Jesus’ name.

**A: Holy Spirit, come upon us.**

L: Holy Spirit, strengthen our faith in Jesus, truly divine and truly human, who carried our sins of division to the Cross and brought us to communion in his Resurrection.

**A: Holy Spirit, come upon us.**

L: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, dwell in us so that we may become a communion of love and holiness. Make us one in you, who live and reign for ever and ever.

**A: Amen.**

### Song of praise

## III. PRAYERS OF RECONCILIATION

L: God invites us to reconciliation and holiness. Let us turn our minds, hearts and bodies to receive the grace of reconciliation on the way to holiness.

*Silence*

L: Lord, you created us in your own image. Forgive us when we do not respect our nature and the world that you gave us. *Kyrie eleison.*

**A: Kyrie eleison.**

L: Jesus, you invite us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. Forgive us when we fail to be holy, to be people of integrity and to respect human rights and dignity. *Christe eleison.*

**A: Christe eleison.**

L: Lord of life, of peace and of justice, forgive us when we transmit the culture of death, of war and of injustice, and fail to build a civilization of love. *Kyrie eleison.*

**A: Kyrie eleison.**

L: Merciful God, fill us with your grace and holiness. Make us apostles of love wherever we go. This we pray through Christ, our Lord.

**A: Amen.**

## IV. PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

R: The Word of God that we will hear is an explosion of love in our lives. Listen and you will live.

**A: Thanks be to God.**

*Isaiah 55:1-3*

R: Listen and you will live.

**A: Thanks be to God.**

*Psalms 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18*

R: I will bless your name for ever and ever.

**A: I will bless your name for ever and ever.**

R: The Lord is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The Lord is good to all,  
and his compassion is over all that he has made.

**A: I will bless your name for ever and ever.**

R: The eyes of all look to you,  
and you give them their food in due season.

You open your hand,  
satisfying the desire of every living thing.

**A: I will bless your name for ever and ever.**

R: The Lord is just in all his ways,  
and kind in all his doings.

The Lord is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth.

**A: I will bless your name for ever and ever.**

*1 Peter 2:9-10*

R: Listen and you will live.

**A: Thanks be to God.**

*Matthew 5:1-16*

R: Listen and you will live.

**A: Thanks be to God.**

## HOMILY

## V. A GESTURE OF COMMITMENT TO BE SALT AND LIGHT

*The Leader then makes the following invitation to the congregation:*

L: We have listened to the Scriptures which we honour and treasure, and we have been nourished together at one table of the Word. We will carry this holy Word out into the world with us, for we are joined in one mission, to be Salt of the Earth, to be Light to the World, and to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord.

As a sign of this mission in which we share, we invite those who wish to come forward, and taste a small pinch of this salt and to light an individual candle from this one flame. We encourage those who do so to keep the flame alight until the end of the service.

## VI. PRAYERS OF HOPE

L: As God's children, aware of our dignity and mission, let us raise our prayers and affirm our desire to be a holy people of God.

*Silence*

L: Loving Father, transform our hearts, our families, our communities and our society.

**A: Make all your people holy and one in Christ.**

L: Water of life, quench the thirst that exists in our society, the thirst for dignity, for love, for communion and holiness.

**A: Make all your people holy and one in Christ.**

L: Holy Spirit, Spirit of joy and peace, heal the divisions caused by our misuse of power and money, and reconcile us across different cultures and languages. Unite us as God's children.

**A: Make all your people holy and one in Christ.**

L: Trinity of love, lead us out of darkness into your marvellous light.

**A: Make all your people holy and one in Christ.**

L: Lord Jesus Christ, we are made one with you in baptism and therefore we unite our prayers to yours in the words you taught us.

**A: Our Father....**

## VII. SHARING OF THE PEACE

L: Jesus says:  
You are the salt of the earth.  
You are the light of the world.  
Let your light shine before others,

so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.  
Be salt of the earth.  
Be light to the world.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**A: And with your spirit.**

L: Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

## VIII. BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

L: Blest be the poor in spirit.  
Blest be those who mourn.  
Blest be the meek.  
Blest be the merciful.  
Blest be the pure in heart.  
Blest be the peace-makers.  
Blest be the persecuted.  
Blest be you by God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**A: Amen.**

L: Go in the peace of Christ.

**A: Amen.**

# BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE EIGHT DAYS

DAY 1 LET THE STONE BE ROLLED AWAY

Ezek 37:12-14 I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people.

Ps 71:18b -23 Your power and your righteousness, O God, reach the high heavens.

Rom 8:15-21 We suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Mt 28:1-10 He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said.

## COMMENTARY

Today's reflections are prepared by the Catholic Youth Centre of the Archdiocese of Rīga, and spring from their experience of organising an Ecumenical Way of the Cross: a very influential annual ecumenical event in the life of Latvia. This experience prompts reflection on what the passion and resurrection mean in the Latvian context, and what are the Lord's mighty acts that baptised Christians are called to proclaim.

Latvia's Soviet history continues to cast a shadow over the people of this nation. There is still much grief and pain; wounds inflicted which are difficult to forgive. All of this is like the large stone

which covered the mouth of Jesus' tomb. Wounds such as these imprison us in a spiritual grave.

But if, in our suffering, our pain is united to his pain, then the story does not end here, locked in our graves. The earthquake of the Lord's resurrection is the earth-shaking event that opens our graves and frees us from the pain and bitterness that hold us in isolation from one another.

This is the mighty act of the Lord: his love, which shakes the earth, which rolls away the stones, which frees us, and calls us out into the morning of a new day. Here, at this new dawn we are re-united with our brothers and sisters who have been imprisoned and hurting too. And like Mary Magdalene we must "go quickly" from this great moment of joy to tell others what the Lord has done.

## QUESTIONS

1. What are the events and the situations of our lives and the circumstances that make us lock ourselves in the grave – in sadness, grief, worries, anxiety and despair? What keeps us from accepting the promise and joy of the resurrection of Christ?
2. How ready are we to share the experience of God with those whom we meet?

## PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you have always loved us from the beginning, and you have shown the depth of your love in dying for us on the cross and thereby sharing our sufferings and wounds. At this moment, we lay all the obstacles that separate us from your love at the foot of your cross. Roll back the stones which imprison us. Awaken us to your resurrection morning. There may we meet the brothers and sisters from whom we are separated. Amen.

## DAY 2 CALLED TO BE MESSENGERS OF JOY

- Is 61:1-4 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed.
- Ps 133 How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!
- Phil 2:1-5 Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
- Jn 15:9-12 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

## COMMENTARY

In the Soviet era a Christian presence through public media was impossible in Latvia. After independence, Latvian State Radio began broadcasting Christian programmes with a focus on unity and mission,

providing a forum for leaders from diverse churches to encounter one another. This public witness of mutual respect, love and joy contributed to the spirit of Latvian ecumenical life. The experience of the creators of Christian programming at the Latvian State Radio inspired this reflection.

The joy of the Gospel calls Christians to live the prophecy of Isaiah: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has appointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed". We long for Good News to mend our broken hearts and to release us from all that binds us and makes us captive.

When we are saddened by our own suffering, we may lack the vigour to proclaim the joy that comes from Jesus. Nevertheless, even when we feel unable to give anything to anyone, by bearing witness to the little that we have, Jesus multiplies it in us and in the people around us.

In the Gospel Jesus says, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love" and "love one another as I have loved you". It is in this way that we discover his joy in us, so that our joy may be complete. This mutual love and mutual joy is at the heart of our prayer for unity. As the psalmist says, "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!"

## QUESTIONS

1. What smothers joy in the world and in the churches?
2. What can we receive from other Christians so that Jesus' joy may be in us, making us witnesses of the Good News?

## PRAYER

God of love, look upon our willingness to serve you despite our spiritual poverty and limited abilities. Fulfil the deepest longings of our hearts with your presence. Fill our broken hearts with your healing love so that we may love as you have loved us. Grant us the gift of unity so that we may serve you with joy and share your love with all. This we ask in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## DAY 3 THE WITNESS OF FELLOWSHIP

- Jer 31:10-13 They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion.
- Ps 122 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May they prosper who love you.
- 1 Jn 4:16b-21 Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters are liars.
- Jn 17:20-23 That they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me.

## COMMENTARY

For over a decade Chemin Neuf, an international Catholic community with an ecumenical vocation, has been present in Latvia, with both Catholic and Lutheran members. Together they experience the joy that comes from fellowship in Christ, as well as the pain of disunity. As a sign of this division, they place an empty paten and chalice on the altar during evening prayer. Their experience inspired this reflection.

Division amongst Christians is an obstacle to evangelisation. The world cannot believe that we are Jesus' disciples while our love for one other is incomplete. We feel the pain of this division when we cannot receive together the body and blood of Christ at the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity.

The source of our joy is our common life in Christ. To live our life of fellowship every day is to welcome, love, serve, pray and witness with Christians from diverse traditions. It is the pearl of great value given to us by the Holy Spirit.

The night before his death, Jesus prayed for unity and love amongst us. Today we raise our hands and pray with Jesus for Christian unity. We pray for the bishops, ministers and members of all churches. We pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us all on this path of unity.

## QUESTIONS

1. How do we regard Christians of other churches and are we prepared to ask forgiveness for prejudice towards them?
2. What can each of us do to decrease division amongst Christians?

## PRAYER

Lord Jesus, who prayed that we might all be one, we pray to you for the unity of Christians according to your will, according to your means. May your Spirit enable us to experience the suffering caused by division, to see our sin and to hope beyond all hope. Amen.

DAY 4	A PRIESTLY PEOPLE CALLED TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL
Gen 17:1-8	Your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations.
Ps 145:8-12	The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
Rom 10:14-15	And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard?
Mt 13:3-9	Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

## COMMENTARY

These reflections were inspired by the producers of the Sunday morning Christian programme Vertikale. The challenge of maintaining this Christian voice on Latvian national television has taught them that it is only when we learn to recognise other Christians as brothers and sisters that we can dare take God's Word into the public space.

In today's world more than ever, words flood into our homes: no longer just from our conversations, but from television, radio and now from social media. These words have the power to build up and to knock down. Much of this ocean of words seems meaningless: diversion rather than nourishment.

One could drown in such an ocean where there is no meaning to grasp. But we have heard a saving Word; it has been thrown to us as a lifeline. It calls us into communion, and draws us into unity with others who have heard it too. Once we were not a people, but now we are God's people.

More than this, we are a priestly people. United with others who have received his Word, our words are no longer mere drops lost in the ocean. Now we have a powerful Word to speak. United we can speak it powerfully: *Yeshua* – God saves.

## QUESTIONS

1. What personal ambitions, competitive spirits, false assumptions about other Christians, and resentments obscure our proclamation of the Gospel?
2. Who hears a life-giving word from us?

## PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you said that everyone will know that we are your disciples if there is love among us. Strengthened by your grace, may we work tirelessly for the visible unity of your Church, so that the Good News that we are called to proclaim will be seen in all our words and deeds. Amen.

## DAY 5 THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE APOSTLES

Isa 56:6-8	For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.
Ps 24	Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
Acts 2:37-42	They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
Jn 13:34-35	I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.

## COMMENTARY

The fellowship of Christian leaders shapes the visible expression of ecumenical life in Latvia. They gather regularly at Gaizins, Latvia's highest hill, and other locations, for a 40-hour period of prayer and simple

fellowship around shared meals. For the duration of these meetings they are supported in non-stop prayer and worship by the faithful. These encounters renew the leaders as fellow-workers in Christ. The experience of the founder of the Latvia House of Prayer for All Peoples inspired this reflection.

Jesus' commandment to love one another is not theoretical. Our communion of love with one another becomes concrete when we gather together intentionally as Christ's disciples, to share fellowship and prayer in the power of the Spirit.

The more that Christians, especially their leaders, encounter Christ together in humility and patience, the more prejudice diminishes, the more we discover Christ in one another, and the more we become authentic witnesses to the kingdom of God.

At times ecumenism can seem very complicated. Yet joyful fellowship, a shared meal and common prayer and praise are ways of apostolic simplicity. In these we obey the commandment to love one another, and proclaim our *Amen* to Christ's prayer for unity.

## QUESTIONS

1. What is our experience of encountering one another as brothers and sisters in Christ through Christian fellowship, shared meals and common prayer?
2. What are our expectations of bishops and other church leaders on the path towards the visible unity of the Church? How can we support and encourage them?

## PRAYER

God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may you give to all Christians, and especially to those entrusted with leadership in your Church, the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that with the eyes of our hearts we may see the hope to which you have called us: one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above and through all and in all. Amen.

## DAY 6 LISTEN TO THIS DREAM

- Gen 37:5-8 Listen to this dream that I dreamed.  
Ps 126 We were like those who dream.  
Rom 12: 9-13 Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour.  
Jn 21:25 The world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

## COMMENTARY

Christian disunity hurts. Churches suffer from their inability to be united as one family at the Lord's Table; they suffer from rivalry and from histories of combativeness. One individual response to disunity

emerged in 2005 in the form of an ecumenical journal: *Kas Mus Vieno?* ("What unites us?"). The experience of producing the journal inspired this reflection.

Joseph has a dream, which is a message from God. However, when Joseph shares his dream with his brothers they react with anger and violence because the dream implies that they must bow down before him. Ultimately famine drives the brothers to Egypt and they do bow before Joseph, but rather than the abasement and dishonour they fear, it is a moment of reconciliation and grace.

Jesus, like Joseph, unfolds to us a vision, a message about the life of his Father's kingdom. It is a vision of unity. But like Joseph's brothers, we are often upset, angered and fearful of the vision and what it seems to imply. It demands that we submit and bow to the will of God. We fear it because we fear what we might lose. But the vision is not about loss. Rather, it is about regaining brothers and sisters we had lost, the reuniting of a family.

We have written many ecumenical texts, but the vision of Christian unity is not captured in agreed statements alone, important though these are. The unity God desires for us, the vision he puts before us, far exceeds anything we can express in words or contain in books. The vision must take flesh in our lives and in the prayer and mission that we share with our brothers and sisters. Most of all it is realised in the love we show for one another.

## QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to place our own dreams for Christian unity at the feet of Christ?
2. In what ways does the Lord's vision of unity call the churches to renewal and change today?

## PRAYER

Heavenly Father, grant us humility to hear your voice, to receive your call, and to share your dream for the unity of the Church. Help us to be awake to the pain of disunity. Where division has left us with hearts of stone, may the fire of your Holy Spirit inflame our hearts and inspire us with the vision of being one in Christ, as he is one with you, so that the world may believe that you have sent him. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

## DAY 7 HOSPITALITY FOR PRAYER

- Is 62:6-7 Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent.  
Ps 100 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness.  
1 Pet 4:7b-10 Be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers.  
Jn 4:4-14 The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

## COMMENTARY

The experience of praying together on each of the eight days of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has helped Christians in the small town of Madona to come together in friendship. A particular fruit of this has been the opening of an ecumenical prayer chapel in the centre of town, complete with elements from Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox traditions. Here the Christians of Madona join in continuous round the clock prayer. This experience forms the background of the following reflections.

As long as God's people are divided, and Christians are estranged from one another, we are like Jesus in Samaria, strangers in a foreign land, without safety, without refreshment and without a place of rest.

The people of Israel longed for a place of safety where they could worship the Lord. Isaiah tells us of the Lord's mighty act: he posted sentinels on the walls of Jerusalem so that his people could worship him in safety day and night.

In the Week of Prayer our churches and chapels become places of safety, rest and refreshment for people to join in prayer. The challenge from this week is to create more places and protected times of prayer, because as we pray together, we become one people.

## QUESTIONS

1. How can we promote mutual hospitality among parishes and congregations in our locality?
2. Is there a place in our neighbourhood where Christians from different traditions can gather in prayer, and if not can we help to create such a place?

## PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you asked your apostles to stay awake with you and to pray with you. May we offer the world protected times and spaces in which to find refreshment and peace, so that praying together with other Christians we may come to know you more deeply. Amen.

## DAY 8 HEARTS BURNING FOR UNITY

- Is 52:7-9 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news.
- Ps 30 You have turned my mourning into dancing.
- Col 1:27-29 How great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you.
- Lk 24:13-36 Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

## COMMENTARY

Different churches in Latvia have been able to work together in evangelisation through the use of the Alpha Course, developed in the Anglican Church of Holy Trinity, Brompton, London. Latvians who have come to faith through this programme remain open to learning and being enriched by the gifts of other Christian communities. This experience inspired the following reflections.

The disappointed disciples who leave Jerusalem for Emmaus have lost their hope that Jesus was the Messiah and walk away from their community. It is a journey of separation and isolation.

By contrast, they return to Jerusalem full of hope with a Gospel message on their lips. It is this resurrection message that drives them back into the heart of the community and into a communion of fellowship.

So often Christians try to evangelise with a competitive spirit, hoping to fill their own churches. Ambition overrides the desire for others to hear the life-giving message of the Gospel. True evangelism is a journey from Emmaus to Jerusalem, a journey from isolation into unity.

## QUESTIONS

1. What are the disappointments that isolate us from others?
2. What are the gifts (initiatives, methods, and programmes) that we can receive from other Christian communities?

## PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you have made our hearts burn within us, and have sent us back upon the road towards our brothers and sisters, with the Gospel message on our lips. Help us to see that hope and obedience to your commands always lead to the greater unity of your people. Amen.

# THE ECUMENICAL SITUATION IN LATVIA

## I. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

“Living ecumenism”: these words describe the ecumenical situation in Latvia today. Christians from different traditions are increasingly meeting each other for common prayer and common witness in a growing number of places and occasions. Part of this dynamic comes from the fact that the three largest confessions are approximately equal in size, while the smaller churches are very active. Latvia is a kind of watershed between the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox traditions. According to official data released in 2011,

34.3% of the population are Lutherans, 25.1% are Roman Catholics, 19.4% are Orthodox and Old Believers, 1.2% belong to other Christian churches (such as Baptists, Adventists, Pentecostals, and other free churches), while 20% identify themselves as of other religions or no religion. Latvia officially acknowledges six religious traditions: Lutherans, Catholics, Baptists, Orthodox, Old Believers and Jews.

## II. LIVED ECUMENISM

Although churches in Latvia have not come together in a national council of churches, ecumenical life goes on bearing good fruit. Cooperation among Christians in Latvia is vital today if the Christian message is to reach contemporary post-modern society in all its diversity and abundance of opinions. The ecumenical cooperation and relationships between different denominations in Latvia, is, one could say, based on proclaiming *the mighty acts of the Lord*.

It is a regular practice in Latvia that bishops from the Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran and Baptist churches address a common message to society on issues of ethics, the protection of life, or social justice. Due to the fraternal relationships between the heads of the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran churches in Latvia, the consecration of the present Roman Catholic Archbishop took place in the Lutheran Cathedral of Rīga.

The leaders of the different churches join together during the celebration of the most important remembrance days and holidays, such as the National Independence Day on November 18th. The Word of God is proclaimed, speeches are made and musicians from many Christian churches are engaged. These same leaders meet together annually in the Spiritual Affairs Council at which the Prime Minister presides. In liaising with the State the four main Christian traditions jointly produced materials to be used in State schools which was approved by the Ministry of Education.

However, relationships between bishops and clergy of Latvian Christian Churches go beyond ecumenical services: they are rooted in genuine friendship. This challenges the dividing walls built in earlier centuries, and allows each to recognise in the other a fellow minister of the Gospel. Catholic, Lutheran and Baptist bishops meet regularly. They pray, praise God together in a fraternal atmosphere, and discuss issues relevant to Latvia.

There are also many examples of ecumenical cooperation among communities and at parish level. There are, for example, jointly organised evangelisation programmes based on the Alpha Course. The Catholic parishes of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus and St Mary Magdalene, the Rīga Luther Church in Tornakalns, and the Baptist community in Āgenskalns join together in fellowship, social projects, and in publishing a calendar. Since the year 2000, the different Christian communities in Madona celebrate the Week of Prayer

for Christian Unity each day in a different community. Through this experience many come to meet their brothers and sisters from other Christian traditions for the first time. A special fruit of this experience was the creation of the first ecumenical prayer chapel in Latvia, where brothers and sisters of different confessions can pray. The doors of the chapel are open day and night. Catholics and Lutherans take turns and ensure a constant prayerful presence in the chapel.

Besides activities organized by churches or parishes, there are several ecumenical initiatives undertaken by highly motivated individual Christians. An eloquent example is the opening of the first ecumenical St John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene chapel in the small village of Igate. The building of the chapel was a private initiative. It is used by people from the four major Latvian Christian traditions – Lutheran, Catholic, Orthodox and Baptist. The building was blessed on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013 by the Catholic, Lutheran and Baptist bishops. One of the special intentions of the people from Igate is to pray for children, born and unborn, and for their mothers, and to help them.

Another example of individual initiative was the Gaizins Summit. A lay Christian invited the heads of the different Latvian churches to meet together at Latvia's highest hill, Gaizins, for fellowship and prayer. They accepted. For the duration of these meetings they were supported in continuous prayer and worship by the faithful. This gathering has been organized seven times so far, and many more church leaders have joined.

*What Unites Us?* is a journal launched ten years ago by an individual lay person. It was inspired by a deep longing for the unity of the Church. In the first issue it focused exclusively on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Later on its different issues were dedicated to specific ecumenical themes. The journal is distributed free of charge in local communities of different churches.

Ecumenical co-operation can be found in the various prayer groups and communities of "Chemin Neuf", "Blue Cross", and "Kalnskola", "Effata" as well as in social action projects such as prison chaplaincy, and in the Rehabilitation Centre for former drug and alcohol addicts, the "Bethlehem House of Mercy". In all these movements and organizations, in daily prayer and mission, Christians from different churches join hands and contribute to Christian unity with their everyday service.

As Latvia is rich in Christian traditions, this influences family life. There are many inter-church couples that have to face in daily life all the questions related to the remaining divisions among Christian churches, such as wedding ceremonies, catechesis of children, attendance of Sunday services, and, most importantly for practising Christians, Holy Communion.

Christian families also face the problems presented by our modern globalised society. Dedicated

particularly to serving families, the “Cana Fraternity” has been active in Latvia since 1994. Ecumenical family festivals, designed to draw attention to family issues and strengthen families, started in 2006 in cooperation with the municipality of Rīga. These events are especially supported by different free churches in Latvia in cooperation with the three larger traditions.

Media is very important for evangelization. An ecumenical team produces Christian programmes that are regularly broadcast by the Latvian State Radio and which promote unity and fellowship amongst Latvian Christians. A Catholic video information centre, “Emanuels”, produces the television programme “Vertikale” on Latvia’s Channel 1. The programmes try to show what unites Christians rather than what divides them. The producers of the programmes look for witnesses of Christ among the Orthodox, Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists and other Christian communities. In addition there is an evangelical radio station, “Latvian Christian Radio”, with many programmes of ecumenical relevance.

The Way of the Cross, celebrated every year, takes place on Good Friday in the streets of several cities in Latvia – Kuldīga, Valmiera, Madona, Liepāja amongst others. In Rīga, the Ecumenical Way of the Cross is organized by the Catholic Youth Centre of the Archdiocese of Rīga and brings together thousands of people, Lutherans, Baptists, Pentecostals and other churches as well as Catholics. At the head of the procession the bishops and ministers of different churches walk side by side. Besides the usual contents of the Way of the Cross, it includes appropriate performances by professional actors from various theatres of Latvia, who also are from different denominations. This prayer unites people not only in a religious, spiritual way, but also in a cultural way. In this shared moment of devotion and reflection all Christians are united by the prayer of the Way of the Cross: “We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.”

### III. CHALLENGES TO THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

There are stable bases for developing ecumenism in Latvia because none of the churches is dominant and there are many ecumenical activities. At the same time it has to be admitted that such activities are developed by the relatively small group of people who are very open to ecumenical relations while many Christians remain either indifferent or even antagonistic to it.

Another challenge is the lack of official theological dialogue commissions between the churches in Latvia. Several issues call for ecumenical dialogue. Agreement on these issues would certainly motivate lay people to be more ecumenically engaged.

It is possible to say that ecumenical development relies largely on personal relationships and fellowship that ensure a successful realization of

ecumenical events. In many cases, one of the churches takes the initiative but the responsibility for it is not quite shared by the churches. A small number of enthusiasts carries most of the burden. The task for the churches is to find a way to ensure an equal sharing of responsibility for ecumenical initiatives.

Finally, a very important challenge to the growth in communion is the political situation, which weakens the bonds of fellowship with brothers and sisters who belong to the Latvian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate). Thus new possibilities in deepening relationships need to be sought.

## WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

### THEMES 1968-2016

*In 1968, materials jointly prepared by the WCC Faith and Order Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity were first used.*

- 1968 To the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:14)
- 1969 Called to freedom (Galatians 5:13)  
(Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1970 We are fellow workers for God (1  
Corinthians 3:9)  
(Preparatory meeting held at the Monastery of  
Niederaltaich, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1971 and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2  
Corinthians 13:13)  
(Preparatory meeting in Bari, Italy)
- 1972 I give you a new commandment (John  
13:34)  
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva,  
Switzerland)
- 1973 Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)  
(Preparatory meeting held at the Abbey of  
Montserrat, Spain)
- 1974 That every tongue confess: Jesus Christ is  
Lord (Philippians 2:1-13)  
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva,  
Switzerland)
- 1975 God’s purpose: all things in Christ  
(Ephesians 1:3-10)  
(Material from an Australian group –  
Preparatory meeting held in Geneva,  
Switzerland)

- 1976 We shall be like him (1 John 3:2) or,  
Called to become what we are  
(Material from Caribbean Conference of Churches - Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1977 Enduring together in hope (Romans 5:1- 5)  
(Material from Lebanon, in the midst of a civil war - Preparatory meeting held in Geneva)
- 1978 No longer strangers (Ephesians 2:13-22)  
(Material from an ecumenical team in Manchester, England)
- 1979 Serve one another to the glory of God  
(1 Peter 4:7-11)  
(Material from Argentina – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1980 Your kingdom come (Matthew 6:10)  
(Material from an ecumenical group in Berlin, German Democratic Republic – Preparatory meeting held in Milan)
- 1981 One Spirit - many gifts - one body  
(1 Corinthians 12:3b-13)  
(Material from Graymoor Fathers, USA – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1982 May all find their home in you, O Lord  
(Psalm 84)  
(Material from Kenya – Preparatory meeting held in Milan, Italy)
- 1983 Jesus Christ - the Life of the World  
(1 John 1:1-4)  
(Material from an ecumenical group in Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Céligny (Bossey), Switzerland)
- 1984 Called to be one through the cross of our Lord  
(1 Corinthians 2:2 and Colossians 1:20)  
(Preparatory meeting held in Venice, Italy)
- 1985 From death to life with Christ  
(Ephesians 2:4-7)  
(Material from Jamaica – Preparatory meeting held in Grandchamp, Switzerland)
- 1986 You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1:6-8)  
(Material from Yugoslavia (Slovenia) – Preparatory meeting held in Yugoslavia)
- 1987 United in Christ - a New Creation  
(2 Corinthians 5:17-6:4a)  
(Material from England – Preparatory meeting held in Taizé, France)
- 1988 The love of God casts out fear (1 John 4:18)  
(Material from Italy – Preparatory meeting held in Pinerolo, Italy)
- 1989 Building community: one body in Christ  
(Romans 12:5-6a)  
(Material from Canada – Preparatory meeting held in Whaley Bridge, England)
- 1990 That they all may be one ... That the world may believe (John 17)  
(Material from Spain – Preparatory meeting held in Madrid, Spain)
- 1991 Praise the Lord, all you nations! (Psalm 117 and Romans 15:5-13)  
(Material from Germany – Preparatory meeting held in Rotenburg an der Fulda, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1992 I am with you always... Go, therefore  
(Matthew 28:16-20)  
(Material from Belgium – Preparatory meeting held in Bruges, Belgium)
- 1993 Bearing the fruit of the Spirit for Christian unity (Galatians 5:22-23)  
(Material from Zaire – Preparatory meeting held near Zurich, Switzerland)
- 1994 The household of God: called to be one in heart and mind (Acts 4:23-37)  
(Material from Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Dublin, Republic of Ireland)
- 1995 Koinonia: communion in God and with one another (John 15:1-17)  
(Material from Faith and Order – Preparatory meeting held in Bristol, England)
- 1996 Behold, I stand at the door and knock  
(Revelation 3:14-22)  
(Material from Portugal – Preparatory meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal)
- 1997 We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20)  
(Material from Nordic Ecumenical Council – Preparatory meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden)
- 1998 The Spirit helps us in our weakness  
(Romans 8:14-27)  
(Material from France – Preparatory meeting held in Paris, France)
- 1999 He will dwell with them as their God, they will be his peoples (Revelation 21:1-7)

- (Material from Malaysia – Preparatory meeting held in Monastery of Bose, Italy)
- 2000 Blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14)  
(Material from the Middle East Council of Churches – Preparatory meeting held La Verna, Italy)
- 2001 I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (John 14:1-6)  
(Material from Romania – Preparatory meeting held at Vulcan, Romania)
- 2002 For with you is the fountain of life (Psalm 36:5-9)  
(Material CEEC and CEC – Preparatory meeting near Augsburg, Germany)
- 2003 We have this treasure in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:4-18)  
(Material churches in Argentina – Preparatory meeting at Los Rubios, Spain)
- 2004 My peace I give to you (John 14:23-31; John 14:27)  
(Material from Aleppo, Syria – Preparatory meeting in Palermo, Sicily)
- 2005 Christ, the one foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:1-23)  
(Material from Slovakia – Preparatory meeting in Piestaña, Slovakia)
- 2006 Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them (Matthew 18:18-20)  
(Material from Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Prosperous, Co. Kildare, Ireland)
- 2007 He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak (Mark 7:31-37)  
(Material from South Africa – Preparatory meeting held in Faverges, France)
- 2008 Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:(12a) 13b-18)  
(Material from USA – Preparatory meeting held in Graymoor, Garrison, USA)
- 2009 That they may become one in your hand (Ezekiel 37:15-28)  
(Material from Korea – Preparatory meeting held in Marseilles, France)
- 2010 You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:48)  
(Material from Scotland – Preparatory meeting held in Glasgow, Scotland)
- 2011 One in the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (cf. Acts 2:42)
- (Material from Jerusalem – Preparatory meeting held in Saydnaya, Syria)
- 2012 We will all be Changed by the Victory of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58)  
(Material from Poland – Preparatory meeting held in Warsaw, Poland)
- 2013 What does God require of us? (cf. Micah 6, 6-8)  
(Material from India – Preparatory meeting held in Bangalore, India)
- 2014 Has Christ been divided? (1 Corinthians 1:1-17)  
(Material from Canada – Preparatory meeting held in Montréal, Canada)
- 2015 Jesus said to her: Give me to drink (John 4, 7)  
(Material from Brazil – Preparatory meeting held in São Paulo, Brazil)
- 2016 Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord (cf. 1 Peter 2:9)  
(Material from Latvia – Preparatory meeting held in Rīga, Latvia)

## KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

- c. 1740 In Scotland a Pentecostal movement arose, with North American links, whose revivalist message included prayers for and with all churches.
- 1820 The Rev. James Haldane Stewart publishes “Hints for the General Union of Christians for the Outpouring of the Spirit”.
- 1840 The Rev. Ignatius Spencer, a convert to Roman Catholicism, suggests a “Union of Prayer for Unity”.
- 1867 The First Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops emphasizes prayer for unity in the Preamble to its Resolutions.
- 1894 Pope Leo XIII encourages the practice of a Prayer Octave for Unity in the context of Pentecost.
- 1908 First observance of the “Church Unity Octave” initiated by the Rev. Paul Wattson.

- 1926 The Faith and Order movement begins publishing “Suggestions for an Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity”.
- 1935 Abbé Paul Couturier of France advocates the “Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity” on the inclusive basis of prayer for “the unity Christ wills by the means he wills”.
- 1958 Unité Chrétienne (Lyons, France) and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches begin co-operative preparation of materials for the Week of Prayer.
- 1964 In Jerusalem, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I prayed together Jesus’ prayer “that they all may be one” (John 17).
- 1964 The Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II emphasizes that prayer is the soul of the ecumenical movement and encourages observance of the Week of Prayer.
- 1966 The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity [now known as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity] begin official joint preparation of the Week of Prayer material.
- 1968 First official use of Week of Prayer material prepared jointly by Faith and Order and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (now known as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity).
- 1975 First use of Week of Prayer material based on a draft text prepared by a local ecumenical group. An Australian group was the first to take up this plan in preparing the 1975 initial draft.
- 1988 Week of Prayer materials were used in the inaugural worship for The Christian Federation of Malaysia, which links the major Christian groupings in that country.
- 1994 International group preparing text for 1996 included representatives from YMCA and YWCA.
- 2004 Agreement reached that resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity be jointly published and produced in the same format by Faith and Order (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Catholic Church).
- 2008 Commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. (Its predecessor, the Church Unity Octave, was first observed in 1908).