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*UNITATIS REDINTEGRATIO*  
50th Anniversary of  
Decree on Ecumenism

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## EDITORIAL

For this third issue for 2014 is an article on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Decree on Ecumenism. Mgr Tim Galligan and Dr Robin Orton addressed Churches Together in South London on the Decree's initial hope and progress to re-unite the Church. Next, Bishop Paul Hendricks spoke to the parishes of Bexley and Greenwich at their Annual Blessed Sacrament Procession in Lesnes Abbey ruins at Abbey Wood, SE London, this Summer. Many Catholic families attend and this year other denominations were invited for an Ecumenical theme. His talk used Pope Francis' 'No to warring amongst ourselves' from The Joy of the Gospel to encourage working together in the name of Jesus.

On Tuesday of Holy Week, Churches Together in Nunhead and Hatcham shared a Passover meal celebrating the same experience of God's blessing as practised in Jesus' time. A Walk of Witness on Good Friday reminded shoppers of the holy character we all share at Easter.

Deacon John Roberts describes some times when his ministry showed the great promise of unity flowering and bearing fruit. The great hope and expectation was for change. These dreams may seem further away and expectations mellowed, but our work is still important enough to try all the more. *John is Director of the Aylesford Centre for Spiritual and personal Development.*

In Swanwick, 2012, David Cornick uses our past hopes to see the rainbow of colour bursting out as more denominations connect in new and surprising ways, each one of us is selected for the Lord's own loving purpose.

*Michael*

## **Better Together in Holy Week**

It was a memorable week. On Tuesday in Holy Week about sixty people from the four churches that make up Churches Together in Nunhead and Hatcham: St Catherine's, New Cross; St Anthony with St Silas, Nunhead; St Mary Magdalene, Peckham; and St Thomas the Apostle (R.C.), Nunhead gathered together to enact the story of the Passover Meal as Jesus and his disciples might have experienced it. The tables were thoughtfully laid out with all the symbolic elements connected with the Israelites escape from Egypt, green (or bitter) herbs, salt water, horseradish (or radishes), fruit puree, Matzos, pitta bread and red wine. On the top table were the Seder plate and the Passover candles.

The liturgy has been honed over the years and includes the dialogue between the child's questions about the symbolic elements and the responses of the Man of the House, interspersed with acclamations from those assembled.

At the appropriate time sufficient hot roast lamb is brought in for everyone and also some 'salady' things and cheese and grapes. The drinking of red wine (or grape juice) punctuates the different parts of the liturgy. Solo singing of some of the psalms and appropriate music while people are eating adds to the overall ambience.

It is indeed the fusion of the different senses that make it such a moving event: the tables themselves visually very attractive, particularly in the light of many candles, a liturgy that takes us back to words spoken thousands of years ago, and music that opens the heart to what might have been and what could still be.

And the feeling of doing this together shared by our different churches gives it an added 'extra' and hopeful experience.

Then on Good Friday we were together again for a Walk of Witness. Starting, holding the large wooden cross, in the porch way of St Catherine's, looking out over the city of London, we took a route through Telegraph Hill Park, stopping for a reflection and hymn half way along. The Park was looking beautiful and we continued along the streets bordering the parish of St Mary Magdalene, before stopping in the front garden of St Thomas the Apostle, Again a reflection and hymn before continuing along the busy local shops and meeting neighbours until we came to Nunhead Green, stopping only for a brief reflection between the very busy bakers and the Funeral Parlour, between, as it were Life and Death. By the time we got to the Green we were about seventy people and all in good voice for two hymns, a reading, prayers and reflection. An invitation back to St Thomas the Apostle for tea/coffee and hot cross buns ensured we all had the opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones. A memorable week indeed!

Gillian Reeve  
Churches Together  
in Nunhead and Hatcham

**NOTES OF A PRESENTATION TO  
CHURCHES TOGETHER IN SOUTH LONDON  
IN CELEBRATION OF 50th ANNIVERSARY OF  
*UNITATIS REDINTEGRATIO***

**I. TALK BY MGR TIMOTHY GALLIGAN**

The Council decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, was issued on 21 November 1964. <sup>1</sup> Its opening words are: ‘The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council.’ It represented a radical realignment of the RC attitude to ecumenism, with important implications for the wider ecumenical scene. The decree:

- recognizes for the first time that those ‘who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect’ (§3)
- explicitly recognizes for the first time that the RC Church can learn from other Christians: ‘Whatever is wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brothers and sisters can contribute to our own edification’ (§4). Here are the seeds of later developments in ‘receptive ecumenism’ – Pope Francis recently remarked about ‘recognizing with joy the gifts of God present in other communities’. for the first time ‘exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism’ (§4)
- introduces the notion of ‘spiritual ecumenism’ (§8).  
‘There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart [...] All the faithful should remember that the more effort they make to live holier lives according to the Gospel, the better will they further Christian unity and put it into practice’ (§7).

Some consequences of the decree:

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<sup>1</sup> This text can be found online, at:  
[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19641121\\_unitatis-redintegratio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html)

- The *Ecumenical Directory* (published in two parts in 1967 and 1970, and completely revised in 1993<sup>1</sup>). A shortened ‘popular’ version of 1993 edition was published by the bishops of England and Wales as *The Search for Christian Unity* (2002).<sup>2</sup>
- The various bilateral ecumenical dialogues between the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations. Robin Orton will speak briefly later on some of the fruits of these dialogues, specifically in the area of the different understandings of the nature of the Church

Further developments came in Saint John Paul II’s encyclical letter on Ecumenism, *Ut unum sint* (1995)<sup>3</sup>

- He underlined that there is no ‘ecclesial vacuum [...] beyond the boundaries of the Catholic community’ (§13)
- He re-emphasized the importance of praying together (§§22-27), of ecumenical dialogue (§§ 28-39) and practical action in common (§40)
- He invited a discussion about the Bishop of Rome’s Petrine ministry (‘papal primacy’). He asked ‘Church leaders and their theologians to engage with [the Pope] in a patient and fraternal dialogue’ about ‘the forms in which that ministry may accomplish a service of love recognized by all concerned’ (§§ 95-96).

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<sup>1</sup> The text of the *Directory* can be found at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/general-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19930325\\_directory\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/general-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19930325_directory_en.html)

<sup>2</sup> This can be found downloaded from the webpage of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference Department of Dialogue and Unity, at: <http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Departments/Dialogue-and-Unity>

<sup>3</sup> Visit: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25051995\\_ut-unum-sint\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html)

## II. TALK BY ROBIN ORTON

The doctrine of the Church is more central to the beliefs of Catholics (and Catholically-minded Anglicans) than to those of some other Reformation Christians. The Church is more than just the sum total of believers constituting an ‘invisible unity.’ Catholics emphasize

- (1) the Church’s social and organic nature, *communio*;
- (2) the Church as the place where the sacraments are celebrated,
- (3) the Church itself as a sacrament.

Cardinal Walter Kasper’s *Harvesting the Fruits* (2009)<sup>1</sup> – provided a summary of the common fruits of the bilateral dialogues between the RC Church and the Lutherans, Methodists, Anglican and Reformed. (Until 2010 Kasper was President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity). It describes the substantial agreement which had been reached in these dialogues on some aspects of the doctrine of the Church:

- i. The Church is part of God’s plan. It is the new People of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit
- ii. The primary authority over the Church is that of Jesus Christ himself
- iii. The Church is apostolic, in the sense that the apostles are the foundation of the Church
- iv. There is wide, although not universal, acceptance of at least the first four ecumenical councils as normative for the faith of the Church (the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the relationship between Christ’s human and divine natures as defined at Ephesus and Chalcedon)
- v. General agreement on ‘the priesthood of all the faithful’ in the sense that ‘all the baptized who believe in Christ share in the priesthood of Christ’, although they exercise their share in this priesthood in different ways

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<sup>1</sup> Published by Continuum, 2009



- vi. Recognition that the ordained ministry was given to the Church by God, and that an essential element in the ordained ministry is *episcopé* (oversight)
- vii. The Church, particularly those exercising *episcopé*, has an authority and a duty to preach and teach the Gospel
- viii. The Church manifests itself at both local and universal levels - an authentic local church is required to be in communion with other local churches and there is a need for structures at local and universal levels to maintain and give visible expression to that unity.

So there is much to celebrate! Even though there are of course lots of still unresolved issues, in particular about:

- ix. the relationship between Scripture and tradition in forming Church doctrine (although progress has been made on this issue in some of the dialogues)
- x. whether ordination is a sacrament
- xi. whether the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons is essential to the nature of the Church
- xii. whether women can be ordained
- xiii. whether the teaching authority of the Church should be expressed in terms of infallibility
- xiv. the possible role of the Bishop of Rome, as the successor of Peter, 'as a sign and safeguard of unity within a re-united Church' (ARCIC).

(There are, of course, unresolved issues in other doctrinal areas, such as the sacraments.)

### III. RESPONSES

The two presentations were followed by conversations in small groups which were invited to consider the following questions:

Has anything you heard this evening been a surprise, or encouraged you reflect again on what the search for unity demands?

How would you characterize the current relationship (at any level) between your church and the Catholic Church?

There was then a plenary discussion in which the following points were made:

- Not being able to share communion together, however much the reasons were explained, was an issue that caused misunderstanding and sadness.
- The possibility of those who were not Roman Catholics receiving a blessing at communion was valued, but clearly not the final answer.
- The warm exchange of messages between Pope Francis and Copeland Ministries, the conservative evangelical organisation in the USA, was a sign of hope.
- The 1982 Papal visit had been a highlight for many, including a Baptist minister who found it a time of great inspiration.
- What would be the final name of a fully united Church?
- Never forget that the final authority in all things is Christ.
- Although Roman Catholics attach importance to the sacrament of reconciliation (confession), they acknowledge that only God forgives sins’
- It helps to remember that ‘Catholic’ means ‘universal’.
- We should all remember the ‘elephant in the room’, namely that secular pressures are experienced on all churches and we need each other more than ever if the Gospel was to be proclaimed effectively.

At the close of the discussion, John Richardson, the Ecumenical Officer, spoke personally of the journey in his lifetime from bigotry to greater understanding and fellowship.

The Council expressed its gratitude to Tim and Robin for what they had said and, acknowledging the progress that had been made over the past fifty years, looked forward to even more growing together in the next fifty.

## **Deacon John Roberts introduces himself**

Being ordained in 1995, I began my ministry as a Permanent Deacon at a time when ARCIC discussions were still alive and hopeful.

My Parish of south Maidstone had a lovely little church covering the rural area of the parish to the south situated in Headcorn which was and still is a bustling and vibrant Kentish village with the major denominations well represented.

The Anglican church was busy and active, occupying a magnificent Norman church.

The Baptists' had a very strong presence too not only in the village, but in the area as a whole with a young minister and a strong youth group.

The Methodists' too were strongly represented.

The clergy were very united with regular 'fraternal' gatherings which we held in each other's homes on a monthly basis. Churches together in Headcorn were very active as a progressive and active reality.

Monthly services again were held in each church on a monthly basis according to a rota.

Whenever an individual church arranged a special evening of any kind with a guest speaker or presenter, members of other denominations were invited as a matter of course.

Where services were held where the families were of mixed denomination the appropriate clergy were invited to participate. I recall preaching at the Anglican funeral in the Parish Church of my daughter's best friend, tragically killed at twenty-one and then conducting the cremation. She was an Anglican.

The Anglican annual carol service was always regarded as the village carol service which would be over flowing with those attending. The Good Friday 'Walk of Witness' like wise.

The highlighted memory however of those wonderful ecumenical years was when I was invited to lead the local Methodist congregation for their weekly Sunday service while they were looking for a new minister. I was made so welcome and the service, which of course was not their usual Eucharist or Communion, was very prayerful and scripturally reflective and very loving. This period lasted for some two months and the gratitude shown to me was so moving. There was no discomfort felt or shown. It really did help me feel that real sense of being one in Christ.

After a while I was needed more in our parish base in Parkwood, Maidstone, so lost the connection with Headcorn, but I can truly say those memories still live in me and form my strong sense today of unity in Spirit with my fellow Christians wherever they may be.

We are united in Christ – spiritually – practically and especially in love.

## **WHAT DOES LOVE REQUIRE OF US ON THE ECUMENICAL JOURNEY AHEAD?**

Address given by the General Secretary  
Churches Together in England Forum  
Swanwick, 25 October 2012

Twenty-five years ago last month the Holy Spirit blew through this place, and the British church changed. Those who were there remember Cardinal Hume presiding at a Catholic Eucharist. He invited non-Catholics to come forward for a blessing, and found himself blessing Archbishop Runcie and a host of other church leaders. And then, after communion, there was a significant silence. The congregation realised that the Cardinal was so moved, he found it hard to finish Mass. The following day's service, when the Cardinal and the rest of the Catholic delegation came forward to receive blessings from Anglican and Presbyterian clergy, was equally moving. Two days later Hume addressed the conference, 'Christian unity is a gift from God and in the last few days I have felt He has given us this gift in abundance.' The moment had come '... to move deliberately from a situation of co-operation to one of commitment.'

And so, with a bit of politicking around the edges, a sea-change happened, and the Cardinal shifted ecumenism into a different dimension. There are days when words, poetry and the Spirit's dance create thin places and you can almost touch the kingdom of God and feel its transforming authority. Days when the blind see, the lame dance and the endless possibilities of God re-sculpt the horizon. Days when the Swanwick Declaration is written:

...We now declare together our readiness to commit ourselves to each other under God. Our earnest desire is to become more fully, in his own time, the one Church of Christ, united in faith, communion, pastoral care and mission. Such unity is the gift of

God. With gratitude we have truly experienced this gift, growing amongst us in these days.

What was intended was, in Robert Runcie's words, a shift from ecumenism as an energy absorbing extra to 'a dimension of all that we do'. That's the kind of thing you sign up to when the Spirit is in the air. It's all a bit more difficult back at the ranch when you have to work out precisely how '... as a matter of policy at all levels and in all places, our churches must now move from co-operation to clear commitment to each other', let alone '... [develop] proposals for ecumenical instruments to help the churches of these islands to move ahead together.'

And so twenty-five years on, it's time to take stock. A quarter of a century might be as a blink of God's eye in eternity, but for mere mortals it is the difference between brown hair and grey, a thirty six inch waist becoming a forty-five inch waist and the sudden discover that gravity is having its inexorable effect on your face. Or measure it in public affairs. 1987 was the year in which Margaret Thatcher won her third term. As she passed memorably into history, John Major's marginal administration somehow lasted six and half years before Blair's 'third way' re-wrote British politics, to be replaced by the short lived Gordon Brown in 2007 and the Coalition in 2010. During those years we've seen wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the death of a Princess and the marriage of her eldest son, 9/11 and the rise of militant Islam, devolution, and almost complete financial melt-down. That is to say nothing of the cultural changes caused on the one hand by continuing immigration and on the other by the IT revolution. In 1987 mobile phones were the size of breeze blocks and best installed in cars – and that was two years before Tim Berners-Lee invented the world-wide web. Twenty-five years is a long time, even in church. It's time to take stock of the post-BCC era and ask the churches what it is that love requires of us.

There is good news. The ecumenical rainbow is brighter now than it was in 1987, its colours more vibrant and exciting. The journey is no longer the prerogative of the Church of England and assorted

Protestants, but is peopled by the Orthodox of the East, the Catholic Church, Pentecostals, African, Caribbean and English and an increasing number of community churches. In 1987 we could barely have dreamt of such variety, such diversity. There is good news. In many places cooperation amongst Christian churches is normal and unremarkable.

This year we were all part of 'More Than Gold', which enabled the largest ever Christian response to the Olympics – over half a million people attended church-run community events, and demand exceeded supply – on the Isle of Dogs for example, the churches planned for a festival for 500 people, and 4,000 turned up. The figures are stunning and cover everything from Games Pastors giving 13,000 hours of pastoral support at transport hubs, to 434 days of street art. There is good news – the churches continue to be deeply engaged with each other in bilateral dialogue, of which ARCIC III and the Anglican-Methodist Covenant are only the most visible instances. That slow, gentle work of deepening understanding of each other continues unabated, despite reduced budgets. There is good news. The dynamics of English Christianity have changed in the last quarter of a century. Broadly speaking the gentle decline of mainstream Protestant churches has continued unabated, balanced by a rise in immigrant congregations. David Goodhew puts it well in his study of church growth since 1980, 'The key thing to note is that parts of the British church have seen serious and long-lasting decline during these same years – but parts have grown. British churches are experiencing both decline and growth. Britain has grown more secular and more religious in the last thirty years. It all depends where you look. Any portrait of the British church which focuses mainly on decline or growth is unbalanced.' The growth is found mainly but not exclusively amongst immigrant and new churches, in the new 'world-city' of London and along major trading routes. Goodhew notes that '...The more multicultural and the more economically buoyant an area, the more likely it is to have growing churches.' (255). There is

good news – we are not living in the last days of English Christianity. So, what does love require of us?

### **a) Change**

Ecumenism cannot be what it was in 1987, not least because the conversation circle is so much broader than it was. In some towns new ad hoc groupings of churches are emerging, some formed from Churches Together Groups, some alongside them. As ever in ecumenical life, dialogue, conversation and friendship are necessary, with the proviso that love demands of us that we aren't going anywhere where our Orthodox and Catholic friends are not included. After all, between them, they are over 60% of the world's Christians. More Than Gold is once more a brilliant model. There was a huge harnessing of new church energy, but it enabled unlikely and wonderful partnerships like Seventh Day Adventists and Coptic Orthodox, and the whole thing would have collapsed without the Salvation Army and the Roman Catholic Church. It was an object lesson in what the new ecumenism might look like.

Love requires of us that we strive to reflect the wholeness of God's people, that we seek to discover that of Christ in the other. I want to suggest some practical ways to move that forwards. One of the joys of the past three years has been the willingness of some Pentecostal churches to join the ecumenical journey. That is all the more important as Pentecostalism is now a significant world church family. The Free Churches Moderator reminded us yesterday that every time a local church receives a new member, it changes. Every time a denomination enters a covenant with another, it changes. That is because they are open to the Christ who comes in the other. The same applies to an Ecumenical Instrument. We are committed to widening the Presidency for example. We have welcomed Archbishop Gregorios as an Orthodox President, and we are committed to welcoming a Pentecostal President. With the grace of God, we will accomplish that by the time we return here.



Discussion with Pentecostal friends during Forum suggest that we could benefit hugely from a deeper conversation with them about theology and ecclesiology so that we and their partner churches can learn more about them, the things that are important to them, and that they can share. Some of them have taken a courageous step by joining this journey, and I hope we can honour that by offering a hand of welcome and a willingness to learn more.

In 1987 the Ecumenical Movement took a decisive step forward when the Roman Catholic Church moved from co-operation to commitment. Prior to that was a long history of hurt, misunderstanding, and treading on painful corns. I suspect that the relationship between ecumenism and Pentecostalism has been similar. It would, surely, be a fitting way to recognise the 25th anniversary of 1987 if we could say to the Pentecostal family, we regret any hurt that our movement has caused you, and we look to a future where we can receive freely and fully from each other, locally and nationally.

Another practical way forwards is to realise that to-day's church climate might mean permeable membranes rather than hard edges, short-term affiances rather than long-term committees, and patience with impatience of ecumenism.

I have a dream of a Churches Together in England as an umbrella under which all kinds of enterprises of Christian co-operation, from Fresh Expressions to English ARC, from church leaders' meetings to Christian Aid and CAFOD are willing to stand. Not because I have any desire to build an empire, not because we want to own or control – we don't and we can't – but because I want the people of God to grasp the unprecedented breadth of their present ecumenical engagement, even if they don't call it that, and the potential for what might be. The problem with ecumenism is not that it has failed but that its success has gone unheralded because in its glory days the churches set themselves an almost impossible idea – and then failed to celebrate what they have actually achieved – the replacement of enmity with friendship,

competition with fellowship in Christ. And that was a very considerable achievement.

## **b) Fidelity**

I don't think Swanwick 1987 was an illusion or a mistake. The Spirit did move in this place. A vision was given, and the leaders of England's churches reached out in hope and anticipation. But back at the ranch it didn't quite work out. Ecumenism is manifestly not a dimension of all that churches do, and if I am brutally honest, from what I can see their commitment to each other is a strictly limited affair. Ecumenism has become a by-word for yesterday's agenda, mired in bureaucracy and disappointment. What matters is keeping the denominational ship afloat.

And then something happens to raise our sights. Few of us who were privileged to be in Westminster Abbey to celebrate evening prayer with Pope Benedict and Archbishop Rowan last year will ever forget it. It was not only the wonder of the occasion, the music and the joy of the gathering, it was the timing. Only a deludedly optimistic ecumaniac could doubt that the slow, but certain movement of the Church of England to ordain women to the episcopate will move the possibilities of rapprochement between those two communions into the indeterminate future. But here was a gesture of deep spiritual friendship, of a continuing if different relationship. Here, if you like was a living parable. Addressing the wonderfully ecumenically diverse congregation, Pope Benedict asked us to entrust the '...blessings, the disappointments and the signs of hope which have marked our ecumenical journey' to God, confident that '...the friendships we have forged, the dialogue which we have begun and the hope which guides us will provide strength and direction as we persevere on our common journey.'

In other words, be faithful, don't lose the vision, hold on to the truth that your allegiance is to Christ and none other. Hold on to the vision that your oneness in Christ is a profounder reality than the ebbs

and flows of ecclesiastical politics and philosophical fashion. Hold on to the vision that in God's good time the church of God will be one, and that its unity will embrace the whole of humanity and indeed the whole created order. I take Pope Benedict's words as an encouragement to those in England who have been given a particular love and responsibility for the ecumenical movement. Hold on to what you have been given. Keep the candle burning even as you listen to the rhetoric about the value of denominations and mission and the value of diversity to a post-modern consumer age, which conveniently side-steps the logic that the opposite of unity is not diversity but disunity. Do not lose sight of what God wills for the whole of creation, that all things in heaven and on earth will be gathered together under one head, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Hold the vision, the gospel does not change.

### **c) Keep a sense of proportion**

I love the story of the young nun who was eager and enthusiastic and bustled about her convent and about her business for the Lord's kingdom. One day as she was striding along the corridor, an elderly sister stopped her, put her hands on her shoulders, looked her in the eye, and said, 'Sister, I have good news for you. There is but one Saviour, and you are not him.'

I have days like that young sister. I don't bustle much, but I do have days when I think that the entire burden of ecumenism, or indeed the English church depends on what I do. I have a sneaking feeling that it might be a sin of the professionally religious. There are days when we forget that the church is God's, that it is the God of mission who has a church, not the missionary church that has a God. There are times when we forget that Jesus came to save the world, and the church's task is not to save itself, to spend itself and be spent in the service of those whom Christ called '...the least of these, my brothers and sisters'. An ecumenism that is not focused on the oikoumene is not worth the effort. Unity is never an end in itself, it is the goal of the

missionary God who will not rest until all are gathered in the sheepfold, brothers and sisters of every colour, culture, age and ability - united in praise and adoration.

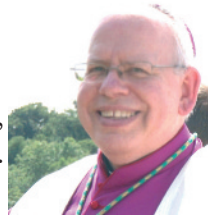
I don't think that we doubt that ultimate goal. I don't think we doubt that in God's good time that will be accomplished. Our difficulty isn't about the ultimate but the penultimate. And that, surely, is about growing into the fullness of Christ. And we do that by being as close to Jesus as we can. As Judith reminded us, our traditions have many gifts which map out paths to Christ. The remarkable thing about that journey is that the closer we get to Jesus, by whatever path, the more we discover his likeness in our brothers and sisters.

I don't have many illusions about the United Reformed Church, which is the church I belong to. I could list its foibles for hours. But one thing I do know. That is where Christ claimed me for his own, and that is why I owe it love and loyalty. It is Christ's place. It also gave me a sense of proportion, for it also taught me that it was but a tiny fragment of Christ's place, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, and that Christ in his holiness, otherness, poverty and, yes, majesty, infuses the whole of that church in all its bewildering diversity. And from every part of that church he has gifts for me, if I have but the humility to open my hands and receive them. Perhaps, just perhaps, the next stage of our ecumenical pilgrimage, is to come with open hands asking to receive what you have to give me of Christ. Maybe that is what love requires of us.

Rev. Dr David Cornick  
ESBVM Newsletter, Nov 2013  
Reprinted with permission

## Homily for Corpus Christi given at Lesnes Abbey by Bishop Paul Hendricks on 22 June 2014

In the feast of Corpus Christi we rejoice in the Eucharist, the great gift of Jesus to us, the gift of himself in his Body and Blood. This is a great joy to us, but it is also a cause of sorrow, because it makes us aware of our divisions. Because the churches are disunited, we aren't able to share fully in our sacraments, including the Eucharist.



Even within our own church we experience a certain amount of division, because people have such different opinions about how we should celebrate the Mass. It has been said that there is nothing you can think of, regarding the Eucharist, that hasn't been a cause of argument or even division, in the history of the Church. You could sit up all night trying to think of something new, but you'd never find something that hadn't already been a cause of division. Who can preside, what language, what sort of bread, whether you have to use alcoholic wine, what sort of vessels, received in the hand or on the tongue, under one or both kinds, which way the priest faces – and even whether you call him a 'priest'.

I wouldn't say that all of these arguments are the result of pride, jealousy and rivalry, but I can't help thinking that these effects of human sinfulness are at least part of the problem. Pope Francis says something about this, in his document on The Joy of the Gospel. He includes it under the heading 'No to warring among ourselves'.

*How many wars take place within the people of God and in our different communities! In our neighbourhoods and in the workplace, how many wars are caused by envy and*

*jealousy, even among Christians! Spiritual worldliness leads some Christians to war with other Christians who stand in the way of their quest for power, prestige, pleasure and economic security. Some are even no longer content to live as part of the greater Church community but stoke a spirit of exclusivity, creating an “inner circle”. Instead of belonging to the whole Church in all its rich variety, they belong to this or that group which thinks itself different or special.*

Some people have what I would call an unhealthy attitude towards what it means to follow the teaching of the Church. They take their ideas of what is acceptable, not from the official teaching of the Church but from some narrower view, which they get from their circle of friends or from something they read on the Internet. And then they think that in order to be faithful to the Church you have to follow the same restricted view that they hold. That’s what I call trying to be more orthodox than the Church!

All this is just in our own churches, but Pope Francis goes on to speak about the divisions between churches.

*Those wounded by historical divisions find it difficult to accept our invitation to forgiveness and reconciliation, since they think that we are ignoring their pain or are asking them to give up their memory and ideals. But if they see the witness of authentically fraternal and reconciled communities, they will find that witness luminous and attractive. It always pains me greatly to discover how some Christian communities, and even consecrated persons, can tolerate different forms of enmity, division, calumny, defamation, vendetta, jealousy and the desire to impose certain ideas at all costs, even to persecutions which appear as veritable witch hunts. Whom are we going to evangelize if this is the way we act?*

The answer is to focus our attention back onto Jesus. The disagreements we have can't be solved overnight — and some of them are important differences we can't ignore. But there's a phrase that Blessed John Henry Newman took as his motto, and it's very relevant here. 'Heart speaks to heart'. I'll never forget a certain occasion, not long after my ordination. I went to meet a family in my parish and there was a visiting Pentecostal minister with them. It was so obvious that here was a man of genuine holiness, a person very close to God. It just shone out, and I could only rejoice to see this, even though we belonged to different churches and our beliefs wouldn't be exactly the same.

It has been wonderful to see how many people in other churches have been inspired by Pope Francis' words. I think it's because he's talking about the real fundamentals of our relationship with Jesus – and that's something we can all understand. It's so basic that it cuts right across all divisions.

*I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”. The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.*

