

Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity
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IN THIS ISSUE

**Joint Declaration Pope Frances &
Patriarch Bartholomew 2014**

Prince Charles visits Syriac Church

The Well is Deep

Ecumenical Journey, Canon O'Toole

ESBVM Congress, Cambridge, 2014

IN CHRIST

EDITORIAL

This Issue takes a look at the background material for this year's theme for Unity Week: *The Well is Deep*. Each year the theme is provided by groups of Christians reflecting on the needs of their country. We've had, recently, the Dalits – outcasts in India – and French Canadians on the scandal of division in our churches. The Brazilian Churches use the story of the Samaritan woman to promote tolerance and understanding where there is hatred, persecution and discrimination.

Canon John O'Toole, Dean of St George's Cathedral, Southwark, has recently been appointed General Secretary to the Department of Dialogue and Unity of the Bishops' Conference replacing Bishop Robert Byrne. We reproduce Canon John's account of his ecumenical journey given in a talk to the Southwark Diocesan Unity Commission in September 2011.

HRH Prince Charles spoke out against the religious conflicts overtaking the Middle-East when visiting the Syriac Orthodox Cathedral in Acton in December 2014. The violence and inhumanity that is growing uncontrollably is destroying the bridges of harmony and trust that show the Divine in the face of our neighbours.

We have a report of the 19th International Congress of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary held in Cambridge in September 2014. The Society has sought to understand Mary's place as Mother of God within the Christian denominations and for the world. The Society welcomes new members (See link on the end page).

Michael

JOINT DECLARATION OF POPE FRANCIS AND PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW 2014

On Sunday, November 30, 2014, the Ecumenical Patriarchate celebrated its Thronal Feast on the occasion of the Feast of St Andrew, First-Called of the Apostles, at the Patriarchal Church of St George, Istanbul.

Typically each year, over the last fifty years, formal visitations take place with the Church of Rome and delegations from each Church are sent by their Primates to attend the patronal feast of the other. This year, however, rather than sending a delegation, Pope Francis attended in person and both Primates exchanged official addresses as well as the kiss of peace, together blessing the faithful at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

The Joint Declaration

We, Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, express our profound gratitude to God for the gift of this new encounter enabling us, in the presence of the members of the Holy Synod, the clergy and the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to celebrate together the feast of Saint Andrew, the first-called and brother of the Apostle Peter. Our remembrance of the Apostles, who proclaimed the good news of the Gospel to the world through their preaching and their witness of martyrdom, strengthens in us the aspiration to continue to walk together in order to overcome, in love and in truth, the obstacles that divide us.

On the occasion of our meeting in Jerusalem last May, in which we remembered the historical embrace of our venerable predecessors Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, we signed a joint declaration. Today on the happy occasion of this further fraternal encounter, we wish to re-affirm together our shared intentions and concerns.

We express our sincere and firm resolution, in obedience to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, to intensify our efforts to promote the full unity of all Christians, and above all between Catholics and Orthodox. As well, we intend to support the theological dialogue promoted by the Joint International Commission, instituted exactly thirty-five years ago by the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios and Pope John Paul II here at the Phanar, and which is currently dealing with the most difficult questions that have marked the history of our division and that require careful and detailed study. To this end, we offer the assurance of our fervent prayer as Pastors of the Church, asking our faithful to join us in praying “that all may be one, that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21).

We express our common concern for the current situation in Iraq, Syria and the whole Middle East. We are united in the desire for peace and stability and in the will to promote the resolution of conflicts through dialogue and reconciliation. While recognizing the efforts already being made to offer assistance to the region, at the same time, we call on all those who bear responsibility for the destiny of peoples to deepen their commitment to suffering communities, and to enable them, including the Christian ones, to remain in their native land. We cannot resign ourselves to a Middle East without Christians, who have professed the name of Jesus there for two thousand years. Many of our brothers and sisters are being persecuted and have been forced violently from their homes. It even seems that the value of human life has been lost, that the human person no longer matters and may be sacrificed to other interests. And, tragically, all this is met by the indifference of many. As Saint Paul reminds us, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together” (1 Cor 12:26). This is the law of the Christian life, and in this sense we can say that there is also an ecumenism of suffering. Just as the blood of the martyrs was a seed of strength and fertility for the Church, so too the sharing of daily sufferings can become an effective instrument of unity. The terrible situation of Christians and all those

who are suffering in the Middle East calls not only for our constant prayer, but also for an appropriate response on the part of the international community.

The grave challenges facing the world in the present situation require the solidarity of all people of good will, and so we also recognize the importance of promoting a constructive dialogue with Islam based on mutual respect and friendship. Inspired by common values and strengthened by genuine fraternal sentiments, Muslims and Christians are called to work together for the sake of justice, peace and respect for the dignity and rights of every person, especially in those regions where they once lived for centuries in peaceful coexistence and now tragically suffer together the horrors of war. Moreover, as Christian leaders, we call on all religious leaders to pursue and to strengthen interreligious dialogue and to make every effort to build a culture of peace and solidarity between persons and between peoples. We also remember all the people who experience the sufferings of war. In particular, we pray for peace in Ukraine, a country of ancient Christian tradition, while we call upon all parties involved to pursue the path of dialogue and of respect for international law in order to bring an end to the conflict and allow all Ukrainians to live in harmony.

Our thoughts turn to all the faithful of our Churches throughout the world, whom we greet, entrusting them to Christ our Saviour, that they may be untiring witnesses to the love of God. We raise our fervent prayer that the Lord may grant the gift of peace in love and unity to the entire human family.

May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. (2 Thess 3:16)

From The Phanar
30 Nov. 2014

Prince Charles visits Syriac Orthodox Cathedral

On 17 December 2014 Prince Charles visited the Syriac Orthodox Cathedral of St Thomas in Acton for a service of prayer. The following is an excerpt from Prince Charles address:

Archbishop, as some of you may be aware, this is the third visit that I have paid in recent weeks to churches whose congregations have the soul-destroying experience of inhuman persecution. In this Advent season, a season of celebration, it is the more profoundly heart-breaking that so many Christians are being persecuted for their faith. For more than twenty years I have tried to build bridges between people of different faiths and have appealed for greater understanding, for greater tolerance and for harmony between the great religions of the world. At a time when so little is held sacred, it is quite literally diabolical that these symbolic bridges should be so destroyed.

And yet there are people who, in the name of their religion, can find it in themselves to disregard the sacred and to persecute people of another faith, or of a different branch of their own faith. So you must not forget that Muslims in Iraq and Syria have been victims of appalling persecution as well as Christians and Yazidis. As I have said before, it seems to me that all faiths to some extent shine a light on the divine image in every human life. If that is so, then surely to destroy another human being is to desecrate the image of the Divine. To do so in the name of faith is, surely, nothing less than a sacrilege.

I have been deeply distressed by the horrific scenes of violence and bestial brutality coming out of the Middle East where Christianity was born including from countries, let us remember, like Syria, to which St Paul went to preach the Gospel and where Christians have lived peaceably with their neighbours for nearly two thousand years.

Archbishop, Ladies and Gentlemen in the meantime, I can only leave you with my prayers and blessings, however inadequate they may be, together with these words of St Paul's, which resonate across two millennia:

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.

See: <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=26298>

THE WELL IS DEEP

Jesus said to her: “Give me to drink”

WHO DRINKS OF THIS WATER?

Journey, scorching sun, tiredness, thirst: “Give me to drink.” This is a demand of all human beings. God, who becomes human in Christ (Jn 1:14) and empties himself to share our humanity (Phil 2:6-7) is capable of asking the Samaritan woman: “Give me to drink” (Jn 4:7). At the same time, this God who comes to encounter us, offers the living water: “The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4:14).

The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman invites us to try water from a different well and also to offer a little of our own. In diversity, we enrich each other. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a privileged moment for prayer, encounter and dialogue. It is an opportunity to recognize the richness and value that are present in the other, the different, and to ask God for the gift of unity.

‘Whoever drinks of this water keeps coming back,’ says a Brazilian proverb, always used when a visitor leaves. A refreshing glass of water, chimarrão, coffee, tereré, are trademarks of acceptance, dialogue and coexistence. The biblical gesture of offering water to whomever arrives (Mt 10:42), as a way of welcoming and sharing, is something that is repeated in all regions of Brazil.

The meditation on this text during the Week of Prayer is to help people and communities to realize the dialogical dimension of Jesus, the Kingdom of God. The text affirms the importance of a person knowing and understanding her/his own self-identity so that the identity of the other is not seen as a threat. If we do not feel threatened, we will be able to experience the completion of the other: alone, a person or culture is not enough! Therefore, the image emerging from the words “give me to drink” is an image speaking of connection: to drink water from someone else’s well is the first step towards experiencing another’s way of being. This leads to an exchange of

gifts that enriches. Where the gifts of the other are refused much damage is done to society and to the Church.

In the text of John 4, Jesus is a foreigner who arrives tired and thirsty. He needs help and asks for water. The woman is in her own land; the well belongs to her people, to her tradition. She owns the bucket and she is the one who has access to the water. But she is also thirsty. They meet and that encounter offers an unexpected opportunity for both of them. Jesus does not cease to be Jewish because he drank from the water offered by the Samaritan woman. The Samaritan remains who she is while embracing Jesus' way. When we recognize that we do have reciprocal needs, a bond takes place in our lives in a more enriching way. "Give me to drink" presupposes that both Jesus and the Samaritan ask for what they need from each other. "Give me to drink" compels us to recognize that persons, communities, cultures, religions and ethnicities need each other.

"Give me to drink" implies an ethical action that recognises the need for one another in living out the Church's mission. It compels us to change our attitude, to commit ourselves to seek unity in the midst of our diversity, through our openness to a variety of forms of prayer and Christian spirituality.

THE ECCLESIAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF BRAZIL

Brazil can be considered a very religious country. It is traditionally known as a country where a certain 'cordiality' characterizes relations between social classes and ethnic groups. However, Brazil is living through a time of growing intolerance made manifest in high levels of violence, especially against minorities and the vulnerable: black people, the young, homosexual people, people practicing Afro-Brazilian religion, women, and indigenous people. This intolerance was hidden for a long time. It became more explicit and revealed a different Brazil when, on 12 October 1995, the feast of Our Lady Aparecida, the patron of the country, one of the bishops of a

Neo-Pentecostal church kicked a statue of Our Lady Aparecida during a national TV broadcast. Ever since there have been other instances of Christian based religious intolerance. There have also been similar incidents of Christian intolerance towards other religions, particularly Afro-Brazilian and indigenous traditions.

The logic that undergirds this kind of behaviour is competition for the religious market. Increasingly, in Brazil, some Christian groups adopt a competitive attitude towards one another: a competition for a place on mass media, and a competition for new members and public funds for major events. Pope Francis points to this very phenomenon when he writes, “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” (*Evangelii Gaudium* n.98). This situation of religious competition has affected the life of traditional Christian confessions, which have experienced a reduction or stagnation in the number of their members. It has encouraged the idea that a strong and dynamic church is a church that has a high number of members. As a result, there is a tendency among significant sectors of traditional churches to distance themselves from the search for the visible unity of the Christian Church.

This market-driven Christianity is investing in party politics, and, in some cases, creating its own political parties. It is allying itself with specific interest groups such as big landowners, Agro-business and the financial markets. Some observers go as far as speaking of the confessionalisation of political life, which threatens the separation between state and religion. Thus the ecumenical logic of breaking down the walls of division is replaced by a “corporative” logic and the protection of denominational interests.

Although the 2010 official Census shows that 86.8% of the Brazilian population identify themselves as Christian, this country has very high rates of violence. Thus a high rate of Christian affiliation does not seem to translate into non-violent attitudes and respect for human dignity. This statement can be illustrated with the following data:

Violence against women:

Between 2000 and 2010, 43,700 women were murdered in Brazil. Forty one per cent of these women who suffer violence, are violated in their own homes.

Violence against indigenous people:

Violence against the indigenous population is often related to large hydroelectric developments and the expansion of agrobusiness. These two projects express the model of development prevailing in the country today. They contribute significantly to the slow demarcation and recognition of indigenous territories. In 2011, the report *Violence against Indigenous Peoples in Brazil* of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), an organisation connected with the Roman Catholic Conference of Bishops of Brazil, identified 450 developments underway on indigenous lands in Brazil. These developments take place without proper consultation with indigenous peoples as envisaged in Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). CPT's report denounces the murder of 500 indigenous people between 2003 and 2011; 62.7% of these are in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. The annual murder average is 55.8 natives.

Overcoming intolerance in its various forms should be dealt with in a positive way: respecting legitimate diversity and promoting dialogue as a permanent path of reconciliation and peace in fidelity to the gospel. The Brazilian churches have begun to recognise that intolerance should be dealt with in a positive way – respecting diversity and promoting dialogue as a permanent path of reconciliation and peace in fidelity to the gospel. We can share this recognition. Although the competition between churches is less obvious in our islands, we are well aware that competition and violent discrimination lie beneath the surface of our lives together. Jesus challenges us to acknowledge that diversity is part of God's design, to approach one another in trust and to see the face of God in the face of all men and women. (Adapted from WCC & CTBI)

MY ECUMENICAL JOURNEY

Talk to Diocesan Unity Commission
by Canon John O'Toole
Saturday, 24 September, 2011.

I hope you will forgive me if I begin with a prayer.

Opening Prayer

Father, you sent your Son to gather together in unity the scattered children of God. We give thanks for the unity we share with our brothers and sisters in Christ through faith and baptism. May we work and pray to bring about that fullness of unity which is the desire and prayer of Christ himself, so that you, Father, may be glorified and so that the world may believe. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Introduction

Last Thursday I travelled down to Guildford for an important meeting. It was a pub lunch with three other priests who were classmates of mine at the seminary – and it was great to meet up and to talk. In all the busyness of life it can be difficult to make time for what is most important and what are the real treasures of life – our faith, our family and our friends. As I walked from Guildford station towards the riverside pub where we were to meet, ('The Boatman' now renamed 'The Weyside' but called the 'Jolly Farmer' in my day) I passed St Nicholas's Anglican Church and was stopped in my tracks by a poster advertising a talk for the coming Monday evening; the title of the talk was: *Could the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church ever be united?* to be given by Bishop Christopher Hill, the Bishop of Guildford – who, along with our own Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham is one of the members of ARCIC 3 – the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission.

Today, I have been asked to speak about my own ecumenical journey and the significant steps and milestones on the way. I'd like to approach this by reflecting on how my own personal ecumenical journey has overlapped with the Roman Catholic Church's community

ecumenical journey and how they perhaps may throw light on each other and hopefully may ring some bells with your own personal ecumenical journey. I thought a map of my own personal ecumenical journey might help along with some highlights and milestones in the Church's ecumenical journey as a whole. My first observation is, however, that real life doesn't run as smoothly or as evenly as these straight lines. The 'cardiograph screen' maybe closer to reality for most of us – with many ups and downs as well as flat periods. Fortunately, our faith is that God is able to write straight with crooked lines. But I hope these dates may be useful pegs on which to hang a few thoughts and reflections.

My timeline:

Pius XII	John XIII	End of Vat II	Humane Vitae	Yr of 3 Popes	Principles & Norms	Ut unum sint	One Bread	Benedict XVI	IARCUUM	Pope visits UK	
1939	58	65	68	78	93	95	98	2001	05	07	2010
1950	58	65	69	78	90	96	99	2001	04		2011
Dublin	Chatham	Mark Cross Wonersh	Ordination Thamesmead			CMS	E ARC Thornton Heath	CEC			St George's Cathedral

I was born in Dublin on 1 February 1950 (birth certificate has 1 January!). This was in the reign of Pope Pius XII. I lived there until I was eight years old, growing up in an environment where 99% of people were RC's and where one's Catholic faith was enormously bolstered by the social and cultural support network. One never thought of not going to Mass! My mum told me later that there were two Protestant families who lived along our road – the Stewarts and the Proctors. When the youngest Stewart boy was killed by a milk van the family brought the boy's favourite teddy to our house and gave it to my mum for my younger brother Gabriel. Simple gestures like this may advance the ecumenism as much as, if not more than, agreed theological statements.

1958

My dad had lost his job and moved to Chatham in Kent to look for work. A few months later my mum and five kids arrived to join him. Suddenly reality changed for me. From being in the Catholic *majorty*

I was now part of a Catholic *minority*. There was no place available in the local Catholic primary school and so I went to the local state school – where RCs stood outside the hall while prayers were being said and I had to pretend not to like the hymns that attracted me. Some years later Mervyn Stockwood, the colourful Anglican Bishop of Southwark told me that in 1958 he had invited Bishop Cyril Cowderoy, his RC counterpart, for dinner. Showing him round his house he took him into the chapel and suggested that they say the Lord's Prayer together but Bishop Cyril replied, "No, I'm sorry. Rome won't allow it." Strangely this was the same year that saw the surprise election of Pope John XXIII who very quickly set up the Secretariat for Christian Unity, and invited Dr Geoffrey Fisher, the first Archbishop of Canterbury since the Reformation, to visit the Pope. Most famously, he summoned the Second Vatican Council and one of its principal aims (which we have perhaps forgotten amid all our internal changes) was to seek the reunion of all Christians.

1965

I went to the Junior Seminary at Mark Cross, near Tunbridge Wells at the age of 13 in 1963 and two years later, in 1965, I was expelled for smoking! 1965 marked also the close of the Second Vatican Council which brought about what we would call today a paradigm shift in the Roman Catholic Church's understanding of itself and its relationship to the world. The Church moved from seeing itself as against the world to being in the world and for the world, although not of the world. The Decree on Ecumenism was promulgated on 21 Nov. 1964 and spoke of the unique Church of Christ as 'subsisting' in the Roman Catholic Church, but with many elements of sanctification and truth existing beyond its visible boundaries – so the Church of Christ is, as it were 'defined' in the Catholic Church, but not 'confined' to it. Importantly, the Decree recognises the presence of the Holy Spirit not only in other Christian believers as individuals, but in their communities – viewed not as heretical conventicles, but as sources of grace and holiness. The Decree rightly sees the Church and the church's unity not only in sociological terms (being chums together), but in theological terms – as mirroring the life of God as Father, Son and Spirit. We are 'one in Christ' and so 'brothers and sisters' and it is God's Spirit that draws and gathers us together as parts of one

(dysfunctional?) family. Perhaps a key quotation is: “There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart (i.e. a conversion)”. Change and conversion can be painful and many have had to make a painful and slow journey through the five C’s – from competition, through coexistence and co-operation to commitment and eventually full communion. It has also been said that Catholics can be divided into three groups: pre-Council, post-Council, and what Council?

Having moved to a non-Catholic school for my A levels I discovered when I tried to join the Christian Union that the staff had to have a meeting to decide whether or not Catholics could be admitted. I made friends with Paul Hatt, a devout Anglican evangelical. He, his family and his church taught me much about the importance of reading, praying and living the Scriptures. His mum is a kind and saintly woman and I am delighted to be on her prayer list. Despite this, arriving at King’s College, London to study history and clutching my supply of Catholic Truth Society pamphlets I was ready to defend the RC corner even to the extent of defending the indefensible such as the Inquisition – but I was rather thrown into confusion to find the Anglican ordinands walking round in cassocks, holding thuribles and clutching Vatican II documents in their hands. I began to see that many differences *are within* denominations rather than *between* denominations. I remember also being surprised to find that Martin Luther had believed passionately in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist even though he rejected the idea of transubstantiation and the Mass as a sacrifice. At the seminary at Womersley we were once set an essay by the church history professor with the title; “If Martin Luther were alive today, he would have been at the Second Vatican Council. Discuss.”

1978

Ordained in the year of the three Popes (Paul VI, another passionate ecumenist, John Paul I and JP II) and in my first appointment as an ordained priest, I was pleasantly surprised to find a good ministers’ fraternal where there was respect for each other and for each other’s tradition as well as a good lunch and the challenge of discovering different ways both of believing and of expressing belief. It was also obvious that many positions that people took were as much to do with

personality and psychology as philosophy and theology – and could cut across denominational lines.

I had always been keen on ecumenism ‘in my head’ but I think my experience at Thamesmead taught me how to be ecumenical ‘in my heart’ too. St Paul’s was a modern church building shared by four denominations – Anglican, Methodist, URC and Roman Catholic. There were two chapels (a RC chapel and a United Congregation chapel) separated by a corridor which was known by the parishioners as Reformation corridor – a wooden construction that could be dismantled once unity comes! In the rest of the building not only did space have to be shared (a real difficulty), but the collections were also shared (a real test of ecumenical commitment and literally putting our money where our mouth was). Every Friday morning there was a Team meeting where we prayed, planned and argued together. Falling out and making up – offering forgiveness and seeking forgiveness are key parts of both our denominational and ecumenical lives. Once a month there was a celebration of ‘Simultaneous Eucharists’ when both congregations joined together, with two altars on the sanctuary and the lectern in between. The Liturgy of the Word was completely shared (with the homily being given by one of the Team), then we moved to our respective altars, but used the same Eucharistic prayer, praying for the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury as well as our own diocesan bishops and Church leaders. People then came forward to receive communion from their own minister (so no intercommunion) and the service ended with the sign of peace followed by refreshments afterwards. It was a bold ecumenical experiment in its day and as far as we could go within the rules of each other’s traditions. Certainly many friendships were made both by ministers and people that cut across denominations and theologies, it was during my time at Thamesmead that the 1993 document Principles and Norms of Ecumenism came out drawing together much good practice since Vatican II and spelling out the implications and possibilities that flow from the ‘real yet imperfect’ communion that we already enjoy as Christians. John Paul II’s famous encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (That they may be One) came out in 1995 and I remember being greatly encouraged by its ‘easy to read’ style and by the way it reaffirmed ecumenism as one of the pastoral priorities both of John Paul’s

pontificate and of the Church's mission (to be Roman Catholic is to be ecumenical). He also invited other Christian leaders and their theologians to explore with him how the Pope might exercise a service of love and be a focus of unity rather than a source of division among all Christians. Significantly, he asked forgiveness for the times the Pope's authority has been used to dominate rather than to serve. The abuse of authority is something which can happen at every level of the Church's life – whether in the Vatican, in a diocese, in a parish, in a home.

1996

Working as part of the Team at the Catholic Missionary Society (CMS) leading parish and school missions taught me not to advertise things as 'ecumenical' (they attract few people), but to present a theme (e.g. family life, justice and peace) ecumenically. It's the wisdom of 'doing things ecumenically' rather than 'doing ecumenical things'. One of the key stumbling blocks, that of celebrating the eucharist and receiving communion together, was addressed in the RC Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland's teaching document, *One Bread One Body* in 1998. The fundamental principle which underlines its norms on Eucharistic sharing is that 'the Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with the Church' and so cannot as a rule be received by those who are not in full communion, except where there is 'a danger of death, or if there is some other grave and pressing need such as a unique occasion for joy or for sorrow in the life of a family or individual such as a Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion, Marriage, Ordination or death' (paras 106 & 109). The teaching of *One Bread One Body* seems logical if one's premise is that the eucharist is a sign of unity, but one could also argue strongly that it is also a means to unity. We also live in a culture which often reacts emotionally rather than logically and so finds it difficult to make sense of the Church's rules and the nuanced theological thinking on which they are based. People tend to say "What would Jesus do?" and quoting from the rule book may cut little ice as a response. At the very least, therefore, a mere generous interpretation of the permitted norms – and a wider knowledge of them would be a help. John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint* says: "We can now ask how much

further we must travel until that blessed day when full unity in faith will be attained and we can celebrate together in peace the Holy Eucharist of the Lord.” (Para 77)

1999

Returning to a large but mainstream parish in Thornton Heath as parish priest I was surprised how relatively little was done ecumenically. Good people, but everyone seemed very busy doing their own thing in their own patch. Not lack of will, but lack of time. With the tragedy of a sword attack (in the Church) the Salvation Army came to our rescue, changed the time of their own evening service and offered the Salvation Army citadel for our Sunday evening mass with the Salvation Army captain rummaging around in his cupboards to try and find a candle for the RC congregation! That is practical ecumenism.

2001

In 2001, I became a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee (or English ARC as it is known) which is the national version of ARCIC – set up over 40 years ago to study the Agreed Statements and to see how best to disseminate them at parish and local level. You can see why then, my eye was caught by the poster in St Nicholas’s church in Guildford asking the question: “Could the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church *ever* be united?” I wonder, for example, which season of the year you think might best sum up the current state of ecumenism – would it be winter, spring, summer or autumn? Is the ecumenical glass half empty or half full – or has it been dropped and smashed?

2011

My journey has taken me to where I am today – St George’s Cathedral – where the most recent joint meeting of Anglican and RC bishops took place – itself a good sign of hope through worship, welcome and witness. (WWW and in that order) is a good succinct mission statement for the cathedrals and churches of all our denominations. So what answer would I give to the question: “Could the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church *ever* be united?” My answer is in terms of an image. If you travel not to Guildford, but to Liverpool you will find two Cathedrals which are fairly close to each other. The

Anglican Cathedral was designed by a Roman Catholic and the RC Cathedral was designed by an Anglican and the two cathedrals are joined together by a road which is called Hope Street. So my answer is hopefully yes –for where there is a will, there is a way –no matter how great or insuperable the difficulties or obstacles may seem. What that fullness of unity would look like in reality we may not be able to imagine, but perhaps some broad principles are beginning to emerge and we have all learnt that unity does not mean uniformity.

So my final and unoriginal thought is another sign outside a church that caught my *eye* some years ago. The church is the Liberal Catholic Church in Putney along the south-circular road; the message on the sign was:

Unity in essentials, diversity in inessentials, charity in all things.

Canon John O'Toole
Dean of St George's Cathedral
Southwark

Canon John has recently been appointed General Secretary to the Department for Dialogue and Unity of the Bishops Conference in England Wales which works to foster cooperation with other Christian traditions and other faiths. It also implements Catholic Church teaching to promote an understanding of the living faith of Judaism and the Jewish roots of Christianity. The department has two committees: The Committee for Christian Unity and the Committee for Catholic/Jewish Relations. It also has an Office for Relations with Other Religions.

ESBVM Congress, Cambridge, 2014

The Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary (ESBVM) held its nineteenth International Congress at Magdalene College, Cambridge, 22-25 September 2014. The theme of the Congress was:

Christian Perfection, The Immaculate Conception and Contemporary Thinking on Holiness in Christian Traditions linked with the ESBVM.

One of the attractions of the ESBVM Congresses is their choice of venue and Magdalene College, Cambridge did not disappoint. We were accommodated in the Cripps Court Conference Centre – a modern building completed in 2005 with excellent facilities. It forms a court in the grounds of two Victorian villas on the other side of Chesterton Road from the College's main site. It is named after Sir Cyril Humphrey Cripps (1915–2000) an English businessman and philanthropist. Funding for the conference centre came from the Cripps Foundation a charity established in 1956 by the Cripps family which has made many gifts to universities, colleges, schools, churches, hospitals and museums.

Magdalene College is dedicated to St Mary Magdalene (the final 'e' distinguishes it from Magdalen College, Oxford). In early documents, the name is spelt as pronounced: 'Maudleyn', containing within it the name of Lord Audley who re-founded it in 1542. The original foundation of 1428 was established on the north side of the River Cam as a hostel for student monks from Crowland Abbey. They were joined by other monks from Ely, Ramsey and Walden Abbeys and began the historic buildings in the 1470s. Walden Abbey came into the possession of Thomas Lord Audley at the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Audley as Lord Chancellor presided over the trials of Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher. The arms of Magdalene, with the motto *Garde ta foy* (Keep faith) are from Audley.

Some thirty six people attended the Congress and were warmly welcomed by The Master of Magdalene, The Most Revd and Rt. Hon. Baron Williams of Oystermouth.

The daily schedule included times of corporate prayer with the Ecumenical Office of the ESBVM, lectures, a formal dinner in the College Hall and entertainment in the form of a concert, compèred by Ben Saul when the Gounod Singers gave a recital of Marian works and other choral music related to composers connected with Cambridge.

The following papers were presented to the Congress:

Difficult Dogmas: Can Methodism's Christian Perfection and Catholicism's Immaculate Conception help in understanding each other by the Revd Dr Richard Clutterbuck, Principal of Edgehill Theological College, Belfast.

Holiness and the Sovereignty of Grace: Mary's Discipleship by the Master of Magdalene, Lord Rowan Williams.

The holiness of obedience and thanksgiving by His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church, United Kingdom.

The Queenship of Mary in the writings of the Fathers by Fr Pierre Najem, OMM, Director of the Centre for Digitization and Preservation of Manuscripts, Notre Dame University – Zouk Mosbeh, Lebanon.

'Bruised, hurting and dirty': a Marian Ecclesiology for a church of the poor. Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ, Heythrop College, University of London.

'I am the Immaculate Conception': Our Lady of Lourdes and Holy Wisdom by Dr Sarah J Boss PhD., Lecturer in Theology and Marian Studies, Director of the Marian Study Centre.

Our Lady of Sorrows and the problem of pain and suffering by Ben Kwizera, Student of Theology, Durham University.

All the talks were of a high standard and have been recorded. It is not possible to give a synopsis of each talk in this short account, but a few brief comments may be appropriate. Doctor Clutterbuck was perhaps the one who successfully kept to the declared theme of the Congress.

Lord Rowan William's address reflected his academic background with clarity of thought and presentation. Bishop Angaelos' presentation was inspiring and encouraging – more in the nature of a sermon. Fr Pierre Najem was less accessible; his talk will need to be listened to again. Dr Gemma Simmonds is a gifted speaker whose contribution was greatly appreciated. The phrase, *bruised, hurting and dirty*, is a quote from Pope Francis' comment on the Church and his desire that the Church should be a poor Church for the poor. Dr Sarah Boss reflected on Mary's self-identification: *I am the Immaculate Conception* and the use of the 'wisdom' texts in relation to Mary and her own conception. Finally Ben Kwizera, a young theology student from Durham, shared his personal experience of suffering resulting from the genocide in Rwanda and how one might deal with the problem of pain and suffering.

One afternoon there was a walking tour of Cambridge guided by the Revd Dr Nicholas Cranfield – art historian, Jonathan Louth – architect, and Ben Saul – Musical Director of Faversham Choral Society and The Gounod Singers. He formed the Girls Choir at Southwark Cathedral where he was assistant organist. The tour introduced us to some of the historical, musical, literary and architectural associations of Cambridge.

The walking tour began within Magdalene College where we examined the exterior of the College Chapel and heard how the earliest part of it is in fact the roof, and how one can learn something of the history from the various patterns of the brickwork. Moving on we stopped outside St Clements Church (early 13th Cent.), An Anglican parish church which is shared with the Greek Orthodox community. Then on to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Round Church; built in the Norman style in about 1130. It is one of four round churches in England. There Jonathan Louth sang a version of the Ave Maria.

Next stop was Sydney Sussex College founded by Lady Frances Sidney, wife of the Earl of Sussex in 1594 on a site that had been occupied by the Grey Friars for 300 years. It is said to have been a Puritan foundation and was attended by Oliver Cromwell. The chapel is in the Tudor style and there we were entertained by Ben Saul playing the organ. Our final visit was to King's College Chapel where we admired the exquisite architecture, the choir stalls and the stained glass. Ben Saul introduced an organ piece by Herbert Howells (1892-1983) played by one of the organ scholars. It was an interesting and informative afternoon.

A visit to *The Pepys Library* was a must. The building planned in 1640 was completed after 1700. It served first as library for the books bequeathed by the then Master, Prof. James Duport, at his death in 1679. Pepys contributed to the building fund, but not until he wrote his will in 1703 did he express his intention to bequeath his library to the College. When his nephew and heir, John Jackson, died in 1723, the collection was transferred intact to the College. The 3000 books are arranged by size in their original 17th century oak bookcases and their bindings, mostly done for Pepys, are very fine. The most important items are the six original bound manuscripts of Pepys's diary. Other remarkable holdings include: early printed material by William Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson, and sixty medieval manuscripts.

Though the numbers were limited by the availability of rooms, the Congress was very successful fulfilling the objectives of the Society of *prayer, study and fellowship* thanks to the dedicated work of Fr Bill McLoughlin OSM, General Secretary of the Society and his team.

Desmond Miller

See Background of the ESBVM: <http://www.esbvm.org.uk/about-2/>

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