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TOGETHER IN CHRIST



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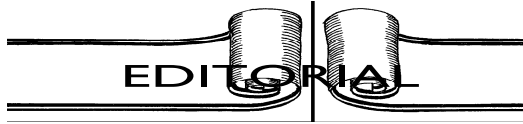
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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our June issue! We offer many thanks for all who have contributed to it. “Practically every aspect of our work has either an ecumenical or interfaith dimension.” This is a quotation, as you will see on page 4, which indicates the importance of Fr Faley’s new task. Perhaps many of our readers, and others too, may feel that the quotation applies to their own work it emphasises the importance of our ecumenical endeavours, and despite setbacks urges us to continue them.

We are grateful to David Carter for the opportunity of publishing his sermon, clearly expressing reasons for “bothering about Christian Unity”.

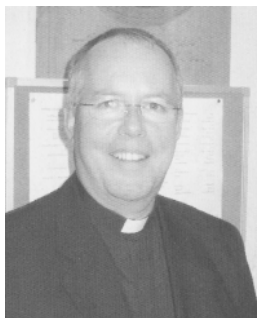
You are all urged to attend *The Gathering* which is due to take place in November. It should be a fruitful and memorable occasion.

We are very grateful to Dom Alberic Stacpoole, OSB. for his thoughts on modern ecumenism, and its problems. We need to be aware of the difficulties on the road towards being fully united, yet we must never cease to pray constantly and work wholeheartedly “that all may be one”.

Desmond Miller has kindly set up this issue on his computer, and we are most grateful to him.

WELCOME TO FR ANDREW JAMES FALEY

Fr Faley, a priest of Hexham and Newcastle diocese, has been appointed by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales as its new assistant general secretary for ecumenism and interfaith relations.



Fr Faley was born on 12 April 1954 in Dilston near Hexham, Northumberland. He was ordained to the priesthood on 23 June 1979. He worked as an assistant and parish priest in five parishes including Hartlepool and South Shields. The general Secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Mgr Andrew Summersgill said 'I am very

grateful to Bishop Ambrose Griffiths for releasing Andrew to work with the Secretariat. Practically every aspect of our work has either an ecumenical or interfaith dimension'. Fr Faley said he how delighted he was to take up this new appointment.

He served as Vice-Rector and Pastoral Director of the Pontifical Beda College in Rome from 1999 to 2003 and worked for the Catholic Education Service as National Advisor for Catechesis and Religious Education from 1994 to 1999. Previously he had been a team member and Director in the Hexham and Newcastle Diocesan Religious Education Centre from 1984 to 1994 specializing in Adult Formation. Fr Faley's hobbies are cooking, reading, music, walking and travel.

CHRISTIAN UNITY OCTAVE 2004 – A SERMON

*For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas . . .
all are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's.
(1 Cor. 3: 21–23)*

People sometimes ask, why bother about Christian unity. Surely, the churches are fine on their own, each doing good in its own way? I want to suggest three reasons why we should take the unity of the whole Church utterly seriously. First and foremost it is because it is the will of Christ and it is his will because it is part of His Father's plan, that the world might believe. We live in a desperately divided world. In every country and in every situation, there are tensions, inequalities, conflicts, jealousies innumerable, and often we feel despair as to whether anything ever can or will change.

The message of the New Testament, spelt out time and time again, especially by Paul, is that it is God's intention, in and through Jesus, to overcome these divisions and conflicts and to unite all things in Christ. Christ came to found a community of reconciliation. In New Testament times, it already reached across the three major divisions of society then existing in such a way that Paul could say that 'in Christ there is neither male nor female, slave nor free, Greek not Jew'.

Our divisions may be different today but God's intention is still the same. His desire is that the Church of Jesus should demonstrate the practical possibility and reality of reconciliation in the way in which it

lives, that it should include people of all races, backgrounds, temperaments and even of different ways of worship. The Church is meant to point beyond itself to the reality of God's love and of God's kingdom already affecting and changing the lives of those touched by its fellowship. As an important ecumenical dialogue has put it – it is called to be 'sign instrument and first fruits of God's kingdom'.

To carry out the mission that Christ entrusted to us, the mission of healing and building up true and loving relationships, we need, as Christians, to be at one with each other, sharing, preferring one another in honour, prepared both to give to and to receive from each other. All this is not for our sake alone but for the sake of the Father's plan for the unity of humankind.

That is the first reason. The second is this, that the things that unite us are already far more important than those that divide us. I do not say that those matters over which we continue to disagree, such as the structure and ministry of the Church are unimportant, clearly they are not, but they are still, as Roman Catholics might say, secondary in the hierarchy of truths.

What then are those great truths that unite us? They are two fold: first, there is our distinctively Christian understanding of God as Trinity, God as eternal communion of love in Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet also reaching out to enfold us in his eternal love. God is infinitely great. In that we can happily agree with our Jewish and Muslim friends,

but He is also the God who draws alongside us as companion and friend in Jesus and the God who lives within us to guide us, the Holy Spirit. This Trinitarian faith is common to all of us, Catholic and Orthodox, free church and Anglican, British and overseas Christians. Secondly, and following from this, is the truth that the Church is essentially a communion, a partnership, a sharing with God in his mission and grace into which we are invited and joined to each other as well as to Him. We may disagree as to whether this communion needs a Pope as a focus but we will agree with John Paul II when he says that the great task of the new millennium is to make the Church the home and school of communion. For our essential task is to let the Holy Spirit develop amongst us a truly Christian pattern of loving relationships.

My third and final point is that in sharing ever more closely with each other, in really learning to affirm each other in our varying styles of worship and witness, we enter into an incredibly rich heritage. This is where my text comes in. Paul found the Christians at Corinth divided between various cliques, each claiming the authority of some prominent leader. This situation he dealt with by reminding them that the gifts and styles of the varying leaders to whom they were attached were not necessarily exclusive and antagonistic but were in fact complementary. Learning from Apollos or Cephas did not mean one could not learn from Paul. He pointed out that all God's gifts to the Church were meant to enrich the entire body – 'All things are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's.'

I have recently, for the purpose of teaching, been re-reading that incredibly moving document, the *Decree on Ecumenism* of Vatican II. Much of what it says can be affirmed by all the churches. It points out that the Spirit has not refrained from using the spiritual riches of the many different Christian groups. The mystery of Christ is very rich. Paul talks of the unsearchable riches of Christ. A Methodist statement of 1937 talked of the Church as ‘the home of the Holy Spirit whose life should be richer as with succeeding generations more and more races are added to it and new apprehensions of divine truth are given’.

We have much to learn from each other and the sharing to which we are called is meant to be a reflection, albeit in our finite terms of that infinite sharing that is at the very heart of God himself.

David Carter,
St Michael’s Beddington,
18 January 2004.

BETHANY

Out on the road from Bethany
he kissed her, held her hands, then turned.
She watched him go;
counted each step dividing them,
marking his sure determined tread,
as tinier and tinier he grew
until – no more than a babe – he stood
on the skyline. Waved. Was gone.
Through sun-bejewelled tears the mother
stared – stared on.

Lewis D. Lawless

THE GATHERING

A gathering of Christians committed to local ecumenical activity is being planned by *Churches Together in England* (CTE). The first national meeting of its kind, *The Gathering* will provide an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, experiences and frustrations of those working in ecumenical situations or involved in Churches Together groupings. It will also be a place where local people can encounter national groups and church agencies, and engage in dialogue with speakers including Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Kathleen Richardson and Stephen Timms, MP

The Gathering follows a highly acclaimed CTE Forum in 2003, but – unlike the Forum – will be for individuals in their personal capacity rather than as representatives sent by their Churches. Bill Snelson, the General Secretary of *Churches Together in England*, says

The Gathering will celebrate the range and diversity of ecumenical and collaborative activity in England, and will encourage and enthuse people to more creative work together. It will be a fresh, informal and exciting weekend.

The Gathering will happen at Stoke Rochford Hall, Lincolnshire, on 5–7 November 2004.

For more information contact:

John Baxter Brown: 07919 050 115 (Chair of organising group)

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www.churches-together.org.uk

theGathering@cte.org.uk

MODERN ECUMENISM: PRESENT PROBLEMS

(Abridged from a paper first published in the Ampleforth Journal)

Present Ecumenism strives to achieve reunion among all Christians. It may be viewed as a *fruitio* from the agony of two world wars combined with a wider world vision engendered by the World Council of Churches [WCC 1948–] and by the Second Vatican Council [1963-5].

Paradoxically, endeavours towards Christian unity have also tended to increase realisation of the depth of doctrinal difference and of the tenacity of denominational loyalty. Reconciliation does not arise from merely comparing ecclesiologies. The WCC 1952 Lund Conference, ‘do together what you need not do apart’, commended a future focus upon four issues: Union of Christ and the Church; Tradition and traditions; Ways of worship; Church in its laws and customs.

An outcome of world Ecumenism has been that theology has become more closely biblical, more informed by careful history, more socially liturgical. The institutional gave place to ‘the mystery of the Church’. All catechism has become more kerysmatic, more ordered to the laity and the Church’s mission to mankind. The Catholic Curia created a Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity – moved by Pope John XXIII. The Vatican Council in 1964, with delegate observers from other traditions, promulgated its Decree, *Unitatis Redintegratio* covering Ecumenism. It encouraged a new mentality among Christians, many of whom had not retained the full reality of the Eucharistic mystery. Brethren were to share a spirit

of mutual forgiveness and co-operation within humanity. Speaking of a 'hierarchy of truths' within Revelation, the Decree called for distinction between the deposit of Faith and the formulation of faith – for expressions of Revelation are often not conflicting but complementary. And yet: never, through charity, compromise the truth.

What then has emerged in our time as Ecumenism's principles? The first is that division among Christians is not of the mind of God, whose Church should be united in being and in mission. That unity is to be based not on friendships but on total truth, Christ being the focus. Central to reunion is the Eucharist within Church worship; and consequently a single ministry of the sacraments has to be shared by all. With such a ministry in union with and governance by the Word Incarnate, Christ's redeeming work continues. Essential to continuance is the work of the college of bishops, who share leadership in teaching and sacramental control.

The one true Church is obscured by Christian disunity, a weakness and even scandal. The Church then has to be solicitous of all the baptised. All forms of recognition and service of God – ecclesial communities – though some separated, share a common patrimony with Catholics, share the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit. So all should recognise, within Christendom, the need to speak to the world beyond with a concordant voice; then also to one another with friendly trust, hoping to find further unison through dialogue in holiness of thought and life.

Ecumenism is then a call to fulfil the will of God through dialogue, common prayer, listening, unified service; and 'doing together unto God and for God'.

Ecumenism today: some examples.

Supposedly the closest of Churches in Christendom today are the two that trace their roots back to the New Testament. The Pope from Poland has famously declared: ‘Christianity breathes with two lungs, East and West’. True it was; true it will be – but between times has fallen the seventy years of Soviet Russia, doomed to aggressive atheism. But the wall has come down: the Orthodoxy of ‘Holy Russia’ over a thousand years has returned, and Europe is as one again with Saints Cyril and Methodius as its eastern patrons. But the present Patriarch, Alexei II, speaks only of the Catholic invasion of Holy Russia – what he calls ‘spiritual aggression’ and ‘imperialism’. He fears a take-over. His voice finds resonance – there is a depth of resentment in Russia that takes Catholics by surprise. Dostoevsky’s tidy phrase still stands in the East: ‘If you are not Orthodox, you cannot be Russian’. Russia’s churches and monasteries are rapidly being rebuilt, but is that Christianity revived, or nationalism? And it is equally said that not only Catholics but Protestants are practising ‘spiritual aggression’. Pope John Paul retains a wish to visit Russia to re-link Orthodoxy with Rome. Religiously there is little theological disharmony. On the ancient dispute about Creeds – the *filioque* clause – the US Catholic/Orthodox Commission has issued an agreed statement. The Pope himself shows due readiness to drop the disputed clause from any shared celebrations. But the point is not about liturgy, but what Rome calls ‘pastoral work’, and Russia calls ‘proselytising’.

The saddest of circumstances, because they are near home and were once so near success, are relations between Rome and Anglicanism. When the primates gathered at Windsor from around the world in mid-

February, they were facing too many crises within to look forward to any future union – even perhaps with the Methodists. It leaves two questions: what of those who are unwelcome so not granted due status; and what of those now expecting their next logical stage, women prelates. Already Salisbury Cathedral has been governed for nigh on two years by Dean June Osborne now called by the Queen’s bidding to full office as Dean, and Leicester is presently governed by a woman dean summoned by her bishop. On 7 February in St Paul’s Cathedral where women hold high office, a service was held to mark ten years since the initial ordination of Anglican women in 1994. That has caused much change – even whole parishes opting out of episcopal control. Women have done expectedly well in practice, but that is not point; Rome and the Orthodox as yet do not grant the principle, nor do many Anglo-Catholics or traditionalists. Ecumenism essentially demands energy, conviction, interior unity and peace among people. Anglicans world-wide are presently not at peace. Conservative Africa – notably Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda – are in confrontation with the more liberal Episcopal Church of America over homosexual ordination. So permissions are withdrawn to share *ordo* and *episcopate* more widely. The Anglican Communion seems ‘torn apart at its deepest level’

Walter Cardinal Kasper, president of the Vatican’s Christian Unity Council, has said in public that Ecumenism is presently ‘in a state of transition’ in which all Churches are re-assessing their identities. He complained that variant currents, especially in Anglicanism, are complicating dialogue. Alas a good instance of that is the work of ARCIC, which is now coming to an end for want of recent success. The second Interna-

tional Commission (from 1982) has published four agreed statements before beginning work on *Our Lady: Salvation and the Church* (1987), *The Church as Communion* (1991), *Life in Christ* (1994), and *The Gift of Authority* (1999), all within a dozen years. Work on *The role of Mary in the life and doctrine of the Church*, now become *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, has taken five years, partly because of the various crises in Ecumenism and within Churches, and partly because Catholic interpretation of the place of Mary has caused ‘deep controversy’ from Anglicanism. ARCIC, has endeavoured to break down what is called ‘entrenched positions’ in favour of language yielding a more common approach. ARCIC means to translate the 1854 and 1950 Marian dogmas into a more accessible language achieving ‘an eschatological perspective’. The Anglicans have accepted early teaching upon Mary as Ever Virgin. What still seems an obstacle to agreement is the active role of saints, and intercessory power of Mary. The promise of success is not strong, so it seems; there is an air of disappointment, not to say termination.

Ecumenism out beyond

Since the recent wars in the Middle East, anti-Muslim prejudice has inevitably increased among Christendom. It is perhaps the United Nations that is most conscious of this. Recently its Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has spoken of it as ‘one of the most disturbing manifestations of bigotry today’. But more daunting is a European revival of anti-Semitism. In January 2004 the three senior members of the Council of Christians and Jews, the Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster, and the Chief Rabbi wrote to *The Times*, thus: ‘Today anti-Semitism is resurfacing . . .

incitement to hatred and active violence against Jewish people has increased'. They pledged themselves once more to combat all forms of racism, prejudice and xenophobia, saying that 'we will not permit [such] to stain our continent's future, as it has in the past'. They ended thus: 'we reject the misuse of religion and religious language-in seeking to address political challenges. We seek instead to be heard together in our shared confidence that, in the mercy of God, the wounds of the world can be healed'. It was a truly ecumenical statement of joint will. Pope John Paul, in Jerusalem for the Jubilee Year, placed a significant letter into a crevice of the Western Wall saying: 'we are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours, Father, to suffer; and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant'. Such letters leave little room for anti-Semitism, were they fulfilled.

The Pope followed it up last Christmas by calling the Lord, in his message *Urbi et Orbi*, to save mankind from 'the scourge of terrorism', which leaves no hope of accommodation in brotherhood of belief. He said: 'Save us from the evils which rend humanity in these first years of the third millennium. Save us from the wars and armed conflicts which are lacerating entire regions of our globe, from the many forms of violence which assail the weak and the vulnerable'. He spoke of both Iraq and 'the endless violence in the Holy Land – the land where The Prince of Peace was born'.

We should remark upon a darker side of Ecumenism, where the State takes a hand over against the national Church. In France during 1876–79 the Republican party in power set out to destroy religious congregations,

Catholic education and the 1801 Concordat with Rome (made between Napoleon and the Benedictine Pius VII under duress). For years afterwards French clergy were preoccupied in ‘ecclesiastical reconstruction’, all ecumenical activity being frozen. The French Church has never wholly recovered; and now many dioceses seriously lack priests, and faith-instruction. And yet, during the post War period and through the Vatican Council, some fine French ecumenists rose to be Cardinals – Yves Congar OP, Henri de Lubac SJ and two other Jesuits.

Today, President Chirac’s government has banned all religious symbols in State schools – notably Muslim head scarves, Jewish skull caps and prominent Christian crucifixes or crosses on walls. Part of the argument, the legislators hold, is that France must preserve its secular tradition against a wave of Islamic militancy among some five million Muslim inhabitants. Such law making is disturbingly anti-ecumenical.

In Britain, Ecumenism feels the door locked in its face when a country with an officially established Church, allows its Government to commend in religious education a clear place for Atheism/Agnosticism. The Decalogue of Moses is to be put aside, the Lord’s life is to be reduced, and religion is called in schools ‘spiritual education’. The young are to learn to doubt and test the plausibility of Scripture’s pages. Initial creation and ultimate afterlife both fall into doubt and unguided choice. New Labour’s Public Policy Research Institute has commended that ‘pupils will be actively encouraged to question the religious beliefs they bring to the class’, so to choose what they judge best as supported by their evidence. Yet some say: ‘Judeo-Christianity has sustained us for 2000 years; we now need it all the more and in more detail’. This puts Ecumenism at a

distance, there being now no agreed doctrine nor refined definition nor co-ordinate tradition.

Christ said at the last: ‘May they be one, Father, as we are one’ and ‘Not for these alone do I pray’ and ‘May the world believe that You sent me’. His missionary Apostle wrote later: ‘Christ is like a single body, wherein its organs together compose oneness in the Spirit . . . God has combined the parts so that there might be no division: when all flourish, all rejoice together’. That is of the essence of Ecumenism. But it presumes peace, shared search, and vowed co-commitment. Our histories prevent peace; our pride in our prejudices prevent rediscovery; our insistences, ceasing to listen, cause us to go our separate ways.

Dom Alberic Stacpoole, OSB.
Ampleforth Abbey



Creina Foy, RIP

Creina Foy died on 13 January 2004, a few days before her 83rd birthday. Creina was a warm-hearted, lively, fun-radiating presence at the innumerable activities in which she was involved. Barnes, where she lived for many years, will never be quite the same again. She was a regular attender and reader at daily and Sunday masses at St Osmund's and it is hard to remember her missing any Saturday coffee mornings at St Mary's Church.

Her original career was in the British Council, where she was a trade union organiser. Her wide interests included Christian unity, politics, editing '*Barnes in Common*' and '*Prospect*', and cats. She was also an expert writer, director and producer of plays, and an actress – best known in her local area for a string of Barnes Pantomimes and for directing the Rev. Raymond Chapman's '*The Sun was Darkened*'.

She was an assiduous worker in her local Liberal/Liberal Democrat Party. She was an accomplished committee-room organizer, canvasser and general activist. When travelling with Creina on Christian unity business, it was unusual to find a town or district where she had not canvassed at bye-elections. Could it be that Creina's ubiquitous labours were the true reason why her party was so successful in bye-elections?

Christian unity was a large commitment in her life. In her time she chaired the Barnes Council of Churches and she was on the Council of that body and then of Churches Together in Barnes for several decades until she died. Similarly she was for many years, up until her death, a

member of the Southwark South West Area Commission for Christian Unity, and at one time its Chair. A major event in her life was an ecumenical pilgrimage to the Holy Land led by The Rev. Peter Sills.

Creina infected a multitude of us with her zest and her sense of fun. She inspired many of us to work harder for our causes. We must all thank God for brightening up our lives through her. May she rest in peace!

Alfred Kenyon

Prayer for Church Unity

Lord Jesus, the day before You died for us, You prayed that your Disciples might be as one, as You in the Father and the Father in You.

Help us, divided, to grieve for our unfaithfulness. Grant us the honesty to acknowledge, and the courage to reject our hidden indifference, our mistrust, and even our hostility. Make us of one mind in You, that our hearts and our lips may pray with you unceasingly for the unity of Christians, according to your desire. In You who are perfect charity, may we find the road to unity, obedient to your love and your truth.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen

