

Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity
Archdiocese of Southwark

June 2005

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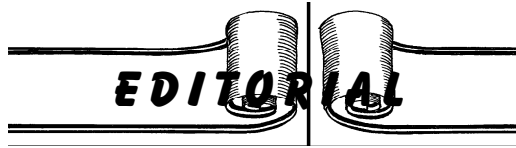


Together in Christ

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our June issue, which presents an interesting variety of material on several aspects of ecumenism. We offer our gratitude to all contributors.

We greatly appreciate an abstract of the talk given by Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor and thank him for permission to publish it.

Terry Davies has generously supplied four items, all of which give an interesting insight into ecumenical experiences.

We offer our gratitude to Canon Clements for news of the Scripture Union Holiday Club. We hope it would encourage similar initiatives to help children to an understanding of the faith of Christians.

Dr Desmond Miller has given us an excellent account of the Great Vespers at Westminster Cathedral, which was an important and prayerful occasion for Unity Week.

Please keep the material flowing in.

Una Ratcliff

.UNITY ON A KNIFE EDGE

An abstract of a talk given by Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, to the *Churches Together in England* forum on 6 November 2004 reflecting on forty years of ecumenical growth since the Vatican Council's decree on ecumenism.

There are four areas which have to be faced by all Christians:

First: the de-christianisation of Europe

In the past fifty years the secularist culture of Europe has gained much sway though things are different in other parts of the world. There is the rise of an assertive Islam, and a popularity of religious practice in the former Soviet Union. The recent victory of President Bush is being attributed to the evangelical Christians in the United States. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, the Churches are expanding. Even in old Europe, religious belief is exerting a new fascination among the young, as is evident in the increased take-up of Religious Education at A-level and theology at university.

In European society, the Christian Churches need to redefine their roles but must avoid the extremes of fundamentalism and the adoption of the ways of the world. The challenge is to preserve the fundamentals of Christian faith while remaining open to the world.

Second: to enter into dialogue with Islam

In the past fifty years dialogue between Christians has led to a “brotherhood rediscovered”. Now we must leave behind historic quarrels with Islam, strive for mutual understanding, and together, promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.

Third: the challenge of poverty

The gospel of Christ is good news for the poor. How can we witness to Christ without putting our option for the poor at the top of our agenda?

Fourth: governance in the Church

Collegiality was defined in *Lumen Gentium*, as the bishops governing the Church ‘with and under the Pope’ – the Pope in communion with the bishops. This relationship needs a new emphasis if the governance of the Church is to be more credible in today’s world.

Christianity is a world religion, and the Churches must learn to collaborate. I would like to see the next pope calling together the leaders of the main Christian denominations and on the basis of our real communion together – our belief in Jesus Christ, in Baptism, in the Holy Spirit, in the Word of God – to share more deeply our desire to spread the Word of God.

Unity is on a knife-edge and could go either way; old ways come to an end making room for new possibilities. It is a time for decision. The crisis of the ecumenical movement is paradoxically

the result of its success. The closer we come to one another the more painful is the separation. The closer we come together, the more important questions of identity become. Every denomination wishes to have its own identity and not be absorbed in a faceless, bigger whole. It is obvious in the Orthodox world, but it is also found in most denominations today. Ecumenism can be accused of abolishing confessional identity and leading to an arbitrary pluralism, to indifferentism, to relativism. But that misunderstanding is the product of fear; the closer we come together, the more we fear being “taken over”. Every intimate relationship must deal with this fear that comes from greater closeness, in all our dialogues, all our meetings, converge around one single concept, *communio* – communion. We seek not uniformity but a unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

The Holy Spirit works in separated Churches and ecclesial communities and outside the Catholic Church – where, of course, there exists great holiness, even martyrdom. The Catholic Church is also, as we know, a Church of sinners and needs purification and repentance. The full reality and fullness of what is Catholic does not refer to subjective holiness but to the sacramental and institutional means of salvation – the sacraments and the ministries. Both Catholic fullness and the defect of the other Churches are sacramental and institutional, and not existential or

even moral in nature; they are on the level of signs and instruments of grace, not on the level of the grace of salvation itself.

Unity is still a future ecumenical goal. This does not mean that the goal of the ecumenical endeavour has to be understood as the simple return of separated brothers and Churches to the bosom of the Catholic mother Church. Only the ecumenical endeavour to help the existing, real but incomplete communion to grow into the full communion in truth and love will lead to the realisation of Catholicity in all its fullness. This is the best reason for continuing dialogue between us.

But what do we do in the meantime?

We have to fill this transitional period, of a real if not complete church communion, with real life. The Churches did not only diverge through disagreements over doctrine; they diverged also because of the way they lived, which led to their alienation and estrangement. They need to come closer to each other again in their lives and get accustomed to each other, pray together, work together, live together, bearing the sting of the incompleteness of the *communio* and of the still impossible eucharistic communion around the Lord's Table.

The early Christians used friendship to describe themselves. Ecumenism does not make progress principally on the basis of documents and actions, but on the strength of friendship that overcomes confessional barriers. Friendship has a huge part: to play in

the development of our ecumenical endeavour, and goes much beyond human empathy in creating a climate of trust and mutual acceptance that is very real.

At the heart of the ecumenical movement is spiritual ecumenism. Mere ecumenical activism is destined to exhaust itself. Academic debate, no matter how important it may be, escapes the normal faithful and touches only the margin of their hearts and minds. There cannot be true ecumenism without personal conversion and institutional reform. I would like to see sacred scripture groups that meet together; more exchanges between monasteries and communities, and movements of spirituality; more visits to pilgrim sites and centres of spirituality; and the study of classical witnesses of faith and new martyrs. Out of this can come a rediscovered brotherhood.

The work of ecumenism is not just our work, our efforts, our cooperation, our prayer, but it is God's work, it is his grace, it is his Holy Spirit that urges us on. This is the reason we must continue our search for unity, because that is what Our Lord prayed:

May they all be one, Father, as you are in me and I in you so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.

This article is a précis of an abridged version of Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor's talk that appeared in *The Tablet*, 20 November 2004. pp. 14-15 and reproduced with the kind permission of the publisher of the Tablet (<http://www.thetablet.co.uk>) and of His Eminence Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

This year (2005) the Annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity took place from Tuesday 18th to Tuesday 25th January.

Last year, twenty-two of us attended most of the services, together with about ten from the other churches. Slightly better than in 2003, but overall the attendance was poor, even by our standards. If we are seriously trying to make Christ's prayer at the Last Supper come true, then the attendance was most unimpressive!

The numbers from our own church, and from the fourteen other churches in Churches Together in Beckenham appear to show scant support for Unity, and clearly we should be deeply ashamed of ourselves. But are we? And if not, why not? Are we totally ignoring Christ's last prayer and virtually his last wish? If so, isn't it scandalous? Are we Christians? Please think deeply about it!

You may have become disappointed after the heady days of the late sixties when Unity was exciting and seemed just round the corner – the excitement seems to have vanished. Instead we seem to be in a trough of despond, and the hard work has to begin again. We have to prove that we are worth uniting with.

If we want Unity to begin and to flourish, we have much hard work to do. Like a good gardener, we must prepare the ground. To get a prize cabbage patch, it is necessary to dig, dig, dig, and if the ground is stony with old roots and brambles grub them out. The

ground will certainly be rank and full of our own pride and arrogance; and the deep-seated prejudices we and all the churches have built up over the centuries. Don't you think that it will take generations and may be centuries to clear and clean the ground? I certainly do! I don't expect miracles. So I am happy to carry on digging! Until I drop! And that can't be too far ahead.

It took many years for the various groups to develop into separate Churches, so the reversal is bound to take many years too. We must work, watch and wait. The time will come, but in God's good time, not in ours!

I must say that in the many services and visits I've paid to the fourteen other churches, (probably over two hundred in the four years that I've been here) I have received nothing but kindness, warmth, love and welcome everywhere. So I am always happy! Why don't some of you be brave enough to try it? Anyway the refreshments are always good especially during *The Week* – believe me!

Compared with last year, attendance at the Roman Catholic Church was down by twenty-five percent but was better at the other Churches and the feeling of unity was greater, so in spite of the lower overall attendance, I felt happy with the result. Roll on next year!

Terry Davies, Unity Contact
St Edmund's, Beckenham

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

During the past year, the Anglican Diocese of Rochester has been celebrating its 1400th anniversary. With good reason! In 604 AD. Augustine of Canterbury sent Justus to Rochester to evangelise the Saxons living around the Medway. In the same year Justus was made a bishop and founded the diocese. So, 2004-604 = 1400, an important anniversary. The diocese remained under the rule of Rome until two beheadings took place by order of King Henry VIII. John Fisher, then Bishop of Rochester, and Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England were the unlucky victims. The King appointed himself Head of the Church in England and so the Church of England began. Thus the diocese became Anglican after 933 years of Roman rule.

Since then, it has been Anglican for 467 years! Strangely, those 467 years are exactly half of 933, the period of Roman rule. In another 467 years the Anglicans, God Bless them, will have matched those 933 years of Roman rule. In that time is it possible that both of our Separated Churches will have learnt to understand, and to trust each other, and to love each other as fellow Christians? Will it be close enough to reach full unity? For that I pray God!

I am not being triumphalistic, rather, just looking back at the past. It has shown me that we, the Romans, should also have

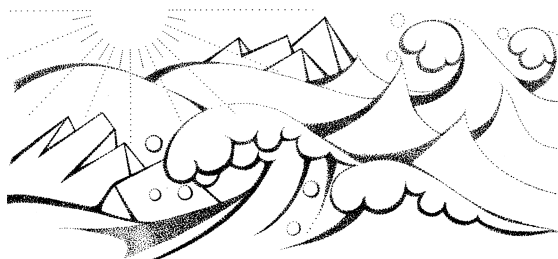
celebrated THE DAY, July 17th, not by ourselves, but with the Anglicans, with real joy! I saw scant mention, if any, in my Catholic paper. Such joint celebration would have been great ecumenism. No doubt, it may have been considered? The next chance be in 2104, so please put that into the liturgical Diary!

Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More were both made saints in 1937, 400 years after their execution. But what will the next 467 years hold? It is partly up to us. We must keep closing the gap, keep praying and keep working for full unity.

Terry Davies, Unity Contact

St Edmund's, Beckenham.

THE DAY, 17 July 2004 marked the opening of the celebrations at Rochester Cathedral, 1400 years to the day from the founding of the Diocese by Justus whose feast day is 10 November on which day was held the closing service to mark the end of the official festivities. Terry Davies gave an account of his experiences on THE DAY in our last issue.



Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad!
Let the sea thunder and all it holds! Ps 96:11

CONVERTED BY THE METHODISTS!

Yes, we were! Me and my six children! But we're not joining them, much as we love them! But we have caught 'goat fever' from them after we heard that they had bought thirty goats from Christian Aid, to be given to thirty poor Africans. But they won't be so poor in future, when the nannies start kidding!

When my children heard about this, they all said to me "Don't give us anything for Christmas, except a goat"! I was, of course, overjoyed and proud of their joint decision. So, on Monday I sent off a cheque to buy eight goats (£200). The two extra goats were for relatives.

Then yesterday I learnt that Christian Aid are now offering four goats for £60 for Bolivia. Too late for my cheque, but not for yours is it? So I hope some of you get 'goat fever' and follow the Methodists lead. Just phone the order line on 0845 330 0500 and relax. You will be sent a certificate for each goat you buy to give to the recipient of the gift.

Terry Davies.

"No one can worship God or love his neighbour on an empty stomach" *Wilson*.

COVENANT SUNDAY – 2 JANUARY 2005 FOLLOWED BY SEVERAL SMALL STEPS

Covenant Sunday was important for several Beckenham churches; for St George's which has been the parish church for the last nine-hundred years, for Beckenham Methodist Church, formed by the amalgamation of the two earlier churches in the town, and for the two United Reform Churches here.

The Methodists have made the first Sunday of the year into Covenant Sunday for years. Their Covenant service is solemn, serious and uplifting throughout, As a Roman Catholic, I have attended it for the last four years, since I moved into Beckenham, and have valued it for what it means to me – I use it to renew my own covenant with my God.

It also gives a chance to renew the recently agreed Covenant between the Anglican, Methodist and United Reform Churches, which has sometimes seemed to lack cement. This year, the Anglican Rector, Fr Malcolm and the United Reform Church Minister, Revd Robert, joined the President, Dr Angela Shier-Jones on the platform and jointly helped all present including me, to renew their covenant with God.

That's why it was a serious day!

I hope that the local and national Covenant between the three Churches grows deeper and stronger year by year. But it won't just

happen. It will demand hard and constant graft to keep it growing. We must remember that Christ never promised us an easy ride, did He? I pray that the paths between the three local churches grow deeper and deeper, made so by the regular tramp of feet.

Also on Covenant Sunday I began the ninth circuit of my perpetual pilgrimage round the sixteen Churches in Beckenham at our Methodist Church. I plan to complete it on the Sunday nearest Wesley Day, 24 May, at Beckenham Methodist Church. I recall the kindness of the Revd Angela Shier-Jones in driving me to Rochester Cathedral two years ago for the 300th Anniversary of John Wesley's birth, and for the celebratory service. I hope to begin my tenth circuit, perhaps at the United Reform Church, on Sunday, 5 June.

As part of the new working together, it was good to see several Methodists joining in the Offertory Procession at St George's (Anglican) Church for the Choral Eucharist at 8 p.m. on the Feast of The Epiphany, and also at 8 p.m. on Candlemas Day. And that Fr Malcolm had thoughtfully provided them with a written explanation of Candlemas, which was somewhat new to the Methodist tradition. I know that the Methodists were pleased with that courtesy.

So, progress already!

Then, more progress! On Sunday, 30 Jan, the United Reform Church hosted a joint service with Beckenham Methodist Church. There were about a hundred there, including some Catholics, and Anglicans from St George's Church.

Then, that evening, Beckenham Methodists played host to some visitors from another Anglican parish on the far edge of Beckenham, St Mary's, Shortlands. St Mary's has stated that it is taking a more proactive role in Christian Unity and is exploring a link with Beckenham Methodists. Their two ministers have met several times recently to consider how they might be able to move forward together. So, on Sunday, 6 March, Beckenham Methodist Church will pay a return visit to St Mary's to share in their evening Communion Service. They hope and pray that the service and joint efforts will be well supported by both sides. I shall be at St Mary's to join in their prayers, and to see what happens.

Let us pray that these efforts to further Unity bear bounteous fruit

So it is good to see these local endeavours taking place. The churches are taking an active interest in each other, opening their doors to each other, and saying so. This may not be earth-shattering but could well be a series of small steps towards our local churches showing interest in each other and warming the soil. So, something is happening! And I am sure that it is small steps like these which

will help make a big difference in future. And they are so much easier to make than big steps, aren't they?

And as people keep saying to me, "The laity will bring about Unity in the end – not the clergy!" I hope so! The laity has much less to lose than the clergy.

So, let us hope and pray that these small steps succeed in Beckenham. But they will only succeed if both laity and clergy put their shoulder to the wheel. But above all else, we must begin to love each other as Christians, and our neighbour as ourselves. As Christ, and St Paul both taught us.

Terry Davies, Unity Contact
St Edmund's, Beckenham

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'God knows how you Protestants can be expected to have any sense of direction,' she said. 'It's different with us, I haven't been to Mass for years, I've got every mortal sin on my conscience, but I know when I'm doing wrong. I'm still a Catholic, it's there, nothing can take it away from me.'

'Of course, duckie,' said Jeremy . . . 'once a Catholic always a Catholic.'

Angus Wilson, 1913-91. *The Wrong Set* (1949)

THE SCRIPTURE UNION HOLIDAY CLUB

Josiah Spiers was on holiday in Llandudno in 1868, when he saw a lot of children on the beach without much to do. He gathered them together, and began to tell them Bible stories. The idea proved so popular that, the following year, he came up with a whole range of activities for the children. And so the Beach Mission was born. Nowadays this has developed, and is now run by the Scripture Union, a world wide organisation, active in over 140 countries, with two declared aims:

- (a) to make God's Good News known to children, young people and families;
- (b) to encourage people of all ages to meet God daily through the Bible and prayer.

For the last fifty years Scripture Union has run a Holiday Club at Minnis Bay, a beach in the parish of Birchington in Kent. This year about 60 young people came from all over Southern England, at their own expense, to act as team members. All were trained for the task, and registered under the Child Protection Policy. They came for two weeks, and lodged with members of the congregations of various churches. During that time over five hundred children, some on holiday, some local, took part in various activities, according to age:

Twigs	aged 5 to 7
Tramps	aged 7 to 11
Trogs	aged 11 to 15
Super Trogs	aged 15 to 18

There is also a crèche for younger children and a café for parents. Activities include organised games, videos, music, competitions, crafts, fancy dress, picnics, etc., interspersed with Bible stories, teaching and discussion.

All the churches of Birchington are now involved. Catholics were the last to give active support, but we are now convinced of the goodness of this work, and make our parish hall available for the two weeks without charge. At first, some of the local leaders seemed a bit wary of Catholics (as I suppose we were of them) but we have come to understand and respect each other, and find we can work together. Two little talks I gave to the Trogs were well received.

The Scripture Union upholds the following truths:

- The unity of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.
- The sovereignty of God in creation, providence, revelation, redemption and final judgment.
- The divine inspiration and the entire trustworthiness and unity of Holy Scripture and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

- The sinfulness and guilt of all people since the Fall rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
- Redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin solely through the sacrificial death, as our representative and substitute, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.
- The bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of God the Father.
- The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to make the death of Christ effective to the individual sinner, granting repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The justification of the sinner by the grace of God through faith in Christ alone.
- The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.
- The one holy, universal Church, which is the Body of Christ, and to which all true believers belong.
- The expectation of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Scripture Union is not another Church. It encourages children and their families to worship in their own Churches, of which there are seven in Birchington.

Canon Bill Clements

GREAT VESPERS AT WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL

On Saturday afternoon 22 January this year Great Vespers was celebrated in Westminster Cathedral to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. It was not the first time Great Vespers has been sung in the Cathedral, a similar occasion took place last year but this was a more solemn event. His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira presided in the presence of His Eminence Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, and His Grace Bishop Basil of Sergievo preached. Guests of honour were ex-King Constantine of Greece together with his wife. Vespers was sung by the Byzantine Choir of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and the Russian Orthodox Patriarchal Cathedral Choir with Father Deacon Meliton as cantor. Invited clergy included representatives from the Armenian Apostolic Church – Bishop Nathan, Coptic – Abba Seraphim, Melkite, Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches, together with Anglican, Methodist and others of the Reformed tradition. The body of the Cathedral was full.

The liturgy, sung in the First Tone, was most impressive – both Cantor and Choirs performed their duties in exemplary fashion. I find the Russian Choir particularly beautiful; it induces a great sense of peace and reverence.

His Grace Bishop Basil inspired and encouraged us by his homily. As we were within the octave of the Feast of Christ's Baptism according to the Julian Calendar, he began his meditation

with the motif of Christ's Baptism. Jesus the incarnate Son of God humbled Himself to submit to the baptism of John thus showing that there was no rivalry between the two of them, yet rivalry occurs time and again amongst His followers. There was rivalry between the sons of Zebedee and the rest of the apostles – they wanted places of privilege. 'And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.' Jesus explains 'But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant' (Mk 10:35-45). Other examples from scripture were given. Rivalry was to become a problem in the Christian church. Constantinople became a direct rival to Rome leading ultimately to the Great Schism of 1054. Bishop Basil suggested that future unity must be based on a genuine collegiality in which the bishops do nothing that is contrary to the just authority of the Head and the Head does nothing contrary to the common good of the bishops and their communities.

I rely entirely on my memory which is none too good, but I think I have got the gist of what was said – I hope the original will be published as it was very apt and clearly expressed.

At the end the Cardinal spoke very graciously. He thanked all who had attended and contributed to the celebration. It was a great day. It was great that so many could come together to pray. A great sign of hope.

Desmond Miller

BOOK REVIEW

Ecumenism for Catholics

Mgr William Steele

This is a publication which I warmly recommend. In its twenty-six pages the author introduces the “Ecumenical Movement” as “the effort under God, to bring the whole Christian world visibly and convincingly into one community, the Church”, and states that “the fundamental purpose therefore of ecumenism is mission, bringing the whole world to Christ.”

Mgr Steele gives an historical outline of ecumenism, including the East-West difficulties in the past and present. “Ecumenism from the Reformation to 1900” includes mention of the “most influential Reformers” and of the Reformation in England.

The section on “The Catholic Church and Modern Ecumenism” includes mention of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and other Decrees, and the way to a “fuller understanding of the Church.”

The author states that after Vatican II the Catholic Church has “played a fuller part in the ecumenical movement” and notes that the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity brings Catholics together with other Christians. Various dialogues with other Christians have taken place, followed by Joint Statements. Local Ecumenical Partnerships and many other groupings have been formed.

The Conclusion gives a “Reflection on the recent English experience”, and finally quotes from the Joint Statement of the Anglican and Catholic Bishops when they met in Canada in 2000. It reminds us that one day “we will be surprised by the new things that God has achieved in his Church.”

Una M. Ratcliff

Ecumenism for Catholics by Mgr William Steele may be obtained from Blackfriars Publications, 13 Inneside Close, Chapel-en-le-frith, High Peak,, SK23 0TS. (price £1.50)

