

Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity
Archdiocese of Southwark

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UNITATIS REDINTEGRATIO
50th Anniversary of
Decree on Ecumenism

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IN CHRIST

**Together in Christ, Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity,
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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our June Edition of *Together in Christ*.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity this January *Is Christ divided?* is addressed within two of our contributions. The background to the Canadian selection of the text shows how their history for Ecumenism has been formed by their openness to dialogue and Catholic willingness to take part as early as 1958.

Bishop Paul Hendricks has provided his homily, given in Cambridge. Cecilia Blackden is well known to many in Southwark through working with the late Bishop Charles Henderson. Now her links with *Interfaith for Churches Together* gives her a foot in both camps. This 'A-Z' links us into the reality that we are in this world together, whatever our beliefs so the more we work together the more we can achieve in Love, Hope and Peace.

Tony Castle is a prolific writer, teacher and Ecumenist. Here he describes the three-pronged route for developing further hope and dialogue.

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Michael

HAS CHRIST BEEN DIVIDED?

(1 Cor 1:1-17)

Introduction to the Theme for The Year 2014

Jointly prepared and published by

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches

Canadians live in a country that is marked by diversity in language, culture, and even climate, and we also embody diversity in our expressions of Christian faith. Living with this diversity, but being faithful to Christ's desire for the unity of his disciples, has led us to a reflection on Paul's provocative question in 1 Corinthians: "Has Christ been Divided?" In faith we respond, "No!" yet our church communities continue to embody scandalous divisions. 1 Corinthians also points us to a way in which we can value and receive the gifts of others even now in the midst of our divisions, and that is an encouragement to us in our work for unity.

Canada is known for its natural splendour: its mountains, forests, lakes and rivers, seas of wheat and three ocean shorelines. Our land stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the U.S. border to the North Pole. This is a land rich in agriculture and natural resources. Canada is also a land of diverse peoples: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, and many people who came to settle here from around the world. First Nations is a term used in Canada to acknowledge the presence of the indigenous peoples before the arrival of Europeans. The indigenous people in the Arctic call themselves Inuit. Métis is a term used to refer to people of both indigenous and French ancestry.

We have two official languages, French and English, yet many Canadians celebrate the cultural and linguistic heritage from their ancestral homelands. Our social and political divisions frequently hinge upon linguistic, cultural, and regional distinctions, yet we are learning to understand how these national identities contribute to a healthy Canadian diversity. Within this multicultural milieu, many Christians have brought their particular ways of worship and ministry. Paul's letter addresses us within our diversity and invites From our earliest frontier experiences, Canadian churches have developed an

instinct for cooperation in pastoral ministry. As early as the 1880s, Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregationalist missions in Western Canada cooperated in allocating responsibility for mission. These led to union churches, which formed part of the impetus for the founding of the United Church of Canada in 1925, the world's first modern ecumenical church union. Proponents of this union saw it as a way to provide unified Christian leadership in the project of nation-building. Today, cooperation in ministry takes many other forms. Spiritual care ministry is shared through ecumenical chaplaincies in prisons, hospitals, universities, and the military. Most formal theological education across the country occurs in ecumenical schools or consortia. Other forms of cooperation have developed in congregational ministry, such as Ecumenical Shared Ministries where two or more denominations share buildings, clergy, or programs and engage in weekly common worship.

Twenty-four denominations come together in the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), one of the broadest and most inclusive church councils in the world, encompassing Anglican, Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical, Free Church, and Eastern and Oriental Orthodox traditions. The CCC, which uses a consensus model of decision making, was founded in 1944 and its current denominational membership represents 85% of the Christians in Canada. It is of substantive note that the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is a full member of the CCC as are six Evangelical denominations. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) brings together denominations, para-church ministries, and local congregations across the Evangelical and Pentecostal spectrum. A number of churches are members or observers in both the CCC and the EFC. These two bodies have been working more closely together in recent years.

Many Canadian churches are engaged in bilateral and multilateral relationships both at national and local levels. The most significant organic union has been the coming together of numerous Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregationalist churches in 1925 to form the United Church of Canada, but many other forms of fellowship and communion have developed, including the Anglican-Lutheran *Waterloo Declaration* on full communion in 2001. The Canadian theological dialogues have contributed to local study and reflection and have shared their insights in the international dialogues.

One of the many innovative aspects of Canadian ecumenism is the formation of more than fifty inter-church coalitions for social justice beginning in the 1960s. Project Ploughshares, the Women's Inter-church Council of Canada, KAIROS-Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, the Canadian Churches' Forum on Global Ministries, and others have assisted the churches and government in research and engagement with complex social issues.

The Canadian Centre for Ecumenism was founded by Fr Irénée Beaubien in Montréal in 1963 in a very vibrant French and English milieu. It offers national resources such as *Ecumenism* magazine which is published in French and English editions and sent to subscribers in forty countries. The Centre's ongoing sensitivity to social movements is demonstrated in the new Green Church program which helps churches of all denominations to become better stewards of creation.

The calling of the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s positively impacted the growth of ecumenism in Canada. Canadian ecumenical insight and experience are evident in the 1962 pastoral letter of Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger, archbishop of Montréal, titled *Chrétiens désunis (Disunited Christians)*. Léger did not call for the conversion of Protestants to Catholicism, but invited Catholics to pray for unity, particularly through the revival and conversion of the Catholic Church itself. In words that anticipated the Second Vatican Council, the cardinal acknowledged that "the concern for unity is becoming the main focus of contemporary Christianity" and that this important movement was "born under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." In this reflection on the mystery of the unity and disunity of Christians, he stressed that all validly baptized persons "are inserted into Christ and become one body with him." He also noted that in light of the express will of Christ, disunity is "a scandal" and "evil." Thus, the cardinal urged his flock to pray for unity and to enter into dialogue with their fellow Christians, recognizing that the responsibilities for disunity are shared on both sides.

Having heard of the discrete monthly meetings between Protestant pastors and Catholic priests organized in Montréal by Fr Beaubien beginning in 1958, the World Council of Churches chose to hold the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order in that city

in 1963. This gathering of over 450 theologians from many different denominations and countries, warmly welcomed by a mainly Catholic population, constituted a major ecumenical happening. An evening of Christian fellowship held during the conference at the Université de Montréal brought together 1,500 Christians. At Expo 67, the World's Fair held in Montréal, Canada's main churches and the Vatican put aside the practice of separate kiosks to come together in one common 'Christian Pavilion.' In the history of World's Fairs, this was the first time an ecumenical pavilion had been erected.

Other ecumenical groups emerged after the Second Vatican Council and in the decades that followed: the Atlantic Ecumenical Council (1966), the Quebec Ecumenical Network (1982), and the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism (1984) are of particular note. The Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, founded in Saskatoon by Fr Bernard de Margerie, is sponsored by seven denominations and has a focus on ecumenical education and formation, as well as serving as a national resource for Ecumenical Shared Ministries. Across the country, local ecumenism is promoted by ministerial groups in rural communities and urban neighbourhoods as well as by numerous councils of churches. Several ecumenical initiatives flourish throughout the country: shared celebrations of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, common formation in theological faculties, activities for peace and social justice, publications, etc. As an integral part of Church life in Canada, inter-church families live the challenges and blessings of the work for Christian unity and frequently provide leadership in ecumenical ministries.

A highlight of recent ecumenical life has been the growing involvement of Evangelical churches and pastors in local ecumenical gatherings, in ecumenical worship and dialogue, and in community ministries. Following upon a period of internal Evangelical rapprochement, we now see opportunities for new dialogue partnerships between the historic mainline Protestant churches, Evangelicals and Pentecostals, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, and Roman Catholics. Evangelicals in Canada are reaching out to other local churches seeking dialogue, opportunities to worship together, and cooperation in witness to our cities. Churches are facing a common reality in which they no longer have the social influence that

they once enjoyed, and for many historic churches membership rolls are dramatically declining.

Differences within the Christian community over the priority or need to evangelize people of other living faiths have continued to be factors inhibiting cooperation. Nevertheless, Christian cooperation in inter-religious dialogue has increased in recent years and is frequently undertaken collaboratively between churches.

Has Christ been divided in Canada? It can certainly be said that there are divisions among Christians in Canada. The Christian community is divided over the role of women in both church and society as well as over ethical issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and same-sex marriage. Many of these divisions cut across denominational lines.

However, in the face of new social issues some religious communities have begun to engage with their neighbours in new and positive ways. Indeed, Canadian history has seen periods of tension and rivalry, of life lived in ignorance and indifference to each other. Through it all, we have learned to take into consideration the values of others in order to live peaceably together. We continue to be divided by doctrine, polity, and practice, and to maintain our own religious solitudes, yet our pilgrimage towards unity continues under God's guidance.

The aspirations expressed in this prayer from the 1967 Canadian Centennial celebrations still reflect the modern Canadian character:

Let us pray and live for a world where people of all nations will be united in thought, word and deed; help us to be transparently honest, pure, and loving in our relations with others in our world and every world. Let us pray for harmony and self-fulfilment for every soul in this nation and every nation; help us to work and live so that hunger, poverty, ignorance, and disease will disappear and thy kingdom will come indeed. Amen.

Extracts from *The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*
Information Service Bulletin, 141

WEEK OF PRAYER 2014, CAMBRIDGE
BISHOP PAUL HENDRICKS – HOMILY

I was very pleased when I saw the readings that had been chosen for this year's service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. They speak to us about so many things that are fundamental to us as Christians and to our common search for unity.

Setting the scene, the First Reading reminds us of the need for repentance: *I dwell ... with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit.* This is a central theme of our faith, reflected in the symbolism of Baptism itself. Many, perhaps most, of our churches have a prominent place in our Sunday services where we recognise our need of forgiveness from God and from each other.

This has to be our starting point when we gather to pray for unity, recognising not only our faults as individuals but also the fact that divisions between the churches are, at least in part, the result of mistakes that our own churches have made in times past. For instance in my own tradition there has sometimes been too close an identification of the Church as an institution, with the Church seen in theological terms as the Body of Christ and all that goes with this. On one level the two are the same, and I believe that the Holy Spirit guides even the institution. But that has too often been taken to mean that those who lead the Church can do no wrong and make no mistakes. The result is that injustice has sometimes been done to those who sincerely desired to reform the Church – both those who remained within the Catholic tradition and those who felt compelled to break from it.

Balancing that awareness of our need for repentance is a recognition of how much has already been given to us. As St Paul says in the Second Reading, *I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus ... so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Gathered here this evening we can be deeply thankful for two things. Firstly, the progress that has already been made towards unity, especially over the past hundred years or so. As on any journey, we naturally look ahead, in the direction of travel. As a result, we're more

aware of how far we still have to go than of how far we've come – particularly as the end of our journey seems to remain stubbornly out of sight! It doesn't help that, as we continue on the ecumenical journey, the landscape seems to become increasingly complicated. I'm reminded of what was said about Ireland in the book *1066 and All That*. Over the centuries, various British politicians tried to solve the 'Irish Question', but they failed again and again, because the Irish cunningly kept on changing the question! In a similar way, we struggle with various ecumenical issues, only to find new issues emerging. Despite this, when we look back on the journey so far, I think we can all see that we have moved on very considerably, even during our own lifetimes.

We also have a second cause for thankfulness: the gifts that God has given to our ecumenical partners. That's one reason why I believe receptive ecumenism is so important, particularly if the emphasis is on what each of us can learn from the others, rather than on what we have to offer them. That might sound like a strange thing to say. Each of our churches has a tradition that means so much to us, so that we have a natural desire to share those gifts with others. But, as St Thomas Aquinas famously pointed out centuries ago [1], we have to recognise that a lot depends on what a person is ready to accept at a given time. Or, in the words of the old saying, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink! On the other hand, if I have an attitude of openness, ready to learn from other traditions, my own life and faith is greatly enriched. This is too good an opportunity to miss – and it's an option that remains open to me at any time. Therefore, even though we deeply value what we have been given, I think we have to be less like market traders calling out for people to buy our wares, and more like merchants seeking out the pearl of great price.

If I focus first and foremost on what I can learn from other churches, I can also avoid that sectarianism that defines being a Catholic primarily in terms of not being a Protestant. I can think of one example from the dim and distant days when I was a student. At the time, I remember being struck by the emphasis being given in the lectures, to the fact that we can't earn God's gifts. Our life isn't about earning some sort of spiritual credit with God, nor can we expect God to reward us for good behaviour by making sure that we don't ever have any problems in life. I've found myself preaching about this

again and again over the years, because it seems to me a natural attitude to religion, but a false and dangerous one, which can distort our whole relationship with God. All that God gives comes freely, out of his overflowing love. The only limitation isn't on his generosity but on our openness to receive his gifts.

I suppose this seems fairly obvious today, both to Roman Catholics and to others, but I can't help thinking that (say) a hundred years ago, we Catholics might have viewed it with some suspicion as being a bit too similar to what Luther was saying. But at least by the time I was a student, teachers at Catholic universities were able to speak in these terms without any danger of disapproval.

All the same, though we have made considerable progress in openness to each other, we still need to be alert to the danger of rejecting an idea because of where it comes from. It's natural to feel a certain wariness of 'the others', just as the disciples in this evening's Gospel automatically rejected the man acting in the name of Jesus, but who was not 'one of us'. Jesus warned them about this, and it's a warning we still need to heed.

Some years ago I was a teacher in a seminary. From time to time I noticed a tendency amongst a small proportion of the students to insist on a narrow view of what is acceptable in terms of faith and practice. I would sometimes say that they were trying to be 'more orthodox than the Church'. What disturbed me wasn't only the narrowness of their viewpoint, but also the emphasis they sometimes gave to conformity to a sort of 'party line' rather than a desire to discover the truth. I am convinced that we can't be concerned merely with conformity, because conformity doesn't of itself have any reference to the truth, only to what is allowed.

I believe that what the Church teaches is true, but I would say it teaches it *because* it's true, rather than it's true because the Church teaches it. To put it another way, I don't think it's enough to learn what the Church teaches, unless we also know *why* the Church teaches it. That's clearly important for anyone with a teaching or preaching ministry, but I think it's also important for all of us. We not only believe, but we have reasons for belief – and that's true of the person in the pew as well as the person in the pulpit!

If I have confidence in the truth of my faith, I can be genuinely open to learn from other Christian traditions. I know that I personally have a long way to go, and that in my appreciation of other traditions I'm only scratching the surface. Still, I am confident that, without being less Catholic myself, I can learn many things.

From the Methodists I can learn about preaching and about the importance of good hymns. From the Baptists I can learn about the importance of adult faith commitment and about the strengths (and perhaps the limitations) of congregationalism. From the Pentecostals I can learn something about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual believer and about the importance of personal testimony. From the Anglicans I can learn about the importance of church music and about cooperating with lay people in church leadership. From the URC I can learn about the priority of ecumenical commitment and about the possibilities of lay preaching and eldership. From the Orthodox I can learn something of their spiritual and theological traditions, and maybe even begin to grasp their concept of synodality, which may well become increasingly important – both in my own church and ecumenically.

On the whole, these are things that I can learn, without letting go of the positive things that make up my faith as a Catholic. At the same time they can make me question what is essential and what is perhaps accidental and historically conditioned. I firmly believe that ecumenism isn't about finding a 'lowest common denominator', or doing away with the characteristic features of our different traditions. I think that for too long, people have assumed that ecumenism is like a sort of peace conference or negotiation, where people start from different places and seek a sort of mid-point or compromise position. I believe that ecumenism isn't about dropping things we believe in, but about accepting new ideas that enrich our faith rather than taking away from it.

But having said all this, it is important for us to question our own faith and to consider what may need to change. We need to do it, not only for ecumenical reasons but also because it brings us closer to the truth. This brings us back to the theme of conversion. For Jesus, as you know, conversion wasn't only turning away from sin, but also being ready to look at the world in a new way.

I can't finish without considering the fundamental question posed to us, both by St Paul and by the writers of the resources for this year's Week of Prayer. *Is Christ divided?* We might put this another way and say: *Christ is clearly not divided. Why are we?*

Perhaps I might approach this question by observing a difficulty that I sometimes feel myself. I've said that, for me, unity doesn't mean losing that which is distinctive in our different traditions. What I'm not entirely comfortable with is when people talk about celebrating *diversity*, either ecumenically or an interfaith context – or in terms of society generally. I suppose this is because, for me, the word 'diversity' sounds rather too much like 'division'. I'm happy to celebrate what is special to different people and churches, but I'm not happy to celebrate division as such. It seems to me that words like 'variety', 'richness' and 'distinctiveness' may have a better emphasis than 'diversity' – though you may think I'm being too particular.

At any rate, the main thing is that we don't need to be divided to have variety and distinctive strengths. After all, my own church has a great emphasis on internal unity, particularly as regards doctrine, but it still has a great deal of variety – for instance in styles of liturgy, spirituality and popular devotion. Similarly, I rejoice that even now there are signs that the particular strengths of some churches are being shared more widely amongst the others. For instance, and to oversimplify hugely, the Eucharist has become increasingly important to Protestants and the Bible to Catholics. There are many more subtle examples, however, such as the possibilities for learning from other churches, which I mentioned earlier.

There is one thing I would insist on, however. If we are to be united in any meaningful sense, we have to make sure that variety or distinctiveness doesn't involve incompatibility. There *is* such a thing as truth and there are some statements that, if true, rule out other statements. There are still important issues that divide us – and I get very irritated when I hear people speaking as though we can either do away with doctrine altogether or just pretend that the differences between us don't exist. Ignoring doctrine doesn't solve the problem; it just impoverishes our faith and our understanding.

Having said this, I do believe there is often a way forward if we focus on the positive things being said rather than the negative ones.

To take a simple example, emphasising the liturgy and the sacraments doesn't require us to neglect the Bible. Insisting on the need for the ordained ministry doesn't necessarily deny the priesthood of all the baptised. As a Catholic, I can even read the thirty nine articles and agree with what they affirm, while not agreeing with them in what they deny. Listening carefully to other Christians is also very important. It's essential to focus on what they actually believe, rather than what I might think they believe, or what their predecessors are thought to have believed at the time of the Reformation.

In order to sum up what I want to say, perhaps you'll forgive me if I play around for a moment with the idea of division. Jesus was not divided from other people, in the sense that his call was open to all and that no one was excluded. But he did 'divide' intellectually, in the sense that he taught some things very firmly and ruled out others in a most uncompromising way. We have to avoid division, by recognising with joy the gifts that God has given to others, and by being ready to look at ourselves in a spirit of openness to conversion. Or, as Pope Francis put it recently, we have to allow ourselves continuously to be evangelised.

This doesn't mean being sloppy in our thinking or losing the characteristic strengths of our different traditions. But, even where there are conflicts and tensions in terms of doctrine, there is considerable room for progress if we focus on what is affirmed by each tradition rather than what is denied.

Christ is not divided and, although there is no short-cut to true and full unity amongst Christians, we can be very much united in spirit and learn a great deal from each other along the way.

Bishop Paul Hendricks
Chair of CCU in Southwark

[1] *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*, (*ST* Supp q.90, a.3, obj 4.)

An 'A-Z' of inter faith relations
Twenty-six short reflections for Christians

A All people are loved by God and Christ died for all. All are on what might be called the Holy Journey of life. We have confidence in God's plan for all humanity and for creation; "Blessed are those who put their trust in God" as Psalm 2:12 says, and we know that "All things work together for good for those who love God" (Rm 8:28). This includes us and people of other faiths.

B Better together is an essential motto for Christians involved in interreligious dialogue. We have much to share both of the difficulties and sufferings and of the joys and fruits of inter faith relations. We can draw strength from one another to work for greater harmony and understanding and to resist sectarianism and discrimination in all its forms.

C Christian unity and the ecumenical movement are vital for inter faith relations. We have had the experience of division and reciprocal persecution that other faith communities experience too. We can witness to our journey towards reconciliation and the healing of memories. Without the testimony of mutual love and forgiveness, our Christian message is empty.

D Dialogue is more than ever a sign of the times. For Christians it means dialogue within our own tradition, with other Christian traditions, with people of other religions and with people of good will who may not have a formal faith. "Peace on earth to people of good will" (Lk 2:14).

E Equality – believing in and respecting the equal dignity and worth of every human person helps create a more equal and just society. Hatred, violence and war in the world derive more from profound economic, social and political inequalities and injustices than from religions or religious teachings.

F Friendship with people of other faiths arises out of our friendship with God and with one another in the Christian family of traditions. Friendship underpins effective work together for the common good.

G “God is love and those who live in love live in God and God lives in them” (1 Jn 4:16). The theology of inter faith relations is based on God who is love and whose loving and saving mercy reaches out to all people of all times and places.

H Humility is one of the most important Christian virtues. Truly knowing our own nothingness and God’s everything is a good basis for healthy relationships with others. God can use this to reach out to others. As the song goes: “Like the pipe the shepherd plays, let nothing of myself remain in me, so that empty in your hands you can play your music through me.” (*Shepherd Song* by Veronica Towers)

I Initiative! Taking the first step towards others is to reflect the kind of love God has for humankind: “God sent his only Son into the world so that we could have life through him” (1 Jn 4:9). It is very limiting to wait for others to take the first step. Taking the initiative will often bring good results. This principle also helps groups to be open to others and not become cliques.

J Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. We do not know all the ways and means by which Jesus reaches out to each person on their journey through life, or even at the moment of death. What is certain is that all have the opportunity to say their ‘yes’ to him at some point. Let’s pray that when people encounter us, they encounter genuine witness to Jesus in our life, and when appropriate in our words as well.

K Knowledge is something we acquire every day of our lives. Learning about other faith traditions and hearing from them is necessary. Ignorance is a real danger because we can be manipulated and conditioned by misinformation, distortion of the facts, caricatures and stereotypes.

L Love is the one thing that is necessary (Lk 10:42). We believe in the love that is in God and which the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts, helping us to be more like Jesus. St Paul’s words on love can guide us on our way (1 Cor. 13:1-13).

M Marriage between persons of different faith is on the increase and we need to do our part to help couples grow in their understanding of one another and in the dialogue needed for family life. *The Inter Faith Marriage Network* is significant in this regard.

N Nature, ecology and care for the environment unites people of all faiths and none. The work done locally by faith communities together in caring for the natural or built environment is sure to grow. In addition to many Christian groups the Alliance of Religions and Conservation helps faith communities build environmental programmes based on their own core beliefs, teachings and practices.

O Opportunities to create encounters among people of different faiths, or between different social, ethnic and religious groups in our villages, towns and cities, are invaluable and necessary. Manchester City Council set up a myth-busting opportunity for local people so that stereotypes and judgements about ‘people taking our jobs and homes’ were overcome by a presentation of what was actually true in that place. We need more opportunities for meeting and understanding across the biggest social and cultural divides.

P Peace is possible if we have peace in our own hearts and are at peace with God and build up peace with one another. We must not be discouraged by the wars, discrimination and cruelty in the world. The Gospel equips us and requires us to be peacemakers. Very small steps can make a very big difference like the person in a Latin American country who was going to leave a bomb on a bus but decided against it after a conversation with someone who gave him hope.

Q Questions are okay! We don’t have to have all the knowledge; no one has it. Asking our neighbours of other faiths about themselves or their faith is one of the best ways of growing in our understanding of other religions. It is good for our humility and helps us to help others.

R Rules are important, but we need to know how to interpret them in the light of Scripture. We can respect the customs and rules of other religious traditions without betraying our own understanding. We are free to say where we differ, but do it with love. The most important rule is the *Golden Rule* shared by all religions. “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Lk 6:31)

S Solidarity with people of other faiths, arising out of our shared humanity and faith based values, can achieve an enormous amount of good in the world. That can and does come about through local help to families in need, collaboration amongst agencies responding to natural disasters and wars, and the drive to meet *Millennium Development Goals*.

T Truth and the search for truth, individually and collectively, is not an obstacle to interreligious dialogue but the basis for it. There are many truths we share in common with people of other religions despite all that is said to the contrary. We are made genuinely free and happy by putting into practice the truth we find in Jesus and in Scripture, such as being poor in spirit, gentle, merciful, seeking justice, being peacemakers (see Mt. 5:3-10). With this freedom we can encounter any kind of difference and overcome many barriers.

U Unity in diversity is a reality that Christians can major on. It calls to mind the Trinitarian roots of our faith and the imprint of the Trinity in creation and in our relationships. We are all called to a life of mutual exchange, fellowship, communion, reciprocity. This is part of our Christian DNA and can translate into the capacity to encounter those very different from ourselves, having confidence in God's love.

V Vices and virtues: Although not much talked about they are definitely still around and can be recognised by all. Our brothers and sisters of other faiths also have writings and teachings that help believers to experience that patience overcomes anger, generosity counteracts avarice, purity combats lust, kindness mitigates envy, hard work is more rewarding than sloth, moderation healthier than gluttony, humility vanquishes pride.

W Who's who? For Christians the relationship with the Jewish people naturally comes first and although some historical and present day circumstances are very painful it is for that very reason that building relationships amongst us is most important. There are many other religious traditions in this country including Baha'i, Buddhist, Jain, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian. There are different strands within these religions and other groups such as Pagans. There are also new religious movements about which information is

available from ‘INFORM’, *The Inter Faith Network for the UK* plays a significant role in inter faith relations nationally.

X Xmas: Christmas and other festivals are important to us, and to our neighbours of other faiths who recognise that this is a Christian country. All faith communities want to protect the festivals and to resist secularising influences which seek to obliterate them and to downgrade Christianity as well as other religions.

Y You are important and your contribution is necessary! All that we do can influence others even in ways we are not aware of. As the saying goes “A smile costs nothing and gives much”. Small gestures can be more important than days of conferences. You will be able to see the effect of the good you do in building up friendships with people of other faiths in your workplace, local shops or street.

Z Zz! Let’s “stay awake” as Scripture says, knowing that the Lord wants to use us to build a harmonious society. As a Christian leader in interfaith dialogue said: “Believers are prophets of hope ... they know that, gifted by God with a heart and intelligence ... they can, with his help, change the course of history ... to make of humanity an authentic family of which each one of us is a member.” (Jean-Louis Tauran)

Celia Blackden
Inter Faith Officer
Churches Together in England

[Grove Books EV91](#) “Friendship and Exchange with People of Other Faiths: a context for witness and dialogue” £3.95

[CTE website resources](#)

[The Council of Christians and Jews](#)
[The Council of Dharmic Faiths](#)

[The Christian Muslim Forum](#)
[The UK Bahá’í Community](#)

PRAYING WITH OUR SEPARATED BRETHREN

In September 1949, in Dover, Kent, as my two friends, Peter and Kevin, and I prepared to go to Castlemount, the local County Secondary School, we received a lecture from our parish priest. He gave us a warning. 'Remember, on no account are you to pray with the heretics. Not even the Our Father.' So later, when our Form Tutor, Miss Prior, told us that it was time for the morning assembly, we three left the classroom and sat outside! The parish priest was obediently applying the teaching of the Church at that time.

Then, fifteen years later, in November 1964, came the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism; and the Church did a U-turn! Praying with members of other Christian communities was not just permitted, it was encouraged.

It is allowable, indeed desirable, that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren. Such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine expression of the ties which even now bind Catholics to their separated brethren. (para 7)

My first experience of praying with other Christians occurred when I took part in the 'People Next Door' project, promoted by the British Council of Churches, in 1966. Quite literally sitting down with Anglican and Methodist neighbours, in a Catholic home, and praying together, was a refreshing experience. I learnt how to pray 'The Grace' and had my first introduction to *ex tempore* prayer. This was a novel experience for Catholics, whose prayer had consisted, in the main, of reciting traditional set prayers. Providentially, just a few years before, 'Prayers of Life' had been published. This was a revolutionary collection of very down-to-earth prayers by Michel Quoist, a French YCW chaplain. The book, which appealed to Catholics and Non-Catholics alike, sold over a million copies world-wide. It helped very many Catholics to pray spontaneously from the heart.

In the heady years following the Decree on Ecumenism expectations of developments in Church Unity were high. This was the time when new shared churches were built; ecumenical team ministries, like the one at Thamesmead, in South London, where I was

a member, were formed. Our team leader was the Anglican Bishop, David Sheppard, who later did much sterling ecumenical work with Derek Worlock, the Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool. Catholics got involved, in every town and village in England and Wales, in their local Council of Churches (later called 'Churches Together'). The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was widely and enthusiastically supported. At the same time, with high hopes, the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) started work and, over the years, produced Agreed Statements, including ones on the Eucharist, Authority and 'Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ'. Blessed Pope John Paul II visited England and Wales in 1982 and prayed, side by side, with the Archbishop of Canterbury in his Cathedral. The work of ARCIC was accepted by both Churches and there was an air of hopeful expectation.

Then, in the '90s came the set-backs! The Church of England started ordaining women as priests and discussing the ordination of women as bishops. Some Anglican clergy, who could not accept this development, left their Church and sought admittance to the Roman Catholic Church. The ARCIC meetings, post 2004, were put on hold and everything seemed to slide to a halt. Some spoke of the end of Ecumenism and certainly the atmosphere changed to a tired and weary resignation.

However, it was not as simple as that! Friendship bonds had been formed between members of the different traditions and particularly between Anglicans and Catholics. People at all levels wanted to continue meeting, whatever the difficulties. For example, the English Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee (EARC), comprising fifteen representatives from each Church, continued to meet as though nothing had happened. The other dialogues, for example between the Church of England and the Baptist Union; that between the Catholic Church and the Methodist Church and between the Catholic Church and the United Reform Church continued; as did the friendships that had been formed.

As a member of EARC I was present, for just a few hours, at the Meeting of the Anglican and Catholic Bishops at Lambeth Palace, London, on 22nd/23rd November 2013. (EARC had been invited to share its work with the joint meeting of Bishops and seek suggestions for future work). As a complete outsider I was struck, at the coffee

break and lunch, by the evident warmth of friendship that was clearly present. At the summing up, concluding their two days together, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said, ‘this has been the third time we have been together, and the warmth of friendship grows and grows’.

It would appear that, out of the spotlight, the work of Ecumenism continues. Two years ago a new phase of the work of ARCIC was lunched and hope is alive again on that front. In support of the theological explorations three areas of ecumenical life have been identified and are growing in support and strength.

First, there is Affective Ecumenism, already spoken of; the November Lambeth Meeting of Bishops being a clear and certain witness to it. At EARC meetings, which include praying and socialising together, the warmth of friendship, the pleasure of one another's company, is very evident. On the local level, at the Churches Together meetings that I attend, all taking part experience the same contentment with being in one another's company and planning and working together with mutual respect.

The second successful development in recent years is the concept and practice of Receptive Ecumenism. This originates from the work of Professor Paul Murray, lecturer in Systematic Theology at the University of Durham, who has invested much energy in promoting it. He explains that ‘the essential principle behind Receptive Ecumenism is that the primary ecumenical responsibility is to ask not, “What do the other traditions first need to learn from us?”, but “What do we need to learn from them?”’ The assumption is that if all were asking this question seriously and acting upon it, then all would be moving in ways that would both deepen our authentic respective identities and draw us into more intimate relationship.’ [1]

In conclusion, the third important contribution to the Ecumenical Movement is Spiritual Ecumenism. As we have seen the Catholic Church took a U-turn at the Second Vatican Council, in its Decree on Ecumenism (the 50th anniversary of its publication is coming up in November next year) by encouraging Catholics to pray with their separated brethren. The Decree spoke of the change of heart necessary for all involved in the search for Unity;

This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and can rightly be called 'spiritual ecumenism'. (para 8).

In 2006, desirous to keep the flame of ecumenism alive, Cardinal Walter Kasper, at the time the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, produced a very down-to-earth and practical little handbook to promote spiritual ecumenism. The cover blurb of the book says this of it;

This Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism offers practical suggestions for implementing spiritual ecumenism, the heart of all efforts to re-unite divided Christians. Grounded in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, as well as the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* it is written for anyone who values deeply the restoration of Christian unity, especially those responsible for promoting it at various levels of Church life.

Although this little book came out in 2006 it does not appear to be well known. Witness to this is that there is no English edition for the UK. The American edition is obtainable via Amazon.

The focus on Spiritual Ecumenism has grown and has currently become one of the principle areas of exploration and promotion in the Ecumenical Movement. For example, it featured in both the meeting of Bishops, referred to above, and the meeting of EARC, which has a special sub-committee seeking ways of promoting it.

The three avenues of Ecumenical development; the affective, the receptive and spiritual ecumenism come together when, as separated brethren, we share the acknowledgement that we have much to learn from one another; and, as brothers and sisters, pray perseveringly together, trusting that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love, will, in God's own good time, bring us to the unity which we know is the will of Christ.

Tony Castle

¹ More information about this valuable contribution to the work of Ecumenism can be found online by going to, 'Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham; receptive ecumenism.'

If any reader would like to receive a free summary of Cardinal Kasper's Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism, request one at the email address: ant_castle@hotmail.com

