



ACTA 2020 ŒCUMENICA

INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY



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PREFACE

All Christians and their ecumenical relationships have been deeply affected by the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. While preventing many meetings and common projects, this situation also challenged Christians from different traditions to find new ways of communication, common prayer, joint theological reflection and service towards those in need.

Indeed, by its very nature, the ecumenical movement can be said to be familiar with the concept of ‘social distancing’, since it endeavours to promote unity among separated Christians, in a sense distanced among themselves. While encouraged to make use of digital means to pursue dialogue and relations, ecumenical partners were nonetheless confirmed in their conviction that personal contact and in person meetings are irreplaceable to promote communion.

The work of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity last year was also affected by this challenge. Two important events were commemorated in 2020, through online means and only when possible through personal encounters: the 60th anniversary of the Pontifical Council and the 25th anniversary of the Encyclical letter of Saint John Paul II *Ut unum sint*.

These anniversaries were the impetus for the publication of a new document entitled *Ecumenical Vademecum. The Bishop and Christian Unity* (cf. p.225) issued with a view to encouraging and assisting bishops in their ecumenical mission.

Another important initiative of the Pontifical Council was the launch of our new journal, *Acta Œcumenica*, following on from the previous bulletin *Information Service/Service d'information* which had been published since 1967. The journal is offered as a comprehensive reference source on the official ecumenical commitment of the Holy See. The Holy Father, in his letter on 24 May 2020 on the 25th anniversary of *Ut unum sint* (cf. p.18), welcomed the launch of *Acta Œcumenica*, trusting that it would “assist all who work in the service of unity”. This is also our hope.



Kurt Cardinal Koch
President

POPE FRANCIS AND ECUMENISM

AUDIENCES

Ecumenical Delegation from Finland

(17 January 2020)

On 17 January, Pope Francis received an ecumenical delegation from Finland in a private audience. The visit was part of the pilgrimage to Rome undertaken over the last 35 years to celebrate the feast of Saint Henry, patron saint of Finland. The group was guided by the Lutheran Bishop of Helsinki Teemu Laajasalo, Monsignor Marco Pasinato, Diocesan Administrator of the Catholic Diocese of Helsinki, and Metropolitan Elia of Oulu, representative of the Orthodox Church of Finland. During a meeting with Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and his staff members, the participants of the Finnish delegation discussed issues relating to the current ecumenical dialogue. The programme of the pilgrimage also included a Catholic Mass, during which the Lutheran Bishop Laajasalo delivered the homily, and ecumenical vespers presided over by Cardinal Koch. The two celebrations, in which the Finnish choir “Cantores Minores” also participated, took place at Santa Brigida, a convent for sisters of Saint Bridget whose apostolate is particularly centred on ecumenical prayer.



Pope Francis meets ecumenical delegation from Finland, 17 January 2020

Address of Pope Francis

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I offer you a cordial welcome in the words of Saint Paul: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 1:7). I thank Bishop Teemu for his words, a beautiful invitation to mutual understanding in the midst of today’s many misunderstandings. Your ecumenical pilgrimage for the feast of Saint Henrik has once

more brought you to Rome. Together you are journeying – as all of us are – in communion of faith, so as to encourage one another and to strengthen one another in Christian discipleship.

This past Sunday, we celebrated the Baptism of Jesus and we recalled our own baptism. A Christian is someone who can give thanks for his or her baptism; and this gratitude unites us within the community of all the baptized. The “baptism for the forgiveness of sins” that we profess in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is also a clear summons to holiness.

The Report of the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue group for Sweden and Finland, entitled *Justification in the Life of the Church*, rightly observes that “those who are already baptized can, together with their brothers and sisters, develop their opportunities for holiness, which come from their common justification in Christ. As members of one and the same mystical body of Christ, Christians are bound to one another and must bear one another’s burdens. Since Christ came to redeem the whole world, it is also a mission for the church and for individual Christians, both lay and ordained, to witness to the good news in the midst of their daily life” (No. 203).

Hospitality is likewise part of our shared witness of faith in daily life. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which begins tomorrow, shows us this ecumenical virtue, and indeed recommends it to us. “They showed us unusual kindness” (Acts 28:2) as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, with reference to the inhabitants of the island of Malta, who received with hospitality the Apostle Paul, together with hundreds of shipwrecked people.

As baptized Christians, we believe that Christ wishes to meet us precisely in those who are – both literally and figuratively – shipwrecked in life. Those who show hospitality grow richer, not poorer. Whoever gives, receives in return. For the humanity we show to others makes us in a mysterious way partakers in the goodness of the God who became man.

Dear Finnish friends, as heralds of humanity, as recipients of the goodness of God incarnate, we are journeying together in the community of all the baptized. Christians are those who can give thanks for their baptism. This gratitude links and expands our hearts, and opens them to our neighbour, who is not an adversary but our beloved brother, our beloved sister. The community of all the baptized is not a mere “standing beside one another”, and certainly not a “standing against one other”, but wants to become an ever fuller “standing together”.

Spiritual ecumenism and ecumenical dialogue serve to deepen this “standing together”. May this “standing together” continue to grow, prosper and bear fruit in Finland. To that end, I pray that God may grant you his abundant grace and his blessing. I would ask you also to please pray for me. Thank you.

—

**His Eminence Hilarion of Volokolamsk, President of the
Department for External Church Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate**
(13 February 2020)

On the occasion of his visit to Rome to take part in the commemorative celebrations for the fourth anniversary of the historic meeting of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, was received by Pope Francis at the Apostolic Palace on 13 February 2020.

The meeting, which focused on the current state of relations between the Catholic Church and the Moscow Patriarchate, was an opportunity to discuss the importance of the loan of the relics of Saint Nicholas to Russia in May-June 2017, and to reflect on the cooperation that has developed between the two Churches thanks to the efforts of the Joint Working Group for the Coordination of Cultural and Social Projects. Particular emphasis was placed on reciprocal study visits to Moscow and Rome of young priests of the Catholic Church and the Moscow Patriarchate.

In conclusion, the Pope and the Metropolitan exchanged gifts, with Metropolitan Hilarion introducing the members of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church, including Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), Archpriest Leonid Kalinin, Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), Revd Alexander Aleshin, Archpriest Kirill Kaleda, Hieromonk Jean (Kopeikine), Revd Alexiy Dikarev, and the sub-deacon Viatcheslav Li.



Pope Francis meets with His Eminence Hilarion and delegation, 13 February 2020

Delegation of Young Priests and Monks of the Oriental Orthodox Churches
(21 February 2020)

On Friday 21 February, the Holy Father received in a private audience a delegation of young priests and monks of the different Oriental Orthodox Churches taking part in a study visit to Rome organized by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Accompanying the group, in his greeting (cf. p.147) Cardinal Koch presented the delegation, which was joined in the audience by Archbishop

Khajag Barsamian, representative of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and Bishop Barnaba El-Soryani of the Coptic Orthodox Church. In his address, the Holy Father mentioned the visit of the Mother of God to Elizabeth, recalling that “every visit brings a sharing of gifts”. Indeed, “Like Mary and Elizabeth, the Churches carry with them a variety of gifts of the Spirit, to be shared for their mutual joy and benefit”. Thus, the visit of the delegation is “also a chance for us Catholics to receive the gift of the Spirit that you bring”. In particular, the Holy Father gave thanks “for your saying ‘yes’ to your priesthood and your monastic life, and for the witness given by your Oriental Orthodox Churches. For yours are Churches that have sealed their faith in Christ in blood”. Trusting that the members of the delegation had felt “not so much as guests, but as brothers”, Pope Francis expressed the hope that their presence “may become a small but fruitful seed that will bear fruit in visible communion between us, in that full unity that Jesus ardently desires (cf. Jn 17:21)”. The audience concluded with the prayer of the Our Father.

A study visit of young Catholic priests had been planned for September 2020 in Armenia, upon the invitation of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Etchmiadzin) in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The visit was cancelled due to the pandemic.



Pope Francis meets young priests and monks of different Oriental Orthodox Churches, 21 February 2020

Address of Pope Francis

Dear Brothers,

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 1:2). With these words of the Apostle Paul, I would like to offer you a warm welcome and to share with you the joy your visit brings me. I cordially greet Archbishop Barsamian and Bishop El-Soryani, who are accompanying you. Through you, I wish also to send a special greeting to my venerable and dear brothers, the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Every visit brings a sharing of gifts. When the Mother of God visited Elizabeth, she shared her joy at having receiving God’s gift. Elizabeth, who at Mary’s greeting felt the child leap in her womb, was herself filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit and blessed her cousin (cf. Lk 1:39-42). Like Mary and Elizabeth, the Churches carry with them a variety of gifts of the Spirit, to be shared for their mutual joy and benefit. When we Christians visit one another, and encounter one another in the love of the Lord, we are blessed to be able to exchange these gifts. We can receive what the Holy Spirit has

sown in others as a gift for ourselves. Your visit, then, is not only an opportunity for you to grow in knowledge of the Catholic Church, but also a chance for us Catholics to receive the gift of the Spirit that you bring. Your presence makes possible this sharing of gifts and is a source of joy.

The Apostle Paul also says: “I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor 1:4). Today I too give thanks for the same reason, for the grace of God bestowed upon you. Everything begins there, with our acknowledgment of grace, with our recognition of God’s gracious work, with our belief that he is the source of the goodness within us. This is the beauty of the Christian vision of life. And it is also the proper way for us to welcome our brothers, as the Apostle teaches. I am grateful, then, for you, for the grace that you have received in your lives and your traditions, for your saying “yes” to your priesthood and your monastic life, and for the witness given by your Oriental Orthodox Churches. For yours are Churches that have sealed their faith in Christ in blood and that continue to sow seeds of faith and hope, even in areas often, tragically, scarred by violence and war.

I hope that each of you has had a positive experience of the Catholic Church and the city of Rome, and that you have felt not so much as guests, but as brothers. The Lord is pleased with this brotherly affection between us. May your visit and those that, with God’s help will follow in the future, be a source of joy and give glory to the Lord! May your presence become a small but fruitful seed that will bear fruit in visible communion between us, in that full unity that Jesus ardently desires (cf. Jn 17:21).

Dear brothers, I thank you once more for your visit and I assure you of a remembrance in my prayers. I also trust in your own prayer for myself and my ministry. May the Lord bless you and the Mother of God protect you. And now, if you would like, we can pray together, each in his own language, the *Our Father*.

Brother Alois of the Community of Taizé
(25 June 2020)



Pope Francis meets Brother Alois of the Community of Taizé, 25 June 2020

On Thursday 25 June, the Holy Father received the Prior of Taizé, Brother Alois, together with some members of the Community, in a private audience. During the meeting, Brother Alois shared with the Holy Father recent news from Taizé, in particular the “Pilgrimage of Trust on the Earth” and the recent resumption of activities at Taizé after the lockdown, including the work of safeguarding and welcoming refugees. Brother Alois also spoke of how the encyclical *Laudato si’* has stimulated the work of the Community.

Prior to the current health emergency, the Community of Taizé had sponsored the 42nd European Meeting of Young People held in Wrocław, Poland, from 28 December 2019 to 1 January 2020, to which Pope Francis, as in other years, sent a message expressing his blessings and closeness in prayer.

On Friday 26 June Brother Alois, accompanied by the members of the Community, also met with Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Community of Taizé is made up of over a hundred brothers, Catholics and from various Protestant backgrounds, from around thirty nations. It seeks to be a “parable of community”, a sign of reconciliation between divided Christians and between separated peoples.

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His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians (27 September 2020)



Pope Francis meets His Holiness Karekin II, 27 September 2020

His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, visited the Vatican on 26–27 September 2020 and was received in a private audience with Pope Francis on Sunday 27 September at the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*. Accompanied by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Representative of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Rome, the Catholicos also met with Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the latter. His Holi-

ness Karekin II also gathered in prayer before the Holy Sunday Mass celebrated at the Altar of the Chair of Saint Peter in the Vatican Basilica.

The meetings were also an opportunity to discuss, in particular, the conflict in the Caucasus, which the Holy Father also mentioned in the Sunday Angelus, asking to pray for peace in the region with the following words: “I pray for peace in the Caucasus and I ask the parties in conflict to perform concrete acts of good will and brotherhood, that may lead to resolve the problems not with the use of force and arms, but through dialogue and negotiation. Let us pray together in silence for peace in the Caucasus.”

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His All Holiness Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch
(22 October 2020)



Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I during ecumenical prayer service, Rome, 20 October 2020

On 22 October Pope Francis met with the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, who was in Rome for the International Prayer Meeting for Peace and for the conferral of an honorary degree at the Antonianum. As a gift, the Patriarch gave the pope an image of Saint Martha of Bethany made by monks at Mount Athos. In exchange, the Holy Father offered the Patriarch a ceramic work depicting the icon of Saints Peter and Andrew that had been a gift of Patriarch Athenagoras to Pope Paul VI in 1965 in memory of their historical meeting in Jerusalem in 1964. The icon has become closely associated with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, in the office of which it is now kept.

ADDRESSES

Meeting of Reflection and Spirituality – “Mediterranean: Frontier of Peace”

(Basilica of San Nicola, Bari, 23 February 2020)

On 23 February Pope Francis visited Bari, Italy, for the meeting of reflection and spirituality of the Bishops of the Mediterranean, “Mediterranean: Frontier of Peace”, promoted by the Italian Bishops’ Conference. In his address to the bishops gathered in the Basilica of Saint Nicholas, Pope Francis recalled the meeting with the heads of the Christian Churches of the Middle East held in the same church on 7 July 2018 and, highlighting the innovative nature of the two meetings, described the city of Bari as the “capital of unity”. Pope Francis affirmed that for those who believe in the Gospel, dialogue has theological and not only anthropological value: “Listening to our brothers and sisters is not only an act of charity but also a way of listening to the Spirit of God who surely works in others and whose voice transcends the limits in which we are often tempted to constrain the truth”.



Pope Francis meets participants in Meeting of Reflection and Spirituality, Bari, 23 February 2020

Address of Pope Francis

I am pleased that we can meet you and I am grateful that each of you has accepted the invitation of the Italian Episcopal Conference to take part in this meeting, which assembles the Churches of the Mediterranean. In looking around this Church [the Basilica of St. Nicholas], I think of another meeting, our meeting with the Heads of the Christian Churches, both Orthodox and Catholic, here in Bari. This is the second time in a few months that we have made a gesture of unity of this kind. That earlier meeting was the first time after the great schism that all of us were together, and this is the first meeting of bishops from around the Mediterranean. I think we could call Bari the capital of unity, of the unity of the Church – if Archbishop Cacucci will let us! Thank you for your welcome, Excellency, thank you.

When Cardinal Bassetti presented the idea to me, I readily accepted it, seeing it as an opportunity to begin a process of listening and discussion aimed at helping to build peace in this crucial part of the world. For that reason, I wanted to be present and

testify to the importance of the new model of fraternity and collegiality that you represent. I like the word that you joined to dialogue: *conviviality*.

I find it significant that this meeting takes place in Bari, since this city is so important for its links with the Middle East and Africa; it is an eloquent sign of the deeply rooted relationships between different peoples and traditions. The Diocese of Bari has always fostered ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, working tirelessly to create bonds of mutual esteem and fraternity. I purposely chose Bari a year and a half ago, as I said, to meet leaders of Christian communities in the Middle East for an important moment of discussion and fellowship meant to help our sister Churches to journey together and feel closer to one another.

You have come together in this particular context to reflect on the vocation and future of the Mediterranean, on the transmission of the faith and the promotion of peace. The *Mare nostrum* is the physical and spiritual locus where our civilization took shape as a result of the encounter of diverse peoples. By its very configuration, this sea forces surrounding peoples and cultures to constant interact, to recall what they have in common, and to realize that only by living in concord can they enjoy the opportunities this region offers, thanks to its resources, its natural beauty and its varied human traditions.

In our own day, the importance of this area has not decreased in the wake of the process of globalization; on the contrary, globalization has highlighted the role of the Mediterranean as a crossroads of interests and important social, political, religious and economic currents. The Mediterranean remains a strategic region whose equilibrium has an impact on the other parts of the world.

It could be said that the size of the Mediterranean is inversely proportional to its importance, to see it more as a lake than an ocean, as Giorgio La Pira once said. Defining it as “the great Sea of Galilee”, he drew an analogy between Jesus’ time and our own, between his milieu and that of the peoples of our time. Just as Jesus lived and worked in a context of differing cultures and beliefs, so we find ourselves in a multifaceted environment scarred by divisions and forms of inequality that lead to instability. Amid deep fault lines and economic, religious, confessional and political conflicts, we are called to offer our witness to unity and peace. We do so prompted by our faith and membership in the Church, seeking to understand the contribution that we, as disciples of the Lord, can make to all the men and women of the Mediterranean region.

The transmission of the faith necessarily draws upon the heritage of the Mediterranean region. That heritage has been fostered, preserved and kept alive by Christian communities through catechesis and the celebration of the sacraments, the formation of consciences, and individual and communal hearing of the Lord’s word. Specifically, thanks to popular piety, the Christian experience has taken on a form both meaningful and enduring: popular devotion is for the most part the expression of straightforward and authentic faith. Here I often like to cite that gem which is No. 48 of the Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* on popular piety, where Saint Paul VI prefers, in place of “religiosity”, to speak of “popular piety”, pointing out both its richness and its shortcomings. That passage should guide us in our proclamation of the Gospel to the peoples.

In this region, one deposit of remarkable potential is its art, which combines the content of the faith with cultural treasures and beautiful artworks. This heritage continues to attract millions of visitors from every part of the world and must be care-

fully preserved as a precious legacy received “on loan”, to be handed on to future generations.

In the light of all this, the preaching of the Gospel cannot be detached from commitment to the common good; it impels us to act tirelessly as peacemakers. The Mediterranean region is currently threatened by outbreaks of instability and conflict, both in the Middle East and different countries of North Africa, as well as between various ethnic, religious or confessional groups. Nor can we overlook the still unresolved conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, with the danger of inequitable solutions and, hence, a prelude to new crises.

War, by allocating resources to the acquisition of weapons and military power, diverts those resources from vital social needs, such as the support of families, health care and education. As Saint John XXIII teaches, it is contrary to reason (cf. *Pacem in Terris*, 114; 127). In other words, it is madness; it is madness to destroy houses, bridges, factories and hospitals, to kill people and annihilate resources, instead of building human and economic relationships. It is a kind of folly to which we cannot resign ourselves: war can never be considered normal, or accepted as an inevitable means of settling differences and conflicts of interest. Never.

The ultimate goal of every human society is peace; indeed, we can affirm once more that “in spite of everything, there is no real alternative to peacemaking” (*Meeting with Heads of Churches and Christian Communities in the Middle East*, Bari, 7 July 2018). There is no reasonable alternative to peace, because every attempt at exploitation or supremacy demeans both its author and its target. It shows a myopic grasp of reality, since it can offer no future to either of the two. War is thus the failure of every plan, human and divine. One need only visit a countryside or city that has been a theatre of war to realize how, as a result of hatred, a garden turns into a desolate and inhospitable landscape, how the earthly paradise turns into hell. Here I would also mention the grave sin of hypocrisy, when at international meetings many countries talk about peace and then sell weapons to countries at war. This can be called hypocrisy on a grand scale.

Peace, which the Church and every civic institution must always consider their first priority, has justice as its indispensable condition. Justice is trampled underfoot when the needs of individuals are ignored and where partisan economic interests prevail over the rights of individuals and communities. Moreover, justice is blocked by a throwaway culture that treats persons as if they were things, generating and promoting inequality. So much so that on the shores of this very sea there are some societies of immense wealth and others in which many people struggle simply to survive.

A decisive contribution to combating this culture is made by the countless charitable and educational works carried out by Christian communities. Whenever dioceses, parishes, associations, volunteer organizations – one of the great treasures of Italian pastoral care – or individuals strive to support those abandoned or in need, the Gospel becomes all the more powerful and attractive.

In the pursuit of the common good – another name for peace – we should employ the criterion pointed out by La Pira: to let ourselves be guided by the “expectations of the poor” (“Le attese della povera gente”, in *Cronache sociali* 1/1950). This principle, which can never be set aside for calculation or convenience, if taken seriously, enables a radical anthropological shift that makes everyone more human.

What use is a society of constant technological progress, if it becomes increasingly indifferent to its members in need? In preaching the Gospel, we hand on a way of

thinking that respects each person by our unremitting effort to make the Church, the Churches, a sign of special care for the vulnerable and the poor. For “the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable” (1 Cor 12:22) and “if one member suffers, all suffer together” (1 Cor 12:26).

In the Mediterranean region, these include all who are fleeing war or who have left their homelands in search of a humanly dignified life. The number of these brothers and sisters – forced to abandon their loved ones and their lands, and to face conditions of extreme insecurity – has risen as a result of spreading conflicts and increasingly dramatic environmental and climatic conditions. It is easy to anticipate that this phenomenon, with its momentous developments, will have an effect on the Mediterranean, for which states and religious communities must not be found unprepared. While countries experiencing this flow of migrants and countries to which they travel are affected by this, so too are the governments and Churches of the migrants’ countries of origin, which, with the departure of so many young people, witness the impoverishment of their own future.

We are aware that, in different social contexts, there is a growing attitude of indifference and even rejection that reflects the mentality, condemned in many of the Gospel parables, of those who, caught up in their own wealth and freedom, are blind to others who, by speaking out or by the very fact of their poverty, are pleading for help. Fear is leading to a sense that we need to defend ourselves against what is depicted in demagogic terms as an invasion. The rhetoric of the clash of civilizations merely serves to justify violence and to nurture hatred. The failure or, in any case, the weakness of politics, and factionalism are leading to forms of radicalism and terrorism. The international community has been content with military interventions, whereas it should have built institutions that can guarantee equal opportunities and enable citizens to assume their responsibility for the common good.

For our part, brothers, let us speak out to demand that government leaders protect minorities and religious freedom. The persecution experienced above all – but not only – by Christian communities is a heart-rending fact that cannot leave us indifferent.

In the meantime, we can never resign ourselves to the fact that someone who seeks hope by way of the sea can die without receiving help, or that someone from afar can fall prey to sexual exploitation, be underpaid or recruited by gangs.

To be sure, acceptance and a dignified integration are stages in a process that is not easy. Yet it is unthinkable that we can address the problem by putting up walls. I grow fearful when I hear certain speeches by some leaders of the new forms of populism; it reminds me of speeches that disseminated fear and hatred back in the thirties of the last century. As I said, it is unthinkable that this process of acceptance and dignified integration can be accomplished by building walls. When we do so, we cut ourselves off from the richness brought by others, which always represents an opportunity for growth. When we reject the desire for fellowship present deep within the human heart and is part of the history of peoples, we stand in the way of the unification of the human family, which despite many challenges, continues to advance. Last week, an artist from Turin sent me a little wood-burned picture of the flight to Egypt with Saint Joseph, not the peaceful Saint Joseph we are used to seeing on holy cards, but Saint Joseph in the guise of a Syrian refugee bearing a child on his shoulders. It portrayed the

pain and the bitter tragedy of the Child Jesus on the flight to Egypt. The same thing that is happening today.

The Mediterranean has a unique vocation in this regard: it is the sea of intermingling, “culturally always open to encounter, dialogue and mutual inculturation” (*Meeting with Heads of Churches and Christian Communities in the Middle East*, Bari, 7 July 2018). Notions of racial purity have no future. The message of intermingling has much to tell us. To be part of the Mediterranean region is a source extraordinary potential: may we not allow a spirit of nationalism to spread the opposite view, namely, that those states less accessible and geographically more isolated should be privileged. Dialogue alone enables us to come together, to overcome prejudices and stereotypes, to tell our stories and to come to know ourselves better. Dialogue is the word I heard today: *conviviality*.

Young people, too, represent a special opportunity. When they are provided the resources and possibilities they need to take charge of their own future, they show that they are capable of generating a promising and hope-filled future. This will only happen as the result of an acceptance that is not superficial but heartfelt and benevolent, practised by everyone at all levels, both the everyday level of interpersonal relationships and the political and institutional levels, and fostered by those who shape culture and bear greater responsibility in the area of public opinion.

For those who believe in the Gospel, dialogue is advantageous not only from an anthropological but also from a theological standpoint. Listening to our brothers and sisters is not only an act of charity but also a way of listening to the Spirit of God who surely works in others and whose voice transcends the limits in which we are often tempted to constrain the truth. Let us come to know the value of hospitality: “for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb 13:1).

We need to develop a theology of acceptance and of dialogue leading to a renewed understanding and proclamation of the teaching of Scripture. This can only happen if we make every effort to take the first step and not exclude the seeds of truth also possessed by others. In this way, the discussion of our various religious convictions can concern not only the truths we believe, but also specific themes that can become defining points of our teaching as a whole.

All too often, history has known conflicts and struggles based on the distorted notion that we are defending God by opposing anyone who does not share our set of beliefs. Indeed, extremism and fundamentalism deny the dignity of the human person and his or her religious freedom, and thus lead to moral decline and the spread of an antagonistic view of human relationships. This too shows us the urgent need of a more vital encounter between different religious confessions, one motivated by sincere respect and a desire for peace.

This encounter is spurred by the awareness, set forth in the *Document on Human Fraternity* signed at Abu Dhabi, that “the authentic teachings of religions invite us to remain rooted in the values of peace; to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity and harmonious coexistence”. Religious groups and different communities can cooperate more actively in helping the poor and welcoming immigrants, in such a way that our relationships are motivated by common goals and accompanied by active commitment. Those who together dirty their hands in building peace and fraternal acceptance will no longer be able to fight over matters of faith, but will pursue the paths of respectful discussion, mutual solidarity, and the quest for unity. Its opposite is

what I felt when I went to Lampedusa, that air of indifference: on the island there was acceptance and welcome, but then, in the world, the culture of indifference.

Dear brothers, these are the hopes I wanted to share with you at the conclusion of our fruitful and consoling encounter in these days. I entrust you to the intercession of the Apostle Paul who was the first to cross the Mediterranean, facing dangers and hardships of every kind, in order to bring the Gospel of Christ to everyone. May his example show you the paths to pursue in the joyful and liberating task of handing on the faith in our own time.

I leave you with the words of the Prophet Isaiah, in the hope that they will provide you and your respective communities with hope and strength. Witnessing the destruction of Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet did not fail to look forward to a future of peace and prosperity: “They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations” (Is 61:4). This is the work the Lord entrusts to you on behalf of this beloved Mediterranean region: to restore relationships that have been broken, to rebuild cities destroyed by violence, to make a garden flourish in what is now a desert, to instil hope in the hopeless, and to encourage those caught up in themselves not to fear their brothers or sisters. And to look upon this [sea], which has already become a cemetery, as a place of future resurrection for the entire area. May the Lord accompany your steps and bless your work of reconciliation and peace. Thank you.



**International Meeting of Prayer for Peace:
“No one is saved alone – Peace and Fraternity”
(Campidoglio, Rome, 20 October 2020)**

On the afternoon of 20 October an International Prayer Meeting for Peace took place in Rome promoted by the Community of Sant’Egidio on the theme “No one is saved alone – Peace and Fraternity” in the spirit of Assisi and Pope Francis’ encyclical Fratelli tutti. An ecumenical prayer service was held firstly at the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli attended by Pope Francis together with other Christian leaders, during which the Holy Father gave a homily (cf. p.28). The ecumenical prayer was followed by an international meeting of prayer for peace at Piazza del Campidoglio, gathering together with the Christian leaders other representatives of the world religions, as well as political leaders. In his address, the Holy Father reiterated, “Religions stand at the service of peace and fraternity. For this reason, our present gathering also represents an incentive to religious leaders and to all believers to pray fervently for peace”. In his address, the Ecumenical Patriarch stated, “Created in the image and likeness of God, we see the image of our brother in ourselves, and the divine fragment in every human being. Looking at all that surrounds us, we see the divine work contained therein”.

Address of Pope Francis

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I rejoice and give thanks to God that here on the Capitoline Hill, in the heart of Rome, I can meet with you, distinguished religious leaders, public authorities and so many friends of peace. At each other’s side, we have prayed for peace. I greet the President of the Italian Republic, the Honourable Sergio Mattarella. I am happy to encounter once

more my brother, the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomew. I am most grateful that, despite the difficulties of travel these days, he and other leaders wished to take part in this prayer meeting. In the spirit of the Assisi Meeting called by Saint John Paul II in 1986, the Community of Sant'Egidio celebrates annually, in different cities, this moment of prayer and dialogue for peace among believers of various religions.

The Assisi meeting and its vision of peace contained a prophetic seed that by God's grace has gradually matured through unprecedented encounters, acts of peacemaking and fresh initiatives of fraternity. Although the intervening years have witnessed painful events, including conflicts, terrorism and radicalism, at times in the name of religion, we must also acknowledge the fruitful steps undertaken in the dialogue between the religions. This is a sign of hope that encourages us to continue cooperating as brothers and sisters. In this way, we arrived at the important *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, which I signed with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, in 2019.

Indeed, "the commandment of peace is inscribed in the depths of the religious traditions" (*Fratelli tutti*, 284). Believers have understood that religious differences do not justify indifference or enmity. Rather, on the basis of our religious faith we are enabled to become peacemakers, rather than standing passively before the evil of war and hatred. Religions stand at the service of peace and fraternity. For this reason, our present gathering also represents an incentive to religious leaders and to all believers to pray fervently for peace, never resigned to war, but working with the gentle strength of faith to end conflicts.

We need peace! More peace! "We cannot remain indifferent. Today the world has a profound thirst for peace. In many countries, people are suffering due to wars which, though often forgotten, are always the cause of suffering and poverty" (*Address to Participants in the World Day of Prayer for Peace*, Assisi, 20 January 2016). The world, political life and public opinion all run the risk of growing inured to the evil of war, as if it were simply a part of human history. "Let us not remain mired in theoretical discussions, but touch the wounded flesh of the victims... Let us think of the refugees and displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation and chemical attacks, the mothers who lost their children, and the boys and girls maimed or deprived of their childhood" (*Fratelli tutti*, 261). Today the sufferings of war are aggravated by the suffering caused by the coronavirus and the impossibility, in many countries, of access to necessary care.

In the meantime, conflicts continue, bringing in their wake suffering and death. To put an end to war is a solemn duty before God incumbent on all those holding political responsibilities. Peace is the priority of all politics. God will ask an accounting of those who failed to seek peace, or who fomented tensions and conflicts. He will call them to account for all the days, months and years of war that have passed and been endured by the world's peoples!

The words Jesus spoke to Peter are incisive and full of wisdom: "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt 26:52). Those who wield the sword, possibly in the belief that it will resolve difficult situations quickly, will know in their own lives, the lives of their loved ones and the lives of their countries, the death brought by the sword. "Enough!" says Jesus (Lk 22:38), when his disciples produce two swords before the Passion. "Enough!" That is his unambiguous response to any form of violence. That single word of Jesus echoes

through the centuries and reaches us forcefully in our own time: enough of swords, weapons, violence and war!

Saint Paul VI echoed that word in his appeal to the United Nations in 1965: “No more war!” This is our plea, and that of all men and women of goodwill. It is the dream of all who strive work for peace in the realization that “every war leaves our world worse than it was before” (*Fratelli tutti*, 261).

How do we find a way out of intransigent and festering conflicts? How do we untangle the knots so many armed struggles? How do we prevent conflicts? How do we inspire thoughts of peace in warlords and those who rely on the strength of arms? No people, no social group, can *single-handedly* achieve peace, prosperity, security and happiness. None. The lesson learned from the recent pandemic, if we wish to be honest, is “the awareness that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together” (*Fratelli tutti*, 32).

Fraternity, born of the realization that we are a single human family, must penetrate the life of peoples, communities, government leaders and international assemblies. This will help everyone to understand that we can only be saved together through encounter and negotiation, setting aside our conflicts and pursuing reconciliation, moderating the language of politics and propaganda, and developing true paths of peace (cf. *Fratelli tutti*, 231).

We have gathered this evening, as persons of different religious traditions, in order to send a message of peace. To show clearly that the religions do not want war and, indeed, disown those who would enshrine violence. That they ask everyone to pray for reconciliation and to strive to enable fraternity to pave new paths of hope. For indeed, with God's help, it will be possible to build a world of peace, and thus, brothers and sisters, to be saved together. Thank you.



Pope Francis at International Meeting of Prayer for Peace, Campidoglio, Rome, 20 October 2020

MESSAGES

Message for the enthronement of His Beatitude Sahak II, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople

(11 January 2020)

His Holiness Pope Francis has asked me to convey his cordial best wishes to Your Beatitude on your election as Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, and to assure you of his prayers for your new responsibilities in service of Christ and the Gospel. His Holiness trusts that under your pastoral leadership the fraternal relations between the Armenian Apostolic Church in Turkey and the Catholic Church will continue to progress along the path towards full communion, mindful of Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper that all may be one so that the world may believe (cf. Jn 17:21). With these sentiments, the Holy Father invokes upon Your Beatitude an abundance of peace and joy in the Lord.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State

Letter to His Holiness Neofit, Patriarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, on the occasion of the gift of some relics of Saints Clement and Potitus

(24 March 2020)

Pope Francis gave as a gift to His Holiness Neofit, Patriarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, some relics of Saint Clement, Pope and martyr, and Saint Potitus, martyr. A longstanding tradition links Saints Clement and Potitus to Serdica, the original name of Sofia, with Saint Clement considered to have been the first bishop of the city. The ceremony of the reception of the relics took place on the morning of 27 February at the Patriarch's residence in Sofia, as a gesture of remembrance of the apostolic journey of Pope Francis to Bulgaria in May 2019. In his address conveying the holy relics, the Apostolic Nuncio in Bulgaria, Most Reverend Anselmo Guido Pecorari, recalled: "Holiness, greeting the Holy Father Pope Francis here in Sofia last 5 May, you spoke of that which united the Bulgarian Orthodox Church with the Church of Rome, while still not in full communion and within the diversity of their traditions", adding that "Saints Clement and Potitus are for us an example and an inspiration of defending the faith received by the Apostles in our respective lands". The Nuncio concluded by affirming that "these relics remind us also that Jesus has entrusted all of with the commitment to seek and to pray for the unity of Christians". In his address, the Patriarch affirmed that "it is a great blessing for our Bulgarian Orthodox Church to receive some the holy relics of the venerable Pope Clement, as a symbol of the spiritual bridge between the Church of Bulgaria and the Church of Rome". "The witness of faith of the saints and martyrs of Christ is clear evidence of our good relations, which remain and will continue to do so in peace, understanding and mutual respect", he added. On 24 March 2020, Pope Francis wrote the following letter in Italian to His Holiness Neofit.

Letter of Pope Francis

In occasione del Solenne Moleben per la collocazione delle Reliquie dei Santi Clemente Papa e Polito Martiri nell'antica chiesa di Santa Sofia in Sofia, desidero rivolgere a Vo-

stra Santità, come pure ai venerati Metropoliti e Vescovi, ai sacerdoti, ai diaconi e ai fedeli tutti, il fraterno saluto “Cristo è con noi!”.

San Clemente e San Potito, entrambi legati a codesta terra di Serdica, continuano a essere per noi, malgrado i secoli trascorsi, un esempio eloquente. Essi, infatti, ci ricordano che i martiri appartengono a tutte le Chiese e la santa sofferenza da loro patite nel martirio alimenta un “ecumenismo del sangue” che trascende le divisioni e invita tutti i cristiani a promuovere l’unità visibile dei discepoli di Cristo. Il sangue da loro versato per testimoniare la fede nel Signore Gesù è, come scriveva Tertulliano, *semen christianorum* – seme di nuovi cristiani – (cfr *Apol.*, 50,13; *CCL* 1,171) e impegna tutti noi, che veneriamo le loro Reliquie, a esprimere con uguale coraggio l’amore per Cristo e per i fratelli.

Con questi sentimenti, caro Fratello, Le porgo un caloroso abbraccio di pace, affidandomi a Suo ricordo orante.

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Message to His Holiness Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, on the Day of Friendship Between Copts and Catholics
(8 May 2020)

As we approach the annual Day of Friendship Between Copts and Catholics, I wish to express my profound joy at the ever deeper spiritual bond that unites the See of Saint Peter and the See of Saint Mark.

This bond of friendship and affection between our Churches calls to mind the well-known “Icon of friendship” of the sixth century depicting the Lord placing his hand on the shoulder of his friend, the holy monk Mena of Egypt. Indeed, our bond is rooted in the friendship of Jesus Christ himself with all his followers.

Along this path of friendship, we are inspired and sustained by the example and powerful intercession and example of the martyrs, together with all who have suffered in the name of Christ, in the conviction that “greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13). This friendship is likewise strengthened by the theological dialogue between our Churches, founded on the Lord’s words: “I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (Jn 15:15).

Beloved brother in Christ, may the Holy Spirit unite us ever more in our shared pilgrimage of Christian friendship that has as its goal the fulfilment of Christ’s prayer “that all may be one” (Jn 17:21). May Christ look kindly upon us and upon the suffering human family, as our prayers rise before him, especially in this present time of pandemic.

Assuring Your Holiness of my continued spiritual closeness, I willingly embrace you in the grace and peace of Our Risen Saviour Jesus Christ.

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**Letter to Cardinal Kurt Koch for the twenty-fifth anniversary of
Saint John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint***
(24 May 2020)

On the 25th anniversary of the encyclical "Ut unum sint", published on 25 May 1995, Pope Francis sent a letter to Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Giving thanks to the Lord for "the journey he has allowed us to travel as Christians in quest of full communion", the Holy Father renewed "gratitude to all who have worked and continue to work in the Dicastery to keep the awareness of this irrevocable goal alive in the Church". In his letter, Pope Francis mentioned in particular two recent important initiatives of the Dicastery. The first is the Ecumenical Vademecum for bishops (cf. p.225) published "as an encouragement and guide for the exercise of their ecumenical responsibilities". The second is the launch of the bulletin Acta Ecumenica which, by renewing Dicastery's Information Service, "is meant to assist all who work in the service of unity".

Letter of Pope Francis

To my dear Brother, Cardinal Kurt Koch

Tomorrow marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of Saint John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*. With his gaze fixed on the horizon of the Jubilee of 2000, Pope John Paul II desired that the Church, on her journey towards the third millennium, should be ever mindful of the heartfelt prayer of her Teacher and Lord "that all may be one" (cf. Jn 17:21). For this reason he issued the Encyclical that confirmed "irrevocably" (*UUS*, 3) the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church. He published it on the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, placing it under the sign of the Holy Spirit, the creator of unity in diversity. In that same liturgical and spiritual context, we now commemorate it, and propose it once more to the People of God.

The Second Vatican Council recognized that the movement for the restoration of unity among all Christians "arose by the grace of the Holy Spirit" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1). The Council also taught that the Spirit, while "distributing various kinds of spiritual gifts and ministries", is "the principle of the Church's unity" (*ibid.*, 2). *Ut Unum Sint* reaffirmed that "legitimate diversity is in no way opposed to the Church's unity, but rather enhances her splendour and contributes greatly to the fulfilment of her mission" (no. 50). Indeed, "only the Holy Spirit is able to kindle diversity, multiplicity and, at the same time, bring about unity... It is he who brings harmony to the Church", because, as Saint Basil the Great said, "He himself is harmony" (Homily in the Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Istanbul, 29 November 2014).

On this anniversary, I give thanks to the Lord for the journey he has allowed us to travel as Christians in quest of full communion. I too share the healthy impatience of those who sometimes think that we can and should do more. Yet we should not be lacking in faith and gratitude: many steps have been taken in these decades to heal the wounds of centuries and millennia. Mutual knowledge and esteem have grown and helped to overcome deeply rooted prejudices. Theological dialogue and the dialogue of charity have developed, as well as various forms of cooperation in the dialogue of life, at both the pastoral and cultural level. At this moment, my thoughts turn to my beloved Brothers, the heads of the different Churches and Christian communities, and to all our brothers and sisters of every Christian tradition who are our companions on this journey. Like the disciples of Emmaus, may we experience the presence of the risen Christ who

walks at our side and explains the Scriptures to us. May we recognize him in the breaking of the bread, as we await the day when we shall share the Eucharistic table together.

I renew my gratitude to all who have worked and continue to work in the Dicastery to keep the awareness of this irrevocable goal alive in the Church. I am especially pleased to recognize two recent initiatives. The first is an *Ecumenical Vademecum for Bishops* that will be published this autumn, as an encouragement and guide for the exercise of their ecumenical responsibilities. Indeed, the service of unity is an essential aspect of the mission of every Bishop, who is “the visible source and foundation of unity” in his own Particular Church (*Lumen gentium*, 23; cf. *CIC* 383 §3; *CCEO* 902-908). The second initiative is the launch of the journal *Acta Ecumenica* which, by renewing the Dicastery’s Information Service, is meant to assist all who work in the service of unity.

On the path that leads to full communion it is important to keep in mind the progress already made, but equally important to scan the horizon and ask, with the Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, “*Quanta est nobis via?*” (no. 77). One thing is certain: unity is not chiefly the result of our activity, but a gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet “unity will not come about as a miracle at the very end. Rather, unity comes about in journeying; the Holy Spirit does this on the journey” (Homily at the Celebration of Vespers, Saint Paul Outside the Walls, 25 January 2014). With confidence, then, let us ask the Holy Spirit to guide our steps and to enable everyone to hear the call to work for the cause of ecumenism with renewed vigour. May the Spirit inspire new prophetic gestures and strengthen fraternal charity among all Christ’s disciples, “that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21), to the ever greater praise of our Father in heaven.



Video Message for the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Pentecost Service
(Pentecost Sunday, 31 May 2020)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With joy, I join Archbishop Justin Welby and all of you to share some thoughts from the heart. This is Pentecost: we celebrate the day on which the Spirit of God came down with power. Since that day, God’s life dwells among us, bringing us new and previously unknown hope, peace and joy. At Pentecost God “infected” the world with life. How different this is from the contagion of death that has ravaged the earth for months now! Today, more than ever, it is necessary to implore the Holy Spirit to pour forth into our hearts the life of God, who is love. Indeed, if there is to be a better future, our hearts must change for the better.

On the day of Pentecost, people who spoke different languages assembled and encountered one another. In these months, however, we have been required to observe appropriate and necessary measures to keep our distance from one another. Yet we have also come to understand, perhaps better, what others are experiencing: we have been brought together by fear and uncertainty. How many troubled and broken hearts are in need of comfort! I think of how, when Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit, he used a particular word: Paraclete, that is, Comforter. Many of you have experienced the consolation brought by the Spirit, that inner peace which makes us feel loved, that gentle strength that always inspires courage, even amid suffering. The Spirit assures us that we

are not alone, that God sustains us. Dear friends, we must give in turn the gift that we have received: we are called to share the comfort of the Spirit, the closeness of God.

How can we do this? Let us think about all those things that we long for: comfort, encouragement, someone to care for us, someone to pray for us, someone to weep with us and help us face our difficulties. Everything we would like others to do for us, let us do for them instead (cf. Mt 7:12). Do we want to be heard? Let us first listen. Do we need encouragement? Let us give encouragement. Do we want someone to care for us? Let us care for those who are alone and abandoned. Do we need hope for tomorrow? Let us give hope today. Today our world is experiencing a tragic famine of hope. How much pain is all around us, how much emptiness, how much inconsolable grief! Let us, then, become messengers of the comfort bestowed by the Spirit. Let us radiate hope, and the Lord will open new paths as we journey towards the future.

I would like to share with you something about this journey that we are making together. How greatly I desire that, as Christians, we can be more deeply united as witnesses of mercy for the human family so severely tested in these days. Let us ask the Spirit for the gift of unity, for only if we live as brothers and sisters can we spread the spirit of fraternity. We cannot ask others to be united if we ourselves take different paths. So let us pray for one another; let us each feel responsible for the other.

The Holy Spirit bestows wisdom and good counsel. In these days let us invoke his aid upon those charged with making complex and pressing decisions, that they may defend human life and the dignity of work. For this is what must be invested in: health, employment, and the elimination of inequalities and poverty. Now as never before we need a vision rich in humanity: we cannot start up again by going back to our selfish pursuit of success without caring about those who are left behind. And even if many are doing precisely that, the Lord is asking us to change course. On the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke with a bold courage (parrhesia) prompted by the Spirit. “Repent” (Acts 2:38), he urged, be converted, change the direction of your lives. That is what we need to do: go back, turn back to God and our neighbour: no longer isolated and anaesthetized before the cry of the poor and the devastation of our planet. We need to be united in facing all those pandemics that are spreading, that of the virus, but also those of hunger, war, contempt for life, and indifference to others. Only by walking together will we be able to go far.

Dear brothers and sisters, you are proclaiming the Gospel message of life and you are a sign of hope. I thank you from my heart. I ask God to bless you and I ask you to pray that he bless me. Thank you.

—

**Lettera a Sua Santità Bartolomeo I, Patriarca Ecumenico,
dopo la festa patronale dei Santi Pietro e Paolo
(9 luglio 2020)**

Santità, amato Fratello in Cristo,

a distanza di qualche giorno dalla festa degli Apostoli Pietro e Paolo, Santi Patroni della città e della Chiesa di Roma, Le scrivo per ringraziarLa di vero cuore per la fraterna lettera di auguri che Ella ha voluto benevolmente indirizzarmi in quella circostanza.

In questo tempo di pandemia sperimento in modo sempre più intenso una profonda comunione spirituale con Vostra Santità. Non soltanto preghiamo l'uno per l'altro, ma, ne sono certo, siamo anche uniti nel presentare a Dio le stesse preoccupazioni: le vittime del *virus*, il personale medico e sanitario che si prodiga per alleviare la sofferenza dei malati, quanti patiscono le conseguenze economiche e sociali di tale situazione. Questa nostra vicinanza nella preghiera è un dono che viene dal Signore!

Chiedo a Dio di mostrarci vie sempre nuove e concrete per trasformare questa comunione spirituale che già ci unisce in una piena unità visibile e di darci il coraggio di percorrerle insieme.

Caro Fratello, con questi sentimenti di viva gratitudine e cordiale amicizia Le porgo un caloroso abbraccio di pace, affidandomi al Suo ricordo orante.

**Message to His All Holiness Bartholomew I for the Feast of Saint Andrew,
Patron Saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate**

(30 November 2020)

To His All Holiness Bartholomew
Archbishop of Constantinople
Ecumenical Patriarch

On the feast of the Apostle Andrew, beloved brother of Saint Peter and patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, I joyfully convey my spiritual closeness to Your All Holiness once again through the delegation. I join you in giving thanks to God for the rich fruits of divine providence manifest in the life of Saint Andrew. I likewise pray that through his powerful intercession our Lord, who called him to be among his first disciples, will abundantly bless you, your brothers in the episcopate and members of the Holy Synod, and all the clergy, monks and lay faithful gathered for the Divine Liturgy celebrated in the Patriarchal Church of Saint George at the Phanar. Calling to mind the charity, apostolic zeal and perseverance of Saint Andrew is a source of encouragement in these difficult and critical times. Giving glory to God also strengthens our faith and hope in the one who welcomed into eternal life the holy martyr Andrew, whose faith endured in time of trial.

I recall with great joy the presence of Your All Holiness at the international meeting for peace held in Rome on 20 October last, with the participation of representatives of various Churches and other religious traditions. Together with the challenges posed by the current pandemic, war continues to afflict many parts of the world, while new armed conflicts emerge to steal the lives of countless men and women. Undoubtedly all initiatives taken by national and international entities aimed at promoting peace are useful and necessary, yet conflict and violence will never cease until all people reach a deeper awareness that they have a mutual responsibility as brothers and sisters. In light of this, the Christian Churches, together with other religious traditions, have a primary duty to offer an example of dialogue, mutual respect and practical cooperation.

With profound gratitude to God, I have experienced this fraternity at first hand in the various encounters we have shared. In this regard, I acknowledge that the desire for ever greater closeness and understanding between Christians was manifest in the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople before the Catholic Church and other

Churches engaged themselves in dialogue. This can be seen clearly in the encyclical letter of the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate addressed to the Churches worldwide exactly one hundred years ago. Indeed, its words remain relevant today: “When the several Churches are inspired by love, and place it before everything else in their judgment of the others and in relation towards each other, they will be able, instead of increasing and widening the existing dissensions, to lessen and diminish the same as far as possible; and by promoting a constant brotherly interest in the condition, the stability, and the prosperity of the other Churches, by their eagerness in watching what is happening in those Churches, and by obtaining a more accurate knowledge of them, and by their readiness to give, whenever occasion arises, a hand of help and assistance, they then will do and achieve many good things to the glory and profit both of themselves and of the whole Christian body, and to the advance of the matter of the union”.

We can thank God that relations between the Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate have grown much over the past century, even as we continue to yearn for the goal of the restoration of full communion expressed through participation at the same Eucharistic altar. Although obstacles remain, I am confident that by walking together in mutual love and pursuing theological dialogue, we will reach that goal. This hope is based on our common faith in Jesus Christ, sent by God the Father to gather all people into one body, and the cornerstone of the one and holy Church, God’s holy temple, in which all of us are living stones, each according to our own particular charism or ministry bestowed by the Holy Spirit.

With these sentiments, I renew my warmest best wishes for the feast of Saint Andrew, and exchange with Your All Holiness an embrace of peace in the Lord.



Christmas Message to South Sudan Political Leaders Signed Together with the Archbishop of Canterbury and Moderator of the Church of Scotland
(Christmas 2020)

Their Excellencies, the Political Leaders of South Sudan
Your Excellencies,

In this Christmas season, we remember that our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world among the least - in a dusty stable with animals. Later, he called those who wish to be great in his kingdom to be the servant of all (Mark 10:43).

We remain prayerfully mindful of the commitments made at the Vatican in April 2019 - yours to bring your country to a smooth implementation of the Peace Agreement, and ours to visit South Sudan in due course, as things return to normalcy. We have been glad to see the small progress you have made, but know it is not enough for your people to feel the full effect of peace. When we visit, we long to bear witness to a changed nation, governed by leaders who, in the words of the Holy Father last year, ‘hold hands, united ... as simple citizens’ to ‘become Fathers (and Mothers) of the Nation’.

We pray, this Christmas, that you will know greater trust among yourselves and a greater generosity of service to your people. We pray you know the peace that surpasses understanding in your own hearts and in the heart of your great nation (Philippians 4:7)

HOMILIES

Vespers Concluding the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2020 (Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, 25 January 2020)

On Saturday 25 January at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, Pope Francis celebrated Second Vespers for the feast of the conversion of Saint Paul at the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Holy Father processed into the basilica accompanied by other Christian leaders who minister in the city of Rome, stopping to pray at the tomb of Saint Paul together with Orthodox Metropolitan Gennadios, representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Italy and Malta, and His Grace Ian Ernest, representative in Rome of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The leaders then stopped at the relics of Saint Timothy, which had been moved to the Basilica for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In his homily, the Holy Father stressed that the account of the Acts of the Apostles speaks to us of our quest for the unity that God so ardently desires for us: “Among Christians, each community has a gift to offer to the others. The more we look beyond partisan interests and overcome the legacies of the past in the desire to move forward towards a common landing place, the more readily we will recognize, welcome and share these gifts”. Pope Francis imparted the final blessing together with Metropolitan Gennadios and His Grace Ian Ernest.



Pope Francis at Vespers concluding Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 25 January 2020

Homily of Pope Francis

Three different groups were on board the ship that brought Saint Paul to Rome as a prisoner. The most powerful group was made up of soldiers under a centurion. Then there were the sailors, upon whom naturally everyone on board depended during the long voyage. Finally, there were the weakest and most vulnerable: the prisoners.

When the ship ran aground off the coast of Malta, after having been at the mercy of a storm for several days, the soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to ensure that no one would escape, but they were stopped by the centurion who wanted to save Paul. Although he was among the most vulnerable, Paul offered something important to his traveling companions. While everyone was losing all hope of survival, the Apostle brought an unexpected message of hope. An angel had reassured him, saying to him:

“Do not be afraid, Paul; God has granted safety to all those who sail with you” (Acts 27:24). Paul’s trust proved to be well founded, and in the end all the travellers were saved. Once they landed at Malta, they experienced the hospitality, kindness and humanity of the island’s inhabitants. This important detail provided the theme of the Week of Prayer that concludes today.

Dear brothers and sisters: this account from the Acts of the Apostles also speaks to our ecumenical journey towards that unity which God ardently desires. In the first place, it tells us that those who are weak and vulnerable, those who have little to offer materially but find their wealth in God, can present valuable messages for the good of all. Let us think of Christian communities: even the smallest and least significant in the eyes of the world, if they experience the Holy Spirit, if they are animated by love for God and neighbour, have a message to offer to the whole Christian family. Let us think of marginalized and persecuted Christian communities. As in the account of Paul’s shipwreck, it is often the weakest who bring the most important message of salvation. This was what pleased God: to save us not with the power of this world, but with the weakness of the cross (cf. 1 Cor 1:20-25). As disciples of Jesus, we must be careful not to be attracted by worldly logic, but rather to listen to the small and the weak, because God loves to send his messages through those who most resemble his Son made man.

The account in Acts reminds us of a second aspect: God’s priority is *the salvation of all*. As the angel said to Paul: “God has granted safety to all those who sail with you”. Paul insists on this point. We too need to repeat it: it is our duty to put into effect the paramount desire of God who, as Paul himself writes, “desires everyone to be saved” (1 Tim 2:4). This is an invitation not to devote ourselves exclusively to our own communities, but to open ourselves to the good of all, to the universal gaze of God who took flesh in order to embrace the whole human race and who died and rose for the salvation of all. If we, with his grace, can assimilate his way of seeing things, we can overcome our divisions. In Paul’s shipwreck, each person contributed to the salvation of all: the centurion made important decisions, the sailors put to use their knowledge and abilities, the Apostle encouraged those without hope. Among Christians as well, each community has a gift to offer to the others. The more we look beyond partisan interests and overcome the legacies of the past in the desire to move forward towards a common landing place, the more readily we will recognize, welcome and share these gifts.

We thus arrive at a third aspect that was at the centre of this Week of Prayer: *hospitality*. In the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Luke says, with regard to the inhabitants of Malta, “The natives showed us unusual kindness” (v. 2). The fire kindled on the shore to warm the shipwrecked travellers is a fine symbol of the human warmth that unexpectedly surrounded them. Even the governor of the island showed himself welcoming and hospitable to Paul, who repaid him by healing his father and later many other sick people (cf. vv. 7-9). Finally, when the Apostle and those with him departed for Italy, the Maltese generously resupplied them with provisions (v. 10).

From this Week of Prayer we want to learn to be more hospitable, in the first place among ourselves as Christians and among our brothers and sisters of different confessions. Hospitality belongs to the tradition of Christian communities and families. Our elders taught us this by their example: there was always something extra on the table of a Christian home for a passing friend or a person in need who knocked on the

door. In monasteries a guest is treated with great respect, as if he or she were Christ. Let us not lose, indeed let us revive, these customs that have the flavour of the Gospel!

Dear brothers and sisters, with these thoughts I offer my cordial and fraternal greetings to His Eminence Metropolitan Gennadios, the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to His Grace Ian Ernest, the personal representative in Rome of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and to all the representatives of the different Churches and Ecclesial Communities gathered here to conclude together the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. I greet the students of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, who are visiting Rome to deepen their knowledge of the Catholic Church. I welcome too the young people of the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches who are studying on a scholarship from the Committee for Cultural Cooperation with the Orthodox Churches, under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, to whose members I extend my greetings and gratitude. Together, without ever tiring, let us continue to pray and to beg from God the gift of full unity among ourselves.

Holy Mass on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul

(St Peter's Basilica, 29 June 2020)

During the Mass over which he presided in Saint Peter's Basilica on 29 June 2020, the Holy Father centred his homily on two key words: unity and prophecy. "From prayer [we draw] strength, from prayer comes a unity more powerful than any threat. ... Unity is the fruit of prayer, for prayer allows the Holy Spirit to intervene, opening our hearts to hope, shortening distances and holding us together at times of difficulty".

Homily of Pope Francis

On the feast of the two Apostles of this City, I would like to share with you two key words: unity and prophecy.

Unity. We celebrate together two very different individuals: Peter, a fisherman who spent his days amid boats and nets, and Paul, a learned Pharisee who taught in synagogues. When they went forth on mission, Peter spoke to Jews, and Paul to pagans. And when their paths crossed, they could argue heatedly, as Paul is unashamed to admit in one of his letters (cf. Gal 2:11). In short, they were two very different people, yet they saw one another as brothers, as happens in close-knit families where there may be frequent arguments but unfailing love. Yet the closeness that joined Peter and Paul did not come from natural inclinations, but from the Lord. He did not command us to like one another, but to love one another. He is the one who unites us, without making us all alike. He unites us in our differences.

Today's first reading brings us to the source of this unity. It relates how the newly born Church was experiencing a moment of crisis: Herod was furious, a violent persecution had broken out, and the Apostle James had been killed. And now Peter had been arrested. The community seemed headless, everyone fearing for his life. Yet at that tragic moment no one ran away, no one thought about saving his own skin, no one abandoned the others, but all *joined in prayer*. From prayer they drew strength, from prayer came a unity more powerful than any threat. The text says that, "while Peter was kept in prison, the Church prayed fervently to God for him" (Acts 12:5). Unity is the

fruit of prayer, for prayer allows the Holy Spirit to intervene, opening our hearts to hope, shortening distances and holding us together at times of difficulty.

Let us notice something else: at that dramatic moment, no one complained about Herod's evil and his persecution. No one abused Herod – and we are so accustomed to abuse those who are in charge. It is pointless, even tedious, for Christians to waste their time complaining about the world, about society, about everything that is not right. Complaints change nothing. Let us remember that complaining is the second door that closes us off from the Holy Spirit, as I said on Pentecost Sunday. The first is narcissism, the second discouragement, the third pessimism. Narcissism makes you look at yourself constantly in a mirror; discouragement leads to complaining and pessimism to thinking everything is dark and bleak. These three attitudes close the door to the Holy Spirit. Those Christians did not cast blame; rather, they prayed. In that community, no one said: "If Peter had been more careful, we would not be in this situation". No one. Humanly speaking, there were reasons to criticize Peter, but no one criticized him. They did not complain about Peter; they prayed for him. They did not talk about Peter behind his back; they talked to God. We today can ask: "Are we protecting our unity, our unity in the Church, with prayer? Are we praying for one another?" What would happen if we prayed more and complained less, if we had a more tranquil tongue? The same thing that happened to Peter in prison: now as then, so many closed doors would be opened, so many chains that bind would be broken. We would be amazed, like the maid who saw Peter at the gate and did not open it, but ran inside, astonished by the joy of seeing Peter (cf. Acts 12:10-17). Let us ask for the grace to be able to pray for one another. Saint Paul urged Christians to pray for everyone, especially those who govern (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-3). "But this governor is...", and there are many adjectives. I will not mention them, because this is neither the time nor the place to mention adjectives that we hear directed against those who govern. Let God judge them; let us pray for those who govern! Let us pray: for they need prayer. This is a task that the Lord has entrusted to us. Are we carrying it out? Or do we simply talk, abuse and do nothing? God expects that when we pray we will also be mindful of those who do not think as we do, those who have slammed the door in our face, those whom we find it hard to forgive. Only prayer unlocks chains, as it did for Peter; only prayer paves the way to unity.

Today we bless the pallia to be bestowed on the Dean of the College of Cardinals and the Metropolitan Archbishops named in the last year. The pallium is a sign of the unity between the sheep and the Shepherd who, like Jesus, carries the sheep on his shoulders, so as never to be separated from it. Today too, in accordance with a fine tradition, we are united in a particular way with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Peter and Andrew were brothers, and, whenever possible, we exchange fraternal visits on our respective feast days. We do so not only out of courtesy, but as a means of journeying together towards the goal that the Lord points out to us: that of full unity. We could not do so today because of the difficulty of travel due to the coronavirus, but when I went to venerate the remains of Peter, in my heart I felt my beloved brother Bartholomew. They are here, with us.

The second word is *prophecy*. *Unity and prophecy*. The Apostles were *challenged by Jesus*. Peter heard Jesus' question: "Who do you say I am?" (cf. Mt 16:15). At that moment he realized that the Lord was not interested in what others thought, but in Peter's personal decision to follow him. Paul's life changed after a similar challenge from Jesus: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). The Lord shook Paul to the core:

more than just knocking him to the ground on the road to Damascus, he shattered Paul's illusion of being respectably religious. As a result, the proud Saul turned into Paul, a name that means "small". These challenges and reversals are followed by prophecies: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church" (Mt 16:18); and, for Paul: "He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Prophecy is born whenever we allow ourselves to be challenged by God, not when we are concerned to keep everything quiet and under control. Prophecy is not born from my thoughts, from my closed heart. It is born if we allow ourselves to be challenged by God. When the Gospel overturns certainties, prophecy arises. Only someone who is open to God's surprises can become a prophet. And there they are: Peter and Paul, prophets who look to the future. Peter is the first to proclaim that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16). Paul, who considers his impending death: "From now on there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord will award to me" (2 Tim 4:8).

Today we need prophecy, but real prophecy: not fast talkers who promise the impossible, but testimonies that the Gospel is possible. What is needed are not miraculous shows. It makes me sad when I hear someone say, "We want a prophetic Church". All right. But what are you doing, so that the Church can be prophetic? We need lives that show the miracle of God's love. Not forcefulness, but forthrightness. Not palaver, but prayer. Not speeches, but service. Do you want a prophetic Church? Then start serving and be quiet. Not theory, but testimony. We are not to become rich, but rather to love the poor. We are not to save up for ourselves, but to spend ourselves for others. To seek not the approval of this world, of being comfortable with everyone - here we say: "being comfortable with God and the devil", being comfortable with everyone -; no, this is not prophecy. We need the joy of the world to come. Not better pastoral plans that seem to have their own self-contained efficiency, as if they were sacraments; efficient pastoral plans, no. We need pastors who offer their lives: *lovers of God*. That is how Peter and Paul preached Jesus, as men in love with God. At his crucifixion, Peter did not think about himself but about his Lord, and, considering himself unworthy of dying like Jesus, asked to be crucified upside down. Before his beheading, Paul thought only of offering his life; he wrote that he wanted to be "poured out like a libation" (2 Tim 4:6). That was prophecy. Not words. That was prophecy, the prophecy that changed history.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus prophesied to Peter: "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church". There is a similar prophecy for us too. It is found in the last book of the Bible, where Jesus promises his faithful witnesses "a white stone, on which a new name is written" (Rev 2:17). Just as the Lord turned Simon into Peter, so he is calling each one of us, in order to make us living stones with which to build a renewed Church and a renewed humanity. There are always those who destroy unity and stifle prophecy, yet the Lord believes in us and he asks you: "Do you want to be a builder of unity? Do you want to be a prophet of my heaven on earth?" Brothers and sisters, let us be challenged by Jesus, and find the courage to say to him: "Yes, I do!"

**Ecumenical Prayer Service at International Meeting of Prayer for Peace:
“No one is saved alone – Peace and Fraternity”**
(Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome, 20 October 2020)

An ecumenical prayer service at the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli was held within the context of the International Meeting of Prayer for Peace organized by the Community of Sant'Egidio held on 20 October 2020 (cf. p.13). The prayer service was attended by Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew together with Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, President of the Council of the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD), and leaders of other various Christian traditions, including Archbishop Ian Ernest, Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury in Rome, Metropolitan Joseph (Pop) of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Eichmiadzjin), Bishop Ambrose (Muntjanu) of the Russian Orthodox Church, Pastor Luca Maria Negro, President of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI), Deacon Alessandra Trotta, Moderator of the Waldensian Table, Pastor Mirella Manocchio, President of Italian Methodist Churches, and Pastor Michael Jonas of the Lutheran Church in Rome. The Holy Father delivered the following homily during the prayer service.



Ecumenical prayer service, Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, 20 October 2020

Homily of Pope Francis

It is a gift to pray together. I greet all of you cordially and with gratitude, especially my brother, His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and dear Bishop Heinrich, President of the Council of the Evangelical Church of Germany. Sadly, Justin, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was unable to be here because of the pandemic.

The passage from the account of the Lord's Passion that we have just heard comes shortly before Jesus' death. It speaks of the temptation he experienced amid the agony of the cross. At the supreme moment of his sufferings and love, many of those present cruelly taunted him with the words: "Save yourself!" (Mk 15:30). This is a great temptation. It spares no one, including us Christians. The temptation to think only of saving ourselves and our own circle. To focus only on our own problems and interests, as if nothing else mattered. It is a very human instinct, but wrong. It was the final temptation of the crucified God.

Save yourself. These words were spoken first “by those who passed by” (v. 29). They were ordinary people, those who had heard Jesus teach and who witnessed his miracles. Now they are telling him, “Save yourself, come down from the cross”. They had no pity, they only wanted miracles; they wanted to see Jesus descend from the cross. Sometimes we too prefer a wonder-working god to one who is compassionate, a god powerful in the eyes of the world, who shows his might and scatters those who wish us ill. But this is not God, but our own creation. How often do we want a god in our own image, rather than to become conformed to his own image. We want a god like ourselves, rather than becoming ourselves like God. In this way, we prefer the worship of ourselves to the worship of God. Such worship is nurtured and grows through *indifference toward others*. Those passersby were only interested in Jesus for the satisfaction of their own desires. Jesus, reduced to an outcast hanging on the cross, was no longer of interest to them. He was before their eyes, yet far from their hearts. Indifference kept them far from the true face of God.

Save yourself. The next people to speak those words were the chief priests and the scribes. They were the ones who had condemned Jesus, for they considered him dangerous. All of us, though, are specialists in crucifying others to save ourselves. Yet Jesus allowed himself to be crucified, in order to teach us not to shift evil to others. The chief priests accused him precisely because of what he had done for others: “He saved *others* and cannot save himself”(v. 31). They knew Jesus; they remembered the healings and liberating miracles he performed, but they drew a malicious conclusion. For them, saving others, coming to their aid, is useless; Jesus, who gave himself unreservedly for others was himself lost! The mocking tone of the accusation is garbed in religious language, twice using the verb *to save*. But the “gospel” of *save yourself* is not the Gospel of salvation. It is the falsest of the apocryphal gospels, making others carry the cross. Whereas the true Gospel bids us take up the cross of others.

Save yourself. Finally, those who were crucified alongside Jesus also joined in taunting him. How easy it is to criticize, to speak against others, to point to the evil in others but not in ourselves, even to blaming the weak and the outcast! But why were they upset with Jesus? Because he did not take them down from the cross they said to him: “Save yourself *and us!*” (Lk 23:39). They looked to Jesus only to resolve their problems. Yet God does not come only to free us from our ever-present daily problems, but rather to liberate us from the real problem, which is the lack of love. This is the primary cause of our personal, social, international and environmental ills. Thinking only of ourselves: this is the father of all evils. Yet one of the thieves then looks at Jesus and sees in him a humble love. He entered heaven by doing one thing alone: turning his concern from himself to Jesus, from himself to the person next to him (cf. v. 42).

Dear brothers and sisters, Calvary was the site of a great “duel” between God, who came to save us, and man, who wants to save only himself; between faith in God and worship of self; between man who accuses and God who excuses. In the end, God’s victory was revealed; his mercy came down upon the earth. From the cross forgiveness poured forth and fraternal love was reborn: “the Cross makes us brothers and sisters” (Benedict XVI, Address at the Way of the Cross at the Colosseum, 21 March 2008). Jesus’ arms, outstretched on the cross, mark the turning point, for God points a finger at no one, but instead embraces all. For love alone extinguishes hatred, love alone can ultimately triumph over injustice. Love alone makes room for others. Love alone is the path towards full communion among us.

Let us look upon the crucified God and ask him to grant us the grace to be more united and more fraternal. When we are tempted to follow the way of this world, may we be reminded of Jesus's words: "Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's will save it" (Mk 8:35). What is counted loss in the eyes of the world is, for us, salvation. May we learn from the Lord, who saved us by emptying himself (cf. Phil 2:7) and *becoming other*: from being God, he became man; from spirit, he became flesh; from a king, he became a slave. He asks us to do the same, to humble ourselves, to "become other" in order to reach out to others. The closer we become to the Lord Jesus, the more we will be open and "universal", since we will feel responsible for others. And others will become the means of our own salvation: all others, every human person, whatever his or her history and beliefs. Beginning with the poor, who are those most like Christ. The great Archbishop of Constantinople, Saint John Chrysostom, once wrote: "If there were no poor, the greater part of our salvation would be overthrown" (*On the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, XVII, 2). May the Lord help us to journey together on the path of fraternity, and thus to become credible witnesses of the living God.

OTHER

Pope Francis reflects on Christian Unity in his Catechesis at General Audience

(22 January 2020)

During his general audience on Wednesday 22 January, Pope Francis dedicated his catechesis to “hospitality”, the theme of this year’s Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Holy Father stressed that “hospitality is an important ecumenical virtue, as above all it means recognizing that other Christians are truly our brothers and sisters in Christ”.

Text of Pope Francis

Today’s catechesis is in keeping with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year’s theme, *hospitality*, was prepared by the communities of Malta and Gozo, starting with the first passage in the Acts of the Apostles which tells of the hospitality shown by the people of Malta to Saint Paul and his travelling companions who had been shipwrecked with him.

...

My dearest ones, hospitality is important. And it is also an *important ecumenical virtue*. First of all it means recognizing that other Christians are truly our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are brothers and sisters. Some might say: “But he is Protestant, he is Orthodox ...”. Yes, but we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. It is not a one way act of generosity because when we welcome other Christians, we welcome them as a gift that is given to us. Like the Maltese — these Maltese were good — we are rewarded because we receive what the Holy Spirit has sown in these brothers and sisters and this also becomes a gift for us because the Holy Spirit too sows his graces everywhere. Welcoming Christians from another tradition means firstly showing God’s love to them because they are children of God — our brothers and sisters — and moreover, it means welcoming what God has done in their lives. Ecumenical hospitality requires the willingness to listen to others, to pay attention to their personal stories of faith and to the respective history of their communities, communities of faith with another tradition that is different from ours. Ecumenical hospitality involves the desire to know the experience that other Christians have of God and waiting to receive the spiritual gifts that follow from that. And this is a grace. To discover this is a grace. I think of the past, of my land for example. When evangelical missionaries arrived, a small group of Catholics would burn their tents. Not this: it is not Christian. We are brothers and sisters, we are all brothers and sisters and we have to show hospitality to each other.

...

As Christians we must work together to show migrants God’s love revealed by Jesus Christ. We can and we must bear witness that there are not just hostility and indifference but that every person is precious to God and loved by him. The divisions that still exist among us prevent us from fully being a sign of God’s love. Working together to exercise ecumenical hospitality, in particular to those whose lives are most vulnerable, will make us all Christians— Protestants, Orthodox, Catholics, all Christians — better human beings, better disciples and a more united Christian people. It will bring us closer to unity which is God’s will for all of us.

**Ecumenical dimension of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation
'Querida Amazonia'**
(2 February 2020)

Gathering the results of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region on the theme: “Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for Integral Ecology”, which took place from 6–27 October 2019, Pope Francis issued the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*.

The fourth chapter concludes with a specific section on “Ecumenical and Interreligious Coexistence” (§§106–110) and deals in particular with the call to Christians to seek ways of working together in shared Christian witness. Pope Francis invites all Christians “to find occasions to speak to one another and to act together for the common good” (§106). Pope Francis affirms: “All this unites us. How can we not struggle together? How can we not pray and work together, side by side, to defend the poor of the Amazon region, to show the sacred countenance of the Lord, and to care for his work of creation?” The Holy Father takes care to ensure that there must be no fear of losing one’s identity in this regard. Indeed, “If we believe that the Holy Spirit can work amid differences, then we will try to let ourselves be enriched by that insight, while embracing it from the core of our own convictions and our own identity. For the deeper, stronger and richer that identity is, the more we will be capable of enriching others with our own proper contribution” (§106).

Praying the “Our Father” together for the end of the pandemic
(25 March 2020)

At midday 25 March 2020, when many celebrated the feast of the Annunciation, in an unprecedented gesture, Pope Francis simultaneously with many other Heads of Churches, leaders of Christian communities, and Christians from different traditions, prayed together the “Our Father” for the end of the pandemic. Invoking together their Almighty Father, Christians from East and West, North and South, took part in the initiative, including among many others the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the Coptic Pope Tawadros II, the Armenian Patriarch Karekin II, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and other Anglican leaders, Reverend Dr Fykse Tveit of the World Council of Churches, Reverend Dr Martin Junge of the Lutheran World Federation, and Bishop Ivan Abrahams of the World Methodist Council, joined by many leaders of the Pentecostal, Evangelical, and Reformed traditions, as well as Catholics around the world.

In his introduction to the prayer gathering Christians, “of every Church and Community, of every tradition, of every age, language and nation”, the Holy Father invoked mercy on all of humanity in the crisis of the pandemic, recalling the ill and their families, health care workers, civil authorities and law enforcement officers, volunteers, and the ministers of Christian communities. Reflecting on the Annunciation, Pope Francis asked that we too entrust ourselves in hope to the hands of God, praying together with one heart and soul the “Our Father”.



Pope Francis prays the “Our Father” in spiritual closeness with Christians around the world, 25 March 2020

Introduction of Pope Francis to the Lord’s Prayer

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we made an appointment with all Christians throughout the world to pray together the ‘Our Father’, the prayer that Jesus taught us.

As trusting children, we address our Father. We do it every day, several times a day. However, at this time, we want to implore mercy for humanity, so greatly tried by the coronavirus pandemic. And we do it together, Christians of every Church and Community, of every tradition, age, language and nation.

Let us pray for the sick and their families; for healthcare workers and those who assist them, for the authorities, law enforcement agencies and volunteers and for the ministers of our community.

Many of us today are celebrating the Incarnation of the Word in the womb of the Virgin Mary, when her humble and total [reply]: “Here I am”, reflected in the “Here I am” of the Son of God. We too entrust ourselves into God’s hands in full confidence and with one heart and one soul, let us pray:

Pater Noster

—

Message for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

(1 September 2020)

Pope Francis published his customary Message for the sixth “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation” celebrated on 1 September on the theme this year of “Jubilee for the Earth”. In his message, the Holy Father expressed his delight that “faith communities are coming together to create a more just, peaceful and sustainable world” and that “the Season of Creation is becoming a truly ecumenical initiative”.

The decision to institute the Day was announced by Pope Francis in a letter of 6 August 2015 to Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and to Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

In this letter, the Holy Father stated that he shared with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew “the same concern for the future of creation”, and that he welcomed the suggestion of his representative, Metropolitan John of Pergamum, to celebrate this day on the same date as the Orthodox Church. “The celebration of this Day, on the same date as the Orthodox Church, will be a valuable opportunity to bear witness to our growing communion with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. We live at a time when all Christians are faced with the same decisive challenges, to which we must respond together, in order to be more credible and effective”, wrote Pope Francis.

**During Angelus Pope Francis recalls visit to Lesbos with
Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Hieronymos**
(13 September 2020)

In expressing his solidarity and closeness to the victims of the fire that devastated the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, Pope Francis recalled during the Angelus on Sunday 13 September his historical visit to the island together with Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Hieronymos on 16 April 2016, at which time they launched a common appeal. Pope Francis reflected:

“Recently a series of fires has devastated the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, leaving thousands of people without refuge, albeit precarious. I have a vivid recollection of my visit there and the appeal launched together with the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Hieronymos of Athens, aimed at ensuring that a “humane reception in Europe” is offered to migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. I express my solidarity and closeness to all the victims in these dramatic circumstances”.

Ecumenical reflection in the Encyclical Letter “Fratelli tutti”
(3 October 2020)

In his new encyclical Fratelli tutti signed at the tomb of Saint Francis on 3 October, Pope Francis speaks of the contribution of Christian unity to the wider unity of all humanity in the following words: “We ask God to strengthen unity within the Church, a unity enriched by differences reconciled by the working of the Spirit. For ‘in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body’ (1 Cor 12:13), in which each member has his or her distinctive contribution to make. As Saint Augustine said, ‘the ear sees through the eye, and the eye hears through the ear’. It is also urgent to continue to bear witness to the journey of encounter between the different Christian confessions. We cannot forget Christ’s desire ‘that they may all be one’ (cf. Jn 17:21). Hearing his call, we recognize with sorrow that the process of globalization still lacks the prophetic and spiritual contribution of unity among Christians”. The Holy Father continues this ecumenical reflection by quoting the Common Declaration he signed in 2014 with Patriarch Bartholomew: “Even as we make this journey towards full communion, we already have the

duty to offer common witness to the love of God for all people by working together in the service of humanity". Pope Francis concludes his encyclical with the following ecumenical prayer:

An Ecumenical Christian Prayer

O God, Trinity of love,
from the profound communion of your divine life,
pour out upon us a torrent of fraternal love.
Grant us the love reflected in the actions of Jesus,
in his family of Nazareth,
and in the early Christian community.
Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel,
discovering Christ in each human being,
recognizing him crucified
in the sufferings of the abandoned
and forgotten of our world,
and risen in each brother or sister
who makes a new start.
Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty,
reflected in all the peoples of the earth,
so that we may discover anew
that all are important and all are necessary,
different faces of the one humanity
that God so loves. Amen.

“Exchange of gifts” series (Libreria Editrice Vaticana) (24 November 2020)

The “Exchange of Gifts” series of the Vatican Publishing House (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, LEV) draws together a collection of Pope Francis’ statements on the way in which faith can be transformed into tangible acts of charity. The latest in the series entitled “Il Cielo sulla Terra: Amare e Servire per la trasformazione del mondo” (“Heaven on earth: Loving and serving in order to transform the world”) was published in November 2020 and included a Preface by Reverend Dr Martin Junge, Secretary General of the Lutheran World Federation, in which he writes “[In this book] the bond that is constitutive of the human family shapes our Christian vocation”. It is a commitment that involves common service for the least among us and for the suffering: “Together we bear witness to God’s mercy both through the confession of faith and through our common service to the world.”

The “Exchange of Gifts” series has an ecumenical focus, with most volumes including a preface written by representative of other Churches or Ecclesial Communities. The first two volumes of the series were prefaced respectively by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and by Patriarch Kirill of the Moscow Patriarchate. The third was prefaced by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

ACTIVITIES OF THE DICASTERY

THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUES

Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches

(Atchaneh, Lebanon, 26 January–1 February 2020)

The seventeenth meeting of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches took place in Atchaneh, Lebanon, from 26 January to 1 February 2020, hosted by the Antiochian Syrian Orthodox Church in the patriarchal residence. In keeping with the program of the dialogue, this session was devoted to fundamental aspects of sacramental theology. On 27 January, the members were received in audience by His Holiness Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. The report issued at the conclusion of the meeting is provided here.



His Holiness Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II meets with members of the Commission, 27 January 2020

REPORT

The seventeenth meeting of the International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches took place in Atchaneh, Lebanon, from January 26 to February 1, 2020. It was hosted by the Antiochian Syrian Orthodox Church in the patriarchal residence. The meeting was chaired jointly by His Eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and by His Grace Bishop Kyrillos, Coptic Orthodox Auxiliary Bishop in the Diocese of Los Angeles, California, USA.

Representatives came from the Catholic Church and from the following Oriental Orthodox Churches: the Antiochian Syrian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate of All Armenians and Catholicosate of the Holy See of Cilicia), the Coptic Orthodox Church, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Representatives of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church were not present.

The two delegations met separately on the morning of January 27 and again in the evening of January 29. Plenary sessions were held from January 27 to January 31, each day beginning with a brief prayer service based on material prepared for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

At the beginning of the first plenary session, Cardinal Koch remembered prayerfully an original member of the dialogue, Most Reverend Paul-Werner Scheele, Bishop Emeritus of Würzburg, Germany, who had passed into eternal life on May 10, 2019. The Cardinal also announced that a new Catholic member had been appointed: Maronite Chorbishop John D. Faris of Glen Allen, Virginia, USA. Cardinal Koch also acknowledged the retirement of Most Reverend Woldetensae Ghebregiorghis, Apostolic Vicar Emeritus of Harar, Ethiopia. He has been replaced by Most Reverend Lesanuchristos Matheos Semahun, Bishop of Bahir Dar-Dessie, Ethiopia.

In the afternoon of January 27, the members were received in audience by His Holiness Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II of the Syrian Orthodox Church. He greeted the members warmly and said that this dialogue is very important for his church. He also spoke about the situation of his church in India which is particularly sensitive at the present time. The Patriarch hosted the members for dinner that evening.

On January 28, His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius Youssef III Younan hosted a dinner for the members at the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate in Beirut. A number of local church leaders were in attendance including the Apostolic Nuncio in Lebanon, Archbishop Joseph Spiteri.

In the morning of January 30, Cardinal Koch and Bishop Kyrillos along with a small delegation of three were received by His Excellency Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, in Baabda. In the afternoon of the same day, all the members were received by the Maronite Patriarch, Cardinal Bechara Boutros al-Rai, OMM in his residence in Bkerke. The Patriarch spoke about the general situation in Lebanon and the Middle East. The members then visited the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lebanon in Harissa.

In keeping with the program of the dialogue, this session was devoted to fundamental aspects of sacramental theology. The members heard five Oriental Orthodox papers by Bishop Kyrillos, Metropolitan Theophilose Kuriakose, Reverend Shahe Ananyan, Reverend Daniel Seifemichael Feleke, and Metropolitan Theophilos George Saliba. Four Catholic papers were presented by Reverend Frans Bouwen, M. Afr., Reverend Columba Stewart, O.S.B., Professor Dietmar W. Winkler, and Chorbishop John D. Faris.

The members affirmed together that the mystery of God's design of salvation is revealed in history by audible words and tangible signs and actions that refer and give access to a higher reality. History thus becomes a history of salvation that reaches its culmination in Jesus Christ, who by his words and actions, in particular by his death and resurrection, is the full revelation and self-communication of God's mystery. Christ is the mystery in person.

The fruits of the revelation and the redemptive work of Christ are dispensed to the believers in the Church, through visible signs and actions that signify and communicate an invisible grace that allows them to be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Within this economy of salvation, the Church has privileged some specific acts and celebrations that are essential for the sanctification or deification of the believer and the building up of the Body of Christ, and thus are called sacraments or mysteries in a specific sense of the word.

In both the Oriental and Western traditions, mystery is a visible or tangible object or event that points to a higher reality. The Greek word *mysterion* was translated as *sacramentum* in the early Latin translations of the Bible, parallel to the transliteration of the Greek term as *mysterium*. The Syriac term *rozo*, the Armenian *kborhourd*, the Ethiopian *mestir*, just as the Coptic and Greek *mysterion*, also designate the mysteries of the Triune God, the Incarnation and Redemption as well as the liturgical acts through which God's salvific blessings are dispensed in the Church.

Over the centuries, the Fathers of the Church and theologians of all our Churches became more aware of the theological meaning of the mystery of God's efficacy within the sacred rites of the Church. The terms *mysterion/sacramentum/rozo/kborhourd/mestir*, as defined and used in the patristic period as a visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given to us, did not make it possible to limit sacraments to a specific number. Thus, all our Churches have been recognizing various numbers of sacred and liturgical rites and blessings as having a sacramental nature. At a later stage, the Western tradition identified seven sacred and liturgical rites as sacraments, while the other blessings were called sacramentals. As was the case in the Catholic Church, the Oriental Orthodox Churches likewise articulated a list of seven sacraments. In all of our traditions the seven sacraments (Baptism, Chrismation/Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Holy Orders, Matrimony and Anointing of the Sick) are believed to be instituted by Christ, established by the Apostles, preserved and handed down by the Holy Fathers and faithfully celebrated in the Church. Among these seven, the Eucharist is understood as the Sacrament of Sacraments.

The intention of the number seven is to not to limit but to describe the fullness of God's Grace and the perfection of God's saving work. The holy figure seven is one of the most significant in the Bible and also identified as the union of God with his creation, with three signifying the Holy Trinity and four the whole creation. The core of this definition is that sacramental life is a participation in the mystery of God's salvific work through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The members discussed various aspects of sacramental discipline, including the question of who ministers the sacrament, who can receive a sacrament, and other canonical issues related to matrimony. While all of the baptized faithful participate in the celebration of the sacraments, some by ordination to the ministerial priesthood administer the sacraments to the faithful. The members noted that only in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church can deacons administer baptisms and officiate at

marriages. A further difference is that in the Roman Catholic understanding, in marriage the couple are the ministers of the sacrament rather than an officiating bishop or priest, whereas in the Oriental Catholic Churches and Oriental Orthodox Churches the minister of sacraments must be a priest or bishop.

The Churches reaffirmed that only the baptized faithful can receive a sacrament. While the Roman Catholic Church acknowledges the validity of marriages between the baptized and non-baptized, these are not considered to be sacramental marriages. Because matrimony in particular presents numerous canonical and pastoral questions, the members discussed the approaches of their Churches to these issues.

The next meeting will take place in Rome, hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Arrivals on January 24 and departures on January 30, 2021.

The members of the Commission are:

Representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches (in alphabetical order)

Antiochian Syrian Orthodox Church:

H.E. Mar Theophilus George Saliba, Archbishop of Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Lebanon;
H.E. Kuriakose Mar Theophilose, Metropolitan of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Theological Seminary and President of the Ecumenical Secretariat of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church in India, Ernakulam, India;
H.G. Bishop Mor Polycarpus Aydin (observer).

Armenian Apostolic Church: Catholicosate of all Armenians:

H.E. Khajag Barsamian, Pontifical Legate for Western Europe and Official Representative of the Armenian Church to the Vatican;
Reverend Father Shahe Ananyan, Director of the Interchurch Relationships Department, Etchmiadzin, Armenia (not present).

Armenian Apostolic Church: Catholicosate of the Holy See of Cilicia:

H.E. Bishop Magar Ashkarian, Antelias, Lebanon;
Reverend Father Boghos Tinkjian, Dean of the Armenian Theological Seminary, Antelias, Lebanon.

Coptic Orthodox Church:

H.G. Bishop Kyrillos (Co-Chair), Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles,
Reverend Father Shenouda Maher Ishak, West Henrietta, New York, USA;
H.G. Bishop Daniel of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Sydney, Australia (Observer);
H.G. Bishop Barnaba El Soryany, Rome, Italy (Observer).

Eritrean Orthodox Tenabedo Church:

No representative was able to attend.

Ethiopian Orthodox Tenabedo Church:

Archbishop Gabriel of Sidamo (not present);
Reverend Father Daniel Seifemichael Feleke of Holy Trinity Theological University College and Director of Broadcasting Service in Addis Ababa.

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church:

H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, Northeast Diocese of America (not present);

H.E. Metropolitan Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios (co-secretary), Metropolitan of the Diocese of Delhi, India (not present).

Representatives of the Catholic Church

His Eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (co-chair);

Most Reverend Youhanna Golta, Patriarchal Auxiliary Bishop of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate, Cairo, Egypt (not present);

Most Reverend Peter Marayati, Armenian Catholic Archbishop of Aleppo, Syria;

Most Reverend Paul Rouhana, OLM, Bishop of the Patriarchal Maronite Vicariate of Sarba, Jounieh, Lebanon;

Most Reverend Lesanuchristos Matheos Semahun, Bishop of Bahir Dar-Dessie, Ethiopia;

Most Reverend Boghos Levon Zekiyan, Archbishop of Istanbul and Turkey for the Catholic Armenians;

Reverend Father Frans Bouwen, M.Afr., Sainte-Anne, Jerusalem;

Chorbishop John D. Faris, JCOD, Saint Anthony Maronite Catholic Church, Glen Allen, Virginia, USA;

Reverend Father Habib Mrad, Patriarchal Secretary and Chancellor, Syriac Catholic Patriarchate, Beirut;

Reverend Father Ronald G. Roberson, CSP, Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, USA;

Reverend Father Mark Sheridan, OSB, Collegio di S. Anselmo, Rome;

Reverend Father Columba Stewart, OSB, Executive Director, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, Professor of Theology, Saint John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minnesota, USA;

Reverend Malpan Father Mathew Vellanickal, Spirituality Center, Manganam, Kottayam, India;

Prof. Dietmar W. Winkler, Consultant to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Salzburg, Austria.

Reverend Father Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP, Official of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Rome (co-secretary).

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Methodist–Roman Catholic International Commission (MERCIC)

Drafting Meeting

(Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, 3–7 March 2020)

Members from the Methodist–Roman Catholic International Commission (MERCIC) met in Duke University, Durham, North Carolina from 3–7 March in order to prepare a draft text for the forthcoming Commission plenary in October 2020. The Commission is currently in its eleventh round and working on the theme of reconciliation. Normally each round of dialogue consists of four plenary meetings so that the Commission can present its work to the World Methodist Council (WMC) and Conference which meets every five years. The next WMC meeting will take place in Gothenburg, Sweden, from 18–21 August 2021, and therefore the next MERCIC plenary to be held

in Jerusalem 9–16 October will be the last plenary at which to agree the Commission’s report.

The participants prepared a draft of four chapters. The first chapter deals with reconciliation as a model of salvation. The second chapter looks at the structures of our respective churches as means of reconciliation, holding the faithful in unity whilst allowing and reconciling legitimate diversity. The third chapter examines the rites of reconciliation practised by both communions and the fourth chapter considers the Church’s mission of reconciliation to the world.

Four members of the Commission met in Duke: Revd Dr David Chapman, Methodist co–chair; Revd Professor Edgardo Colon–Emeric; Professor Catherine Clifford; and Revd Anthony Curren, Catholic co–secretary. Two members were unable to travel due to illness but joined the meeting by video conferencing, namely Revd Professor Karen Westerfield Tucker, Methodist co–secretary, and the Right Revd John Sherrington, Catholic co–chair.

The drafting team members were particularly grateful to Revd Prof Edgardo Colon–Emeric and his wife Kathleen for their generous hospitality throughout the week and to the community of Duke University Catholic Centre for hosting them to dinner.



From left: Revd Dr David Chapman, Professor Catherine Clifford, Revd Anthony Curren and Revd Professor Edgardo Colon–Emeric, MERCIC Drafting Meeting, Durham (NC), 3–7 March 2020

Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III)

(Online, 12–15 May 2020)

Despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, like other dialogues, held its plenary session, originally scheduled to meet in Northern Italy, as an online meeting over four days (12–15 May). The Commission is preparing for two further online meetings later in the year. Work for these meetings will be prepared by subgroups of the Commission also working through online meetings. In this way it is hoped that ARCIC can maintain momentum in working towards an agreed statement on how, in communion, the local and universal church discerns right ethical teaching. A communiqué was issued at the conclusion of the meeting.



Participants in the ARCIC III online plenary meeting, 12–15 May 2020

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission was due to meet this year in the monastery of Bose in Northern Italy from 9–16 May. Due to the coronavirus pandemic it was impossible for members to travel to this venue and so the Commission convened virtually online. We are grateful to the community of Bose for its generosity and understanding that we were not able to meet in person. To enable the participation of members from around the world and across many time zones (New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, Canada and the United States) the Commission met over four days (12–15 May) for two hours, beginning at 12 noon London time each day. Various sub-groups also met directly before and after these plenary meetings. Each day’s meeting began with a time of prayer, and the group remembered in particular Bishop Robert Christian, OP, who sadly died after the last plenary in Jerusalem.

ARCIC III’s mandate identified “two interrelated areas as critical for further work: the Church as Communion, local and universal, and how in communion the local and universal Church come to discern right ethical teaching”. The Commission addressed the first ecclesiological part of its mandate in the agreed statement, *Walking Together on the Way* published in 2018. ARCIC’s focus now, therefore, is the processes of ethical discernment operative in the communion of the Church. Much of the work of the virtual plenary meeting centred on the schema developed by a sub-group during ARCIC’s 2019 plenary in Jerusalem and since adopted by the whole Commission. Papers were prepared on how discernment is understood within each tradition, the status of ethical teaching, and to what extent ethical differences have proved Church-dividing in Christian history. The Commission also heard presentations regarding the sources and discernment of the Church’s social teaching.

In its final meeting the Commission considered its future work and decided to refine the schema with a view to two further virtual meetings in the autumn of this year, and then for a drafting group to prepare a text for the plenary in 2021 (8-15 May).

Anglican Co-Chair

The Most Revd Dr Philip Freier

Catholic Co-Chair

Most Reverend Bernard Longley

Anglican Members

Dr Moeawa Callaghan
The Revd Dr Isaias Ezequiel Cachine
The Revd Canon Garth Minott
The Most Revd Linda Nicholls
The Revd Dr Alexander Ross
The Revd Dr Peter Sedgwick
The Rt Revd Christopher Hill (Consultant)

Catholic Members

Sister Margaret Atkins OSA
Reverend Father Albino Barrera OP
Reverend Father Paul Béré SJ
Dr Kristin Colberg
Professor Sigrid Müller
Dr Emmanuel Nathan
Reverend Father Vimal Tirimanna CSsR
Professor Paul Murray (Consultant)

WCC Observer

Professor Dr Myriam Wijlens

Staff

The Revd Dr William Adam (Anglican Co-Secretary)
Reverend Anthony Currer (Catholic Co-Secretary)
The Ven Jonathan Gough (Minutes)
The Revd Neil Vigers (Anglican Communion Office)

Changes to the Commission:

Very sadly the Most Reverend Robert Christian, OP, died suddenly in July 2019. Due to pressures of work Dr Paula Gooder has had to resign from the Commission and Sister Margaret Atkins announced that she also feels unable to continue due to other commitments.

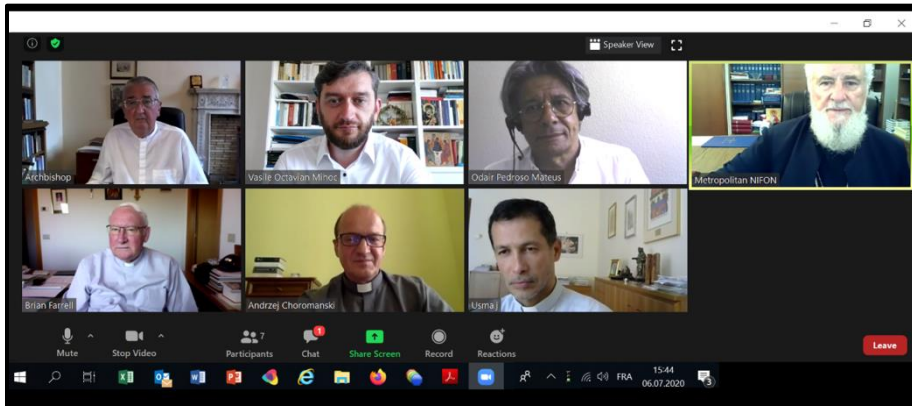
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Executive Committee Meeting of the Joint Working Group Between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches

(Online meeting, 6 July 2020)

The Executive Committee of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC) held an online meeting on 6 July 2020. Among the topics discussed were the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the life of churches and ecumenical relations, the two studies with recommendations to churches currently in preparation (“Peace is a Treasure for All – An Ecumenical Reflection on Peace Building in Situations of Conflict and Violence” and “Migrants and Refugees – Ecumenical Challenges and Opportunities”), and the final report on its activities as it approaches the end of the current mandate. The Catholic Church was represented by Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin and Co-Moderator of the JWG, Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the PCPCU, Monsignor Juan Usma Gómez and Reverend Andrzej Choromanski. The

WCC was represented by Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște, member of the WCC Central Committee and Co-Moderator of the JWG, Reverend Professor Dr Ioan Sauca, interim Secretary General of the WCC, Reverend Odair Pedroso Mateus, interim Deputy Secretary General of the WCC and Director of Faith and Order, and Dr Vasile Octavian Miboc. A communiqué was issued at the conclusion of the meeting.



Participants in the online meeting of JWG Executive Committee, 6 July 2020

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Executive Committee of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC) met online via zoom on Monday, 6 July 2020 under the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop and Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște, Romanian Orthodox Church, and Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, who led the group in the opening prayer. The first session of the meeting was attended by Reverend Professor Dr Ioan Sauca, the new interim Secretary General of the WCC. The meeting started with an exchange on how different ecclesial contexts are facing the current crisis caused by the coronavirus. The participants acknowledged that the worldwide precautionary measures and ordinances during the lockdown had created a kind of ecumenical solidarity, with churches around the globe experiencing the same challenge of finding new ways to worship and to carry on their missionary and pastoral work. The group then discussed the final stages of the two studies with recommendations to the churches which the JWG has undertaken, on “Peacebuilding in Situations of Conflict” and “Migrants and Refugees – Ecumenical Challenges and Opportunities”. Members of the Executive acknowledged the global relevance of both topics while at the same time confirming the need for the contextualization of both texts in light of the new situation caused by the pandemic. Time was given to discussing the remaining steps of finalizing the text of the Tenth Report to be issued at the end of the current mandate. Finally, given the postponement of the eleventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches to 2022 and the related extension of the current mandate of the JWG, the group reviewed the timetable of the coming meetings of this important instrument of collaboration between the two partners. The next Executive will be held online in November 2020, while the next Plenary is planned for Spring 2021. The meeting concluded with a time of prayer led by Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște.

Catholics, Lutherans, Mennonites: Conversations
Communiqué on Final Report
(28 July 2020)

Representatives of the Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Mennonite World Conference met periodically from 2012-2017. These trilateral Conversations focused on the understanding and practice of Baptism in light of contemporary missional challenges facing these Christian communities. The final report entitled Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church (cf. p.287) summarizes the outcome of these Conversations. The text was published together with a Catholic Commentary authored by Professor Peter Casarella (Duke University, USA). The report is published as a study document in the hope that through wide diffusion, both within the three communities and among Christians in general, it will contribute to better mutual understanding on the mystery of Baptism and greater faithfulness to Jesus Christ. The publication of the report was announced by a joint communiqué (below) issued for the publication of the report.



Members of the Trilateral Conversations between Catholics, Lutherans and Mennonites, 4 March 2016

COMMUNIQUÉ

Representatives of the Catholic Church (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), the Lutheran World Federation, and the Mennonite World Conference met from 2012-2017 in the context of an international trilateral dialogue on the understanding and practice of Baptism in light of contemporary missional challenges facing all three Christian communities.

The final report of the conversations summarizes the rich discussions that took place over those six years on three fundamental themes: 1) the relation of Baptism to sin and grace; 2) the celebration of Baptism and the communication of grace and faith in the context of the Christian community; 3) the living out of Baptism in Christian discipleship. Together the three communions now publish the report as a study document in the hope that, through wide discussion both within the three communities and beyond, it will contribute to better mutual understanding and greater faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

Participants in the meetings on behalf of the Mennonites were Prof. Dr Alfred Neufeld † (co-chair, Paraguay); Prof. Dr Fernando Enns (Germany); Revd Rebecca

Adongo Osiro (Kenya); Prof. Dr John Rempel (Canada); Revd Dr Larry Miller (co-secretary, France/USA).

Lutheran delegation members were Prof. Dr Friederike Nüssel (co-chair, Germany); Bishop Emeritus Dr Musawenkosi Biyela (South Africa); Prof. Dr Theodor Dieter (France); Revd Prof. Peter Li (Hong Kong-China); Revd Raj Bharath Patta (India/UK); and Revd Dr Kaisamari Hintikka (co-secretary, Finland/Switzerland).

Catholic Church delegation members were Archbishop Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga, IMC (co-chair, Colombia); Revd Prof. William Henn, OFM Cap (USA/Italy); Revd Prof. Luis Melo, SM (Canada); Sister Prof. Dr Marie-Hélène Robert, NDA (France); and Revd Avelino González-Ferrer (co-secretary, USA/Vatican).

Methodist–Roman Catholic International Commission (MERCIC)
Plenary Meeting
(Online, 9–15 October 2020)



Participants in the MERCIC online plenary meeting, 9–15 October 2020

The Commission’s fourth and final plenary meeting of this round of dialogue was due to meet in Tantar, Bethlehem, from 9–16 October. Due to the COVID pandemic and travel restrictions, the Commission instead met for six video-conference meetings from 9–15 October during which it reviewed a full draft text of its report entitled *God in Christ Reconciling*. The working text had been produced by the drafting group in the months following the March drafting meeting at Duke University. This group had already sent an earlier draft of the document to all members in the late spring/early summer. Comments from members were then incorporated into a redraft which was again sent to all members in September with a second request for feedback. The responses to this text were then collated and formed a working document for the plenary.

Using the working document the plenary dedicated four of its video-conference meetings to the each of the four chapters of the draft report which examine in turn: reconciliation as a way of understanding salvation; the Church’s structures as means to hold a communion of reconciled diversity; the rites of reconciliation; and the

reconciling mission of the Church in the world. The two remaining days' meetings were devoted to returning to unresolved issues and reviewing an ecumenical liturgy of reconciliation for Catholics and Methodists intended to be included as an appendix.

Even with all the extensive work done in preparation the drafting team has continued to meet after the October plenary and hopes to present the final text to the Commission for their final approval at an electronic meeting on 27 March. The text will then be sent to the respective authorities of each communion for approval, and will be presented at the twenty-second meeting of the World Methodist Conference has also been rescheduled from the summer of 2022 until 10-14 August 2022.

Executive Committee Meeting of the Joint Working Group Between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (Online, 10 November 2020)

The Executive Committee of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC) held an online meeting on 6 November 2020. The WCC was represented by Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște, member of the WCC Central Committee and Co-Moderator of the JWG, Reverend Odair Pedroso Mateus, interim Deputy Secretary General and Director of Faith and Order, and Dr Vasile Octavian Miboc, programme executive for ecumenical relations and a Co-Secretary of the JWG. The Catholic Church was represented by Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin and Co-Moderator of the JWG, Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the PCPCU, Monsignor Juan Usma Gómez and Reverend Andrzej Choromanski, Co-Secretary of the JWG. The Executive discussed the two studies with recommendations to churches currently in preparation (“Peace is a Treasure for All – An Ecumenical Reflection on Peace Building in Situations of Conflict and Violence” and “Migrants and Refugees – Ecumenical Challenges and Opportunities”) and decided about the next steps regarding the production of the final Report of the current mandate. A communiqué (below) was issued at the conclusion of the meeting.



Participants in the online meeting of JWG Exective Committee, 10 November 2020

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Executive Committee of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC) met online via zoom on Friday 6 November 2020 under the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop and Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște, Romanian Orthodox Church, and Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, who welcomed the participants. The opening prayer was led by Metropolitan Nifon. During the sharing that followed, the participants acknowledged that the anti-COVID-19 measures had created an unprecedented challenge for churches worldwide, limiting the access of the faithful to pastoral care and restraining ecumenical contacts. At the same time, the crisis had necessitated the use of modern technologies, with churches developing new and enduring forms of pastoral ministry and ecumenical life.

Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), spoke about the current activities of the Dicastery, focusing on the recent anniversaries: sixty years from the foundation of the PCPCU by Saint Pope John XXIII and twenty five years from the publication by Saint John Paul II of the encyclical *Ut unum sint* on the Church's commitment to ecumenism. To mark these anniversaries the PCPCU undertook two special initiatives: the first was the launch of the journal *Acta Oecumenica*, renewing the Dicastery's bulletin *Information Service/Service d'Information*; the second is an *Ecumenical Vademecum* for bishops, to be published in a few weeks.

Reverend Professor Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus, Interim Deputy Secretary General of the WCC, updated the participants on the current activities of the Council. He underlined that the pandemic significantly impacted activities, including the postponement of the next Assembly now scheduled in September 2022 in Karlsruhe, Germany, and the election of the new Secretary General. He then updated the participants on the work of the Faith and Order Commission that is finalizing its studies on ecclesiology and moral discernment in the churches. Relevant publications are being prepared and will be published soon. He also spoke about the series of webinars dedicated to bilateral dialogues, the first of which took place recently.

The Executive discussed the two studies with recommendations to the churches, which the JWG has undertaken, on "Peacebuilding in Situations of Conflict" and "Migrants and Refugees – Ecumenical Challenges and Opportunities". Since the last meeting both documents had been revised in light of the new situation caused by the pandemic and the revisions have been approved. Members of the Executive then discussed the Tenth Report to be issued at the end of the current mandate. It was recognized that the text of the Report reflects well the work accomplished although it requires an update given the extension of the mandate of the JWG, as well as further improvement regarding the content and style. The next Executive will be held online in February 2021 to discuss the work still to be undertaken by the JWG before the end of its mandate. The meeting concluded with a time of prayer led by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, who shared the prayer of Pope Francis included at the end of his recent encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.

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Catholics and Disciples of Christ: A New Dialogue Document
(11 November 2020)



Members of the Commission for Dialogue between the Disciples of Christ and the Catholic Church, June 2014

Do This in Memory of Me: Christians Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist (cf. p.257) is the title of the final report of the Commission for Dialogue between the Disciples of Christ and the Catholic Church. This dialogue, for the first time, has given exclusive attention to the Lord's Table / Eucharist. In fact, Catholics and Disciples believe that the Eucharist is the highest moment of their spiritual journey as Christians. For more than forty years they have been in dialogue with one goal in mind: full visible unity expressed in the common celebration of the Eucharist. By examining carefully each other's eucharistic liturgy and practice in a positive way and discussing in depth different theological and spiritual approaches, the Commission disclosed the richness of both traditions and their joint reflections on such a fundamental theme such as the Eucharist forming and transforming Christians. At the Eucharist, Christians encounter Jesus Christ, hear the Gospel proclaimed, deepen their communion with God and with one another, and are prepared and strengthened for carrying out the mission of the Church in the world. The Commission for Dialogue between the Disciples of Christ and the Catholic Church was established in 1977. During its fifth phase, started in 2014, members worked under the leadership of the Most Reverend David Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, USA, and the Reverend Dr Newell Williams, President of Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, USA. Following the suggestions of the Commission, the sixth phase of Dialogue will be devoted to a reflection on "ministry." As customary, this final report is published together with a Catholic commentary, which was prepared by the Reverend Professor Gilles Routhier from the University of Laval, Canada.

CARDINAL PRESIDENT

PAPERS

Inaugurationsvorlesung zur Eröffnung des neuen Studienjahres in Heiligenkreuz

(Vienna, 1. Oktober 2020)

UNUMKEHRBAR ZUR EINHEIT VERPFLICHTET

Zum 25. Jahrestag der Ökumene-Enzyklika „Ut unum sint“ des heiligen Papstes Johannes Paul II.

Vor fünfundzwanzig Jahren hat Papst Johannes Paul II. seine Enzyklika über den Einsatz für die Ökumene „Ut unum sint“ veröffentlicht. Dieses Gedächtnis verdient nicht nur deshalb eine besondere Erwähnung, weil zum ersten Mal in der Geschichte ein Papst eine umfangreiche Enzyklika über die Ökumene geschrieben hat, sondern vor allem deshalb, weil der Papst „die Suche nach der Einheit der Getauften gemäss dem Auftrag des Herrn, gemäss der inneren Logik des Glaubens, der als Kraft der Einheit von Gott in die Welt gesandt ist“, in dieser Enzyklika „mit der ganzen Leidenschaft seines ökumenischen Wollens ins Bewusstsein der Kirche“ gerückt hat¹. Mit diesen Worten hat der damalige Kardinal Joseph Ratzinger die Enzyklika von Papst Johannes Paul II. gewürdigt und dieses Engagement damit begründet: „Der Papst empfand die Teilung der Christenheit von Anfang an als eine Verletzung, die ihn sehr persönlich betraf, bis hin zum physischen Leiden“; und er sah es also als „seine Aufgabe an, alles zu tun, um zu einer Wende auf die Einheit hin zu kommen“².

1. Leidenschaftliches Bemühen um die Einheit der Christen

In seinem entschiedenen Engagement für die ökumenische Suche nach der Wiederherstellung der Einheit der Christen ist Papst Johannes Paul II. in der Tat von der Überzeugung geleitet gewesen, dass nach dem ersten Jahrtausend der Christentumsgeschichte, das die Zeit der ungeteilten Kirche gewesen ist, und nach dem zweiten Jahrtausend, das im Osten wie im Westen zu tiefen Spaltungen in der Kirche geführt hat, das dritte Jahrtausend die grosse Aufgabe zu bewältigen haben wird, die verloren gegangene Einheit der Christen wiederherzustellen. So konnte Papst Johannes Paul II. im Jahre 1994 in seinem persönlich verfassten Buch „Die Schwelle der Hoffnung überschreiten“ die bewegenden und zuversichtlichen Worte schreiben: „Zum Jahr 2000 müssen wir zumindest in grösserer Einheit und mit grösserer Bereitwilligkeit antreten; müssen in noch höherem Masse bereit sein, den Weg jener Einheit einzuschlagen, für die Christus am Vorabend seines Leidens gebetet hat. Der Wert dieser Einheit ist enorm. Es geht ge-

1. J. Ratzinger - Benedikt XVI., Der Glaube als Refugium der Humanität. Die 14 Enzykliken von Johannes Paul II., in: Ders., Johannes Paul II. Mein geliebter Vorgänger (Augsburg 2008) 43-61, zit. 54.

2. J. Ratzinger - Benedikt XVI., Die Einheit von Mission und Person in der Gestalt von Johannes Paul II. Zwanzig Jahre einer Geschichte, in: Ebda. 15-42, zit. 42.

wissermassen um die Zukunft der Welt; es geht um die Zukunft des Gottesreiches in der Welt.“³

In dieser eindeutigen Selbstverpflichtung für das ökumenische Anliegen muss man den grossen Einfluss und das Erbe des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils erblicken, an dem Kardinal Karol Wojtyła selbst mitgewirkt⁴, das er als Meilenstein der Erneuerung der Kirche erfahren und das für ihn „etwas vom Pfingstfest“ an sich gehabt hat⁵, das er als grosses Geschenk an die Kirche gewürdigt und das für ihn den sicheren Kompass dargestellt hat, „um uns auf dem Weg des jetzt beginnenden Jahrhunderts zu orientieren“⁶. In dieser entschiedenen Treue zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil hat nach seinem Abschluss Kardinal Wojtyła es in der ihm damals anvertrauten Diözese Krakau in Polen umzusetzen sich bemüht und dabei in seiner frühen „Studie zur Verwirklichung des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils“ im Blick auf die Ökumene hervorgehoben: „Das Aufkommen der ökumenischen Haltung und ihre geordnete Entwicklung sind nach der Lehre des Zweiten Vatikanums eines der hauptsächlichlichen Zeichen und zugleich einer der Beweise für die Erneuerung der Kirche.“⁷ Und als Papst hat er gegen verschiedene Zweifel sowohl bei Gegnern wie bei Befürwortern der Ökumene unmissverständlich betont, die Entscheidung der Katholischen Kirche für die Ökumene sei unwiderruflich: „Mit dem II. Vatikanischen Konzil hat sich die katholische Kirche unumkehrbar dazu verpflichtet, den Weg der Suche nach der Ökumene einzuschlagen und damit auf den Geist des Herrn zu hören, der uns lehrt, aufmerksam die <Zeichen der Zeit> zu lesen.“⁸

Angesichts dieser verbindlichen Treue zum Erbe des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils ist es nur konsequent, dass es Papst Johannes Paul II. auch ein wichtiges Anliegen gewesen ist, die vom Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil festgelegte Verpflichtung zur Teilnahme an der Ökumenischen Bewegung auch kirchenrechtlich festzulegen. In seiner Apostolischen Konstitution „*Sacrae disciplinae leges*“ zur Promulgation des neuen Codex Iuris Canonici im Jahre 1983 hat Johannes Paul II. hervorgehoben, die nachkonziliare Erneuerung des Kirchenrechts habe das Ziel verfolgen müssen, die konziliare Lehre über die Kirche „in die kanonistische Sprache zu übersetzen“⁹; er konnte sogar betonen, der neue Codex gehöre zum Konzil selbst und sei gleichsam das „letzte Dokument des Konzils“¹⁰. In seiner legislatorischen Tätigkeit ist es ihm wichtig gewesen, den Konnex zwischen der konziliaren Ekklesiologie und der Kodifikation des universalkirchlichen Rechts auch und gerade im Blick auf die ökumenische Verantwortung der Kirche zum Tragen zu bringen.¹¹ Denn für ihn ist das Ziel der Wiederherstellung

3. Johannes Paul II., *Die Schwelle der Hoffnung überschreiten* (Hamburg 1994) 178.

4. R. Skrzypczak, *Karol Wojtyła al Concilio Vaticano II. La Storia e i Documenti* (Verona 2011).

5. Johannes Paul II., *Die Schwelle der Hoffnung überschreiten* (Hamburg 1994) 85.

6. Johannes Paul II., *Novo millennio ineunte*, Nr. 57.

7. K. Wojtyła, *Quellen der Erneuerung. Studie zur Verwirklichung des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils* (Freiburg i. Br. 1981) 284.

8. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 5.

9. Johannes Paul II., *Sacrae disciplinae leges*.

10. Johannes Paul II., *Ansprache an die Bischöfe beim Kurs zur Einführung des Codex Iuris Canonici* am 21. November 1983.

11. Vgl. K. Koch, *L'attività legislativa di Giovanni Paolo II e la promozione dell'unità dei Cristiani*, in: L. Gerosa (ed.), *Giovanni Paolo II: Legislatore della Chiesa. Fondamenti, innovazioni e aperture. Atti del Convegno di Studio* (Città del Vaticano 2013) 160-177.

der Einheit der Christen eines der entscheidenden Motive bei der Kodifikation des universalkirchlichen Rechts gewesen. Im CIC findet sich deshalb eine explizite Rechtsverpflichtung der Katholischen Kirche zu ihrer Teilnahme an der Ökumenischen Bewegung.

Diese Verpflichtung wird noch dadurch unterstrichen, dass sie im CIC in besonderer Weise dem Diözesanbischof ans Herz gelegt wird und im Kontext der Umschreibung seiner Aufgaben, genauer der Ausübung seines Hirtenamtes festgeschrieben wird.¹² Mit dieser Verortung wird zum Ausdruck gebracht, dass die ökumenische Verantwortung des Bischofs nicht Kür, sondern Pflicht ist, die freilich für die ganze Kirche wegleitend sein muss. Wenn im CIC zudem ausdrücklich betont wird, die Kirche sei „kraft des Willens Christi gehalten“¹³, die Wiederherstellung der Einheit der Christen zu fördern, dann wird die Verpflichtung der Katholischen Kirche zur Ökumene im Testament Jesu begründet und muss man von einer ökumenischen Verpflichtung *iure divino* sprechen.

Die ekklesiologische Rechtsverpflichtung zur Ökumene ist noch deutlicher als im Codex Iuris Canonici von 1983 für die Lateinische Kirche in dem im Jahre 1990 von Papst Johannes Paul II. promulgierten Rechtsbuch für die Katholischen Orientalischen Kirchen, im Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (CCEO) formuliert, in dem dem ökumenischen Auftrag der Kirche ein eigener Titel gewidmet ist, nämlich Titel XVIII, der die Überschrift trägt: „Ökumenismus oder Förderung der Einheit der Christen“. In ökumenischer Hinsicht besonders bedeutsam ist die zeitliche Limitierung der Gültigkeit des CCEO und damit sein transitorischer Charakter. In seiner Apostolischen Konstitution „*Sacri Canones*“ hat Papst Johannes Paul II. deshalb hervorgehoben, dass die *Canones* des CCEO Geltung haben, „bis sie ausser Kraft gesetzt werden oder von der höchsten Autorität der Kirche aus gerechtem Gründen abgeändert werden“, wobei unter solchen gerechten Gründen der wichtigste derjenige der „vollen Gemeinschaft aller Kirchen des Ostens mit der katholischen Kirche“ ist¹⁴. Damit ist deutlich zum Ausdruck gebracht, dass die klare zeitliche Begrenzung der Gültigkeit des CCEO in der ökumenischen Perspektive vorgenommen ist und die Katholischen Orientalischen Kirchen eine besondere ökumenische Verantwortung tragen.

2. Ökumenische Perspektiven in „*Ut unum sint*“

Auf dem Hintergrund der kurzen Erinnerung an das entschiedene Engagement von Papst Johannes Paul II. für die Suche nach der Einheit der Christen und an seine diesbezügliche legislatorische Tätigkeit kann es nicht erstaunen, dass er sich gleich am ersten Tag seines Pontifikats zur ökumenischen Annäherung zwischen den Christen bekannt hat. Er ist zutiefst überzeugt gewesen, dass das Amt, das dem Nachfolger des Petrus aufgetragen ist, auch das Amt der Einheit ist und im Bereich der Ökumene „seine ganz besondere Erklärung findet“¹⁵. In dieser Grundhaltung hat er seinen petrinischen Dienst an der Einheit von allem Anfang an über die Katholische Kirche hinaus

12. Vgl. Cardinale K. Koch, *Il Vescovo e l'ecumenismo*, in: *Congregazione per i Vescovi* (ed.), *Duc in altum. Pellegrinaggio alla Tomba di San Pietro. Incontro di riflessione per i nuovi Vescovi* (Città del Vaticano 2011) 263-281.

13. Canon 755 § 1 CIC 1983.

14. Johannes Paul II., *Constitutio Apostolica „Sacri canones“* vom 18. Oktober 1990.

15. Johannes Paul II., *Die Schwelle der Hoffnung überschreiten* (Hamburg 1994) 181.

auch als Dienst an der grösseren ökumenischen Einheit der Christen verstanden und die ökumenische Aufgabe zu einer seiner pastoralen Prioritäten erklärt, die er mit Leidenschaft wahrgenommen und mit vielen ökumenischen Gesten bekundet hat. In diesem ökumenischen Bemühen hat er auch seine Enzyklika über den Einsatz für die Ökumene geschrieben, in der er unmissverständlich betont hat, „dass der Ökumenismus, die Bewegung für die Einheit der Christen, nicht bloss irgendein <Anhängsel>“ sein darf, „das der traditionellen Tätigkeit der Kirche angefügt wird“. Der Ökumenismus gehört im Gegenteil „organisch zu ihrem Leben und zu ihrem Wirken und muss infolgedessen dieses Miteinander durchdringen und so etwas wie die Frucht eines Baumes sein, der gesund und üppig heranwächst, bis er seine volle Entwicklung erreicht“¹⁶. Die Enzyklika „Ut unum sint“ darf von daher als Summe des ökumenischen Engagements von Papst Johannes Paul II. betrachtet werden. Sie enthält dabei einen so grossen Reichtum, dass im Folgenden nur einzelne Aspekte und Perspektiven herausgegriffen werden können.

a) Wiederentdeckte Brüderlichkeit und Sehnsucht nach Einheit

Zu den Früchten der ökumenischen Bemühungen zählt Papst Johannes Paul II. an erster Stelle die „wiederentdeckte Brüderlichkeit“. Sie zeigt sich darin, dass die verschiedenen kirchlichen Gemeinschaften zugehörigen Christen einander nicht mehr als Fremde oder gar als Feinde betrachten, sondern in ihnen Brüder und Schwestern sehen, dass sich die Christen „zu einer brüderlichen Liebe bekehrt“ haben, „die alle Jünger Christi umfasst“, und dass die „universale Brüderlichkeit“ der Christen zu einer „festen ökumenischen Überzeugung“ geworden ist. Die Anerkennung der Brüderlichkeit ist dabei für den Papst nicht einfach die „Folge eines liberalen Philantropismus oder eines vagen Familiengeistes“, sondern wurzelt in der „Anerkennung der einen Taufe“, die ihrerseits über einen „ökumenischen Höflichkeitsakt“ hinaus geht und eine „ekklesiologische Grundaussage“ darstellt¹⁷. Das Bemühen um die Wiederherstellung der Einheit der Christen ist deshalb zuinnerst eine baptismale Ökumene.

In der wiederentdeckten Brüderlichkeit nimmt Johannes Paul II. genauer die Früchte der ökumenischen Dialoge wahr, die er im zweiten Kapitel seiner Enzyklika eingehend bespricht und würdigt. Denn die bedeutsamen Begegnungen, die wechselseitigen Besuche und die zahlreichen Gespräche zwischen den verschiedenen Kirchen haben ein Netz von freundschaftlichen Beziehungen entstehen lassen, die das tragfähige Fundament für die ökumenischen Dialoge bilden. Solche Dialoge hat die Katholische Kirche in der Zwischenzeit mit beinahe allen christlichen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften geführt und führt sie weiter: angefangen bei der Assyrischen Kirche des Ostens und den Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen wie beispielsweise den Kopten, Armeniern und Syrern, über die Orthodoxen Kirchen der byzantinischen und slawischen Tradition, über die aus der Reformation hervorgegangenen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften wie den Lutheranern und Reformierten und der Anglikanischen Weltgemeinschaft, über die Altkatholiken und die verschiedenen Freikirchen bis hin zu den evangelikalischen und pentekostalen Gemeinschaften, die vor allem im 20. und im beginnenden 21. Jahrhundert enorm gewachsen sind.

16. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 20.

17. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 42.

Aus diesen Dialogen konnten viele positive Früchte gewonnen werden, wie sie beispielsweise Kardinal Walter Kasper in seinem Buch „Harvesting the Fruits“ vorgelegt hat¹⁸. Zu denken ist etwa an den Ökumenischen Dialog mit den Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen, die sich bereits im fünften Jahrhundert von der Grosskirche getrennt hatten, weil sie die christologischen Lehrentscheidungen des Konzils von Chalkedon, dass Jesus Christus, weil er wahrer Gott und wahrer Mensch ist, eine Person in zwei Naturen ist, nicht angenommen haben. Weil es bei diesen frühen Kirchenspaltungen im Osten um das Christusbekenntnis und damit um die innerste Mitte des christlichen Glaubens gegangen ist, versteht es sich von selbst, dass in den ökumenischen Dialogen in erster Linie christologische Fragen zu behandelt gewesen sind. Dabei hat sich sehr bald gezeigt, dass die verschiedenen Gemeinschaften denselben kirchlichen Glauben teilen, ihn aber in verschiedenen theologischen Terminologien zum Ausdruck bringen. Auf diesen ökumenischen Dialogen aufbauend hat der jeweilige Bischof von Rom mit verschiedenen Kirchenführern von Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen gemeinsame Erklärungen vereinbart, mit denen 1500 Jahre nach dem Konzil von Chalkedon die christologischen Differenzen zwischen der Katholischen Kirche und den Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen in einer offiziellen Weise bereinigt werden konnten.¹⁹

Im ökumenischen Dialog der Katholischen Kirche mit den Orthodoxen Kirchen konnten mit dem im Jahre 2007 verabschiedeten Dokument mit dem Titel „Ekklesiologische und kanonische Konsequenzen der sakramentalen Natur der Kirche. Kirchliche Communio, Konziliarität und Autorität“ weiterführende Schritte aufeinander zu vollzogen werden.²⁰ In diesem Dokument wird dargetan, dass Konziliarität und Autorität, beziehungsweise Synodalität und Primat auf allen Ebenen des kirchlichen Lebens wechselseitig voneinander abhängig sind und es auf allen Ebenen einen Protos geben muss. Dass Katholiken und Orthodoxe zum ersten Mal gemeinsam erklären konnten, dass die Kirche auf allen Ebenen ihres Lebens und damit auch auf der universalen Ebene einen Protos braucht, macht den besonderen Beitrag dieses Dokuments auf dem Weg zur Wiederherstellung der einen Kirche in Ost und West aus.²¹

Was die ökumenischen Dialoge mit den aus der Reformation hervorgegangenen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften betrifft, hat sich vor allem der Dialog mit dem Lutherischen Weltbund, den die Katholische Kirche unmittelbar nach dem Ende des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils begonnen hat, als fruchtbar erwiesen. Ein wesentlicher Schritt auf mehr Gemeinschaft hin konnte dabei vollzogen werden mit der Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre, die am 31. Oktober 1999 in Augsburg vom Lutherischen Weltbund und vom Päpstlichen Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der

18. Cardinal W. Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits. Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London – New York 2009).

19. Vgl. K. Kardinal Koch, *Jesus der Christus: Grund der Einheit oder Motiv der Trennung?* in: Th. Hainthaler, D. Ansoerge, A. Wucherpfennig (Hrsg.), *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der einen Kirche. Christologie - Kirchen des Ostens - Ökumenische Dialoge* (Freiburg i. Br. 2019) 365-384.

20. Dokumentiert in: H. Oeldemann, F. Nüssel, U. Swarat, A. Vletsis (Hrsg.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung. Band 4: 2001-2010* (Paderborn – Leipzig 2012) 833-848.

21. Vgl. K. Kardinal Koch, *Auf dem Weg zur Wiederherstellung der einen Kirche in Ost und West*, in: D. Schon (Hrsg.), *Dialog 2.0 – Braucht der orthodox-katholische Dialog neue Impulse?* (Regensburg 2017) 19-41.

Christen unterzeichnet worden ist.²² Dass bei der wohl zentralsten Glaubensfrage, die im 16. Jahrhundert zur Reformation und anschliessend zur Kirchenspaltung im Westen geführt hat, ein weitgehender Konsens erzielt werden konnte, darf man als ökumenischen Meilenstein würdigen. Diese Bedeutung wird noch dadurch unterstrichen, dass sich dieser Gemeinsamen Erklärung in der Zwischenzeit auch der Weltrat der Methodisten im Jahre 2006 und der Weltrat der Reformierten Kirchen im Jahre 2017 angeschlossen haben und in demselben Jahr auch der Erzbischof von Canterbury im Namen der Anglikanischen Weltgemeinschaft seine Zustimmung gegeben hat, so dass sich die Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre von einem bilateralen zu einem multilateralen Dokument mit insgesamt fünf unterzeichnenden ökumenischen Partnern entwickeln konnte.²³

Mit diesen drei Beispielen kann verdeutlicht werden, dass in den ökumenischen Dialogen auch nach dem Erscheinen der Enzyklika von Papst Johannes Paul II. in den vergangenen 25 Jahren weitere positive Früchte gesammelt werden konnten. Es erhebt sich aber auch heute dieselbe Frage wieder, die Papst Johannes Paul II. am Beginn des Dritten Kapitels stellt, wie lange nämlich der Weg ist, „der uns noch von jenem segensreichen Tag trennt, an dem die volle Einheit im Glauben erreicht sein wird und wir einträchtig miteinander die heilige Eucharistie des Herrn werden feiern können“. Mit dieser Frage macht der Papst darauf aufmerksam, dass bei allen ökumenischen Dialogfrüchten das eigentliche Ziel der Ökumene noch nicht erreicht werden konnte, das er so formuliert: „Das letzte Ziel der ökumenischen Bewegung ist die Wiederherstellung der sichtbaren vollen Einheit aller Getauften.“²⁴

Damit ist der zweifellos heikelste Punkt in der ökumenischen Situation auch heute angesprochen, der darin besteht, dass in der Ökumenischen Bewegung noch kein wirklich tragfähiger Konsens über ihr Ziel festgestellt werden kann.²⁵ In den bisherigen Phasen der Ökumenischen Bewegung konnten zwar auf der einen Seite erfreuliche und weitgehende Konsense über viele bisher strittige Einzelfragen des Glaubensverständnisses und der theologischen Struktur der Kirche erzielt werden. Auf der anderen Seite jedoch bündeln sich die meisten der noch bestehenden Differenzpunkte im nach wie vor unterschiedlich geprägten Verständnis der ökumenischen Einheit der Kirche selbst. In diesem doppelten Sachverhalt muss man die eigentliche Paradoxie der Ökumenischen Bewegung heute wahrnehmen, die man mit Bischof Paul-Werner Scheele in der

22. Dokumentiert in: H. Meyer, D. Papandreou, H. J. Urban, L. Vischer (Hrsg.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*. Band 3: 1990-2001 (Paderborn – Frankfurt a. M. 2003) 419-441.

23. Vgl. K. Kardinal Koch, *Ein Meilenstein auf dem Weg zur Einheit der Kirche. Die Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre als ökumenische Errungenschaft und als bleibende Herausforderung*, in: B. Oberdorfer / Th. Söding (Hrsg.), *Wachsende Zustimmung und offene Fragen. Die Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre im Licht ihrer Wirkung* (Freiburg i. Br. 2019).

24. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 77.

25. Vgl. K. Kardinal Koch, *Lob der Vielfalt – Gerät den christlichen Kirchen die Einheit aus dem Blick? in: St. Kopp / W. Thönissen (Hrsg.), Mehr als friedvoll getrennt? Ökumene nach 2017* (Freiburg i. Br. 2017) 15-40.

Diagnose festmachen kann: „Man ist sich einig über das Dass der Einheit und uneinig über ihr Was.“²⁶

Diese paradoxe Situation hat ihren Grund darin, dass die recht unterschiedlichen konfessionell geprägten Konzeptionen der Kirche und ihrer Einheit nach wie vor unversöhnt nebeneinander stehen. Da jede Kirche und kirchliche Gemeinschaft ihr spezifisches Konzept von ihrem Kirche-Sein und ihrer Einheit hat und verwirklicht, ist sie bestrebt, diese konfessionelle Konzeption auch auf die Ebene des Ziels der Ökumene zu übertragen, so dass es im Grunde so viele ökumenische Zielvorstellungen wie konfessionelle Ekklesiologien gibt.²⁷ Dies bedeutet, dass die mangelnde Verständigung über das Ziel der Ökumenischen Bewegung nicht unwesentlich in einer fehlenden ökumenischen Verständigung über das Wesen der Kirche und ihrer Einheit begründet ist. Um hier weiterzukommen, hat Papst Johannes Paul II. in seiner Enzyklika nicht nur jene Themen genannt, die vertieft werden müssen, damit wir zu einer „echten Übereinstimmung im Glauben“ gelangen²⁸; er hat vielmehr auch auf die Notwendigkeit einer noch tieferen Gestalt des ökumenischen Dialogs aufmerksam gemacht.

b) Dialog der Bekehrung und Ökumene der Märtyrer

Das innere Fundament für den ökumenischen Dialog und für die brüderlichen Beziehungen, „die etwas anderes sind als ein herzliches Einverständnis oder eine rein äusserliche Tischgemeinschaft“, erblickt Papst Johannes Paul II. im „Dialog der Bekehrung“, der sich in einer ernsthaften Gewissensprüfung vor Gott vollzieht.²⁹ Der Papst ist überzeugt, dass wir Christen die Einheit, die uns in Jesus Christus bereits gegeben ist, nur finden können, wenn wir gemeinsam zu Jesus Christus umkehren. In seiner Sicht ist das ganze konziliare Dekret über den Ökumenismus „vom Geist der Bekehrung durchdrungen“³⁰, indem es programmatisch formuliert: „Es gibt keinen echten Ökumenismus ohne innere Bekehrung. Denn aus dem Neuwerden des Geistes, aus der Selbstverleugung und aus dem freien Strömen der Liebe erwächst und reift das Verlangen nach Einheit.“³¹ Die Ökumenische Bewegung ist in ihrem innersten Kern eine Umkehrbewegung.³² Dabei geht es in erster Linie nicht um die Bekehrung der Anderen, sondern um die eigene Bekehrung, die die Bereitschaft voraussetzt und einschliesst, eigene Schwächen und Defizite selbstkritisch wahrzunehmen, in Demut zu bekennen und am Evangelium Jesu Christi Mass zu nehmen.

26. P.-W. Scheele, Ökumene – wohin? Unterschiedliche Konzepte kirchlicher Einheit im Vergleich, in: St. Ley, I. Proft, M. Schulze (Hrsg.), Welt vor Gott. Für George Augustin (Freiburg i. Br. 2016) 165-179, zit. 165.

27. Vgl. G. Hintzen, W. Thönissen, Kirchengemeinschaft möglich. Einheitsverständnis und Einheitskonzepte in der Diskussion (Paderborn 2001); F. W. Graf, D. Korsch (Hrsg.), Jenseits der Einheit. Protestantische Ansichten der Ökumene (Hannover 2001).

28. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 79.

29. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 82.

30. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 35.

31. *Unitatis redintegratio*, Nr. 7.

32. Vgl. K. Kardinal Koch, Innere Reform und Umkehr als Voraussetzung von Ökumene, in: E. Dieckmann - K. Kardinal Lehmann (Hrsg.), Blick zurück nach vorn. Das Zweite Vatikanum aus der Perspektive der multilateralen Ökumene (Würzburg 2016) 161-186.

Die glaubwürdigsten Protagonisten eines solchen „Dialogs der Bekehrung“ sind in den Augen von Papst Johannes Paul II. die Märtyrer, die ihren Glauben an Jesus Christus mit ihrer ganzen Existenz bis zum letzten Blutstropfen bezeugt haben. Bereits in der Einführung zu seiner Enzyklika erinnert er an das „mutige Zeugnis so vieler Märtyrer unseres Jahrhunderts, die auch anderen nicht in voller Gemeinschaft mit der katholischen Kirche befindlichen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften angehören“, und er erblickt in ihnen den „bedeutendsten Beweis dafür, dass in der Ganzhingabe seiner selbst an die Sache des Evangeliums jedes Element der Spaltung bewältigt und überwunden werden kann“³³.

Der Papst erinnert damit an die Tatsache, dass am Ende des Zweiten und am Beginn des Dritten Jahrtausends die Christenheit erneut und in einem unvergleichlichen Mass Märtyrerkirche geworden ist. Denn heute gibt es mehr Märtyrer sogar als während den Christenverfolgungen in den ersten Jahrhunderten. Achtzig Prozent aller Menschen, die wegen ihres Glaubens verfolgt werden, sind Christen. Der christliche Glaube ist in der heutigen Welt die am meisten verfolgte Religion.³⁴ Dabei haben alle christlichen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften ihre Märtyrer. Christen werden heute nicht verfolgt, weil sie einer bestimmten christlichen Glaubensgemeinschaft angehören, weil sie Orthodoxe oder Katholiken, Lutheraner oder Anglikaner sind, sondern weil sie Christen sind. Das Martyrium ist heute ökumenisch, und man muss von einer eigentlichen Ökumene der Märtyrer sprechen.³⁵ Papst Johannes Paul II. hebt deshalb hervor, dass „aus einer theozentrischen Sicht“ wir Christen bereits ein „gemeinsames Martyrologium“ haben, das uns vor Augen führt, „wie auf einer tieferen Ebene Gott unter den Getauften die Gemeinschaft unter dem höchsten Anspruch des mit dem Opfer des Lebens bezeugten Glaubens aufrechterhält“³⁶.

Trotz aller Tragik der Christenverfolgungen hat Papst Johannes Paul II. in der Ökumene der Märtyrer auch eine positive Botschaft gesehen und in ihr bereits eine grundlegende Einheit unter den Christen wahrgenommen und gehofft, dass die Märtyrer uns vom Himmel her helfen werden, die volle Gemeinschaft wieder zu finden. Während wir Christen und Kirchen auf dieser Erde noch in einer unvollkommenen Gemeinschaft zu- und miteinander stehen, leben die Märtyrer in der himmlischen Herrlichkeit bereits jetzt in voller und vollendeter Gemeinschaft. Denn das Blut, das die Märtyrer heute für Christus vergossen, trennt uns Christen nicht, sondern eint uns. Wie die frühe Kirche überzeugt gewesen ist, dass das Blut der Märtyrer Same von neuen Christen ist („Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum“), so dürfen wir auch heute in der Hoffnung leben, dass sich das Blut von so vielen Märtyrern unserer Zeit einmal als Same der vollen ökumenischen Einheit des durch so viele Spaltungen verwundeten

33. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 1.

34. Vgl. R. Backes, „Sie werden euch hassen“. Christenverfolgung heute (Augsburg 2005); R. Guittton, *Cristianophobia. La nuova persecuzione* (Torino 2009); *Kirche in Not* (Hrsg.), *Christen in grosser Bedrängnis. Diskriminierung und Unterdrückung. Dokumentation 2016* (München 2016); A. Riccardi, *Salz der Erde, Licht der Welt. Glaubenszeugnis und Christenverfolgung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg i. Br. 2002).

35. Vgl. W. Kasper, *Ökumene der Märtyrer. Theologie und Spiritualität des Martyriums* (Norderstedt 2014); K. Cardinal Koch, *Christenverfolgung und Ökumene der Märtyrer. Eine biblische Besinnung* (Norderstedt 2016).

36. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 84.

einen Leibes Christi erweisen wird. Wir dürfen überzeugt sein, dass wir Christen im Blut der Märtyrer bereits eins geworden sind und das Leiden von so vielen Christen und Christinnen Einheit stiftet, die sich als stärker erweist als die Differenzen, die die christlichen Kirchen noch trennen.

Die theologische Brisanz der von Papst Johannes Paul II. betonten Ökumene der Märtyrer, die die gegenseitige Anerkennung der christlichen Märtyrer in verschiedenen christlichen Gemeinschaften einschliesst, wird freilich erst sichtbar, wenn wir bedenken, dass er damit eine bedeutsame Ausweitung des Märtyrerbegriffs vorgenommen hat. Denn in der Vergangenheit ist nur derjenige Christ als Märtyrer anerkannt worden, der mit seinem Leben die unverkürzte Christuswahrheit bezeugt hat. Dabei konnte man nicht annehmen, dass ein solches Ja zur vollen Christuswahrheit auch ausserhalb der Katholischen Kirche gegeben sein kann. Von daher war es nicht möglich, die auch in anderen christlichen Gemeinschaften geschehenen Martyrien anzunehmen. Bereits in der frühen christlichen Zeit haben beispielsweise Cyprian und Augustinus in den Auseinandersetzungen mit den Donatisten darauf bestanden, dass es nur in der Katholischen Kirche echte Märtyrer geben könne. Die späteren Spaltungen in der Kirche haben zu einer weiteren „binnenchristlichen Konfessionalisierung“ des Märtyrerbegriffs geführt, „die nur noch die Märtyrer der eigenen Kirche als solche anerkannte und dem gewaltsamen Tod der anderen Christen die religiöse Qualifikation des Martyriums absprach“³⁷.

Diese konfessionell verengte Sicht ist im Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil überwunden worden, indem es wahrgenommen hat, dass viele und bedeutende Elemente oder Güter, aus denen insgesamt die Kirche erbaut ist und ihr Leben gewinnt, auch in anderen christlichen Gemeinschaften existieren können, wobei es zu diesen Elementen in besonderer Weise „eine wahre Verbindung im Heiligen Geist“ zählt, „der in Gaben und Gnaden auch in ihnen mit seiner heiligenden Kraft wirksam ist und manche von ihnen bis zur Vergiessung des Blutes gestärkt hat“³⁸. Mit diesen wichtigen Aussagen des Konzils ist die Realität des Martyriums auch in anderen christlichen Kirchen gewürdigt worden. Auf dieser konziliaren Grundlage hat Papst Johannes Paul II. die ökumenische Dimension des Martyriums ins kirchliche Bewusstsein gehoben und vor allem mit der gemeinsamen Feier im Jubeljahr 2000 am historisch symbolträchtigen Ort am Kolosseum zum Ausdruck gebracht, als er in Anwesenheit von hohen Vertretern verschiedener Kirchen und kirchlicher Gemeinschaften der Märtyrer des 20. Jahrhunderts gedacht und auf ihre Glaubenszeugnisse gehört hat wie auf diejenigen des orthodoxen Metropoliten Serafim, des evangelischen Pastors Paul Schneider und des katholischen Paters Maximilian Kolbe. Diese Feier hat die tiefe Gemeinschaft im Glauben erfahrbar werden lassen, die die Christen in den verschiedenen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften trotz aller noch bestehenden Unterschiede und Hindernisse miteinander verbindet. Denn in der gemeinsamen Verfolgung – beispielsweise in den nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern und in den kommunistischen Gulags - sind Christen und kirchliche Gemeinschaften zusammengewachsen, haben ihre Gemeinsamkeit im Glauben entdeckt und miteinander Freundschaft geschlossen.

37. E. Schockenhoff, *Entschiedenheit und Widerstand. Das Lebenszeugnis der Märtyrer* (Freiburg i. Br. 2015) 171.

38. *Lumen gentium*, Nr. 15.

Schliesslich sei erwähnt, dass die Insistenz auf der ökumenischen Dimension des Martyriums heute eine schöne Fortsetzung findet bei Papst Franziskus, der immer wieder auf die „Ökumene des Blutes“ hinweist. In den Augen von Papst Franziskus wird uns diese vor allem von den Christenverfolgern selbst nahe gelegt, für die wir „nicht geteilt“, sondern „eins“ sind: „Für die Verfolger sind wir Christen! Etwas anderes interessiert nicht. Das ist die Ökumene des Blutes, die heute gelebt wird.“³⁹ In dieser Gestalt der Ökumene begegnet uns deshalb auch eine grosse Herausforderung, die Papst Franziskus in dem einprägsamen Satz zum Ausdruck bringt: „Wenn uns der Feind im Tod vereint, wie kommen wir dann dazu, uns im Leben zu trennen?“⁴⁰ Ist es in der Tat nicht beschämend, dass die Christenverfolger die bessere ökumenische Vision als wir Christen haben, da sie darum wissen, dass die Christen untereinander zutiefst eins sind? Weil das Leiden so vieler Christen in der heutigen Welt eine gemeinsame Erfahrung bildet, ist die Ökumene des Blutes für Papst Franziskus sogar das „überzeugendste Zeichen“ der Ökumene heute⁴¹.

c) *Ökumene der Heiligen und spiritueller Ökumenismus*

Was von den Märtyrern gesagt worden ist, gilt ganz allgemein von den Heiligen, im Blick auf deren Erbe der „Dialog der Bekehrung“ zur vollen und sichtbaren Einheit „unter einem Licht der Hoffnung“ erscheint. Denn die Allgegenwart der Heiligen, die allen christlichen Gemeinschaften angehören, gibt den „Beweis für die Transzendenz der Macht des Geistes“: „Sie ist Zeichen und Beweis für den Sieg Gottes über die Kräfte des Bösen, die die Menschheit spalten.“⁴² Dies gilt zumal von den Heiligen, die noch in der Zeit der einen und ungeteilten Kirche gelebt haben und deren Verehrung die Christen in verschiedenen Gemeinschaften zusammenbringt.

Mit der Ökumene der Heiligen verbindet Papst Johannes Paul II. in seiner Enzyklika die Ermahnung, den spirituellen Ökumenismus fortzusetzen und zu vertiefen, den das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil als „Seele der ganzen Ökumenischen Bewegung“ bezeichnet hat⁴³, und zwar im klaren Bewusstsein, dass in der Mitte allen ökumenischen Bemühens das Gebet um die Einheit stehen muss. Das Gebet muss nach Papst Johannes Paul II. im Leben der Kirche und bei jeder Tätigkeit präsent sein, die die Einheit der Christen zum Ziel hat: „Es ist, als sollten wir uns immer wieder im Abendmahlssaal des Gründonnerstag versammeln, obwohl unsere gemeinsame Anwesenheit an jenem Ort noch auf ihre vollkommene Erfüllung wartet, bis sich nach Überwindung der Hindernisse, die der vollkommenen kirchlichen Gemeinschaft im Wege stehen, alle Christen zu der einen Eucharistie versammeln werden.“⁴⁴

Mit diesem Hinweis bezieht sich der Papst auf das Hohepriesterliche Gebet, das Jesus am Vorabend seines Leidens gesprochen und darum gebetet hat, „dass alle eins seien“. Dabei fällt auf, dass Jesus seinen Jüngern die Einheit nicht befiehlt und sie von ihnen auch nicht einfordert, sondern für sie betet. Diese schlichte, aber elementare

39. Franziskus, Ansprache an die Mitglieder der „Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships“ am 31. Oktober 2014.

40. Franziskus, Ansprache an die Bewegung der Charismatischen Erneuerung am 3. Juli 2015.

41. Franziskus, Botschaft anlässlich des Global Christian Forum vom 1. November 2015.

42. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 84.

43. *Unitatis redintegratio*, Nr. 8.

44. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 23.

Feststellung hat grundlegende Bedeutung für die ökumenische Suche nach der Einheit. Wenn die Einheit der Jünger das zentrale Gebetsanliegen Jesu ist, kann christliche Ökumene nur Einstimmen der Christen in das Gebet Jesu und Teilhabe an seinem Hohepriesterlichen Gebet sein. Das Gebet um die Einheit der Christen ist und bleibt das entscheidende Vorzeichen aller ökumenischen Bemühungen, wie Johannes Paul II. betont: „Der Vorrang auf dem ökumenischen Weg zur Einheit gebührt sicherlich dem gemeinsamen Gebet, der Verbundenheit all derer, die sich um Christus selbst zusammenschließen.“⁴⁵

Mit dem Gebet um die Einheit der Christen bringen wir unsere Glaubensüberzeugung zum Ausdruck, dass die Einheit nicht primär und schon gar nicht allein durch unsere Bemühungen erwirkt werden kann und wir die Einheit nicht selbst machen und auch nicht über ihre Gestalt und ihren Zeitpunkt befinden können. Wir Christen können Spaltungen produzieren; dies zeigen die Geschichte und auch die Gegenwart. Die Einheit können wir uns nur vom Heiligen Geist schenken lassen. Das Gebet um die Einheit erinnert daran, dass auch in der Ökumene nicht alles machbar ist, sondern dass wir dem unverfügbaren Wirken des Heiligen Geistes Raum geben und ihm zumindest so viel zutrauen wie den eigenen ökumenischen Bemühungen.

Die beste Vorbereitung, um die Einheit als Geschenk vom Heiligen Geist empfangen zu können, ist das Gebet um die Einheit. Hier liegt der Grund, dass die Ökumenische Bewegung von allem Anfang an eine Gebetsbewegung gewesen ist und an ihrem Beginn die Einführung der Gebetswoche für die Einheit der Christen gestanden hat und eine ökumenische Idee gewesen ist. Es ist das Gebet um die Einheit der Christen gewesen, das den Weg der Ökumenischen Bewegung geöffnet hat. Dabei kann es sich freilich nicht um einen Anfang handeln, den wir jemals hinter uns lassen könnten; es geht vielmehr um einen Anfang, der gleichsam auch heute mitwandern und alle ökumenischen Bemühungen begleiten muss. Denn die Zentralität des Gebetes macht sichtbar, dass die ökumenische Arbeit vor allem eine geistliche Aufgabe ist und es deshalb keine wahrhafte Ökumene geben kann, die nicht im Gebet verankert wäre, wie Papst Johannes Paul II. eindringlich betont: Wenn sich die Christen „immer öfter und eifriger vor Christus im Gebet begegnen, werden sie Mut schöpfen können, um der ganzen schmerzlichen menschlichen Realität der Spaltungen entgegenzutreten zu können, und sie werden sich miteinander in jener Gemeinschaft der Kirche wiederfinden, die Christus trotz aller menschlichen Schwachheiten und Begrenztheiten unaufhörlich im Heiligen Geist aufbaut“⁴⁶.

d) Petrinischer Dienst an der Einheit der Kirche

Im Dienst der Einheit der Kirche steht in besonderer Weise der Bischof von Rom. Ihm widmet Papst Johannes Paul II. grundlegende Gedanken im Schlussteil seiner Enzyklika in einem längeren Abschnitt, in dem ein doppelter Sachverhalt im Vordergrund steht: Auf der einen Seite ist sich die Katholische Kirche bewusst, „in Treue zur apostolischen Überlieferung und zum Glauben der Väter“ das Amt des Bischofs von Rom als „sichtbares Zeichen“ und als „Garanten der Einheit“ bewahrt zu haben. Auf der anderen Seite ist sich Johannes Paul II. ebenso bewusst, dass das Amt des Bischofs von

45. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 22.

46. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 22.

Rom „eine Schwierigkeit für den Grossteil der anderen Christen“ darstellt, „deren Gedächtnis durch gewisse schmerzliche Erinnerungen gezeichnet ist“⁴⁷. In der Überzeugung, dass dem Bischof von Rom als dem Nachfolger des Petrus das Amt der Einheit übertragen ist, hat Papst Johannes Paul II. die gesamte Ökumene eingeladen, sich mit ihm auf einen „brüderlichen geduldigen Dialog“ über den Primat des Bischofs von Rom einzulassen, und zwar mit dem Ziel, eine Form der Primatsausübung zu finden, „die zwar keineswegs auf das Wesentliche ihrer Sendung verzichtet, sich aber einer neuen Situation öffnet“, genauer dahingehend, „dass dieses Amt „einen von den einen und anderen anerkannten Dienst der Liebe zu verwirklichen vermag“⁴⁸.

Die Unterscheidung zwischen dem Wesen des Primats und der konkreten Form seiner Ausübung haben auch die späteren Päpste aufgegriffen und die damit verbundene Einladung an die Ökumene erneuert. Bei einer Begegnung mit Vertretern der Orthodoxen Kirchen in Freiburg im Breisgau im September 2011 hat Papst Benedikt XVI. betont: „Wir wissen, dass es vor allem die Primatsfrage ist, um deren rechtes Verständnis wir weiter geduldig und demütig ringen müssen. Ich denke, dabei können uns die Gedanken zur Unterscheidung zwischen Wesen und Form der Ausübung des Primates, die Papst Johannes Paul II. in der Enzyklika *Ut unum sint* (Nr. 95) vorgenommen hat, weiterhin fruchtbare Anstöße geben.“⁴⁹ Auch Papst Franziskus unterscheidet zwischen dem, was für den Primat wesentlich ist, und dem, was zur konkreten und teilweise geschichtlich bedingten Form seiner Ausübung gehört, und er gesteht zugleich ein, dass wir auf diesem Weg der Unterscheidung bisher „wenig vorangekommen“ sind⁵⁰. Um diese perspektivenreichen Initiativen der Päpste aufzugreifen und zu vertiefen, haben in der Zwischenzeit verschiedene Institutionen wie das Päpstliche Komitee für die Geschichtswissenschaften⁵¹, die Kongregation für die Glaubenslehre⁵² und der Päpstliche Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen⁵³ wissenschaftliche Symposien über Theorie und Praxis des Primats des Bischofs von Rom durchgeführt.

Wie können wir bei diesem notwendigen ökumenischen Dialog über den Dienst des Bischofs von Rom für die Einheit der Christen vorankommen? Zur Beantwortung dieser Frage hat Papst Johannes Paul II. in seiner Enzyklika einen deutlichen Hinweis gegeben: Sowohl in der Lehre als auch in der Praxis hält die Katholische Kirche daran fest, dass die Gemeinschaft der verschiedenen Teilkirchen mit der Kirche von Rom und die Gemeinschaft ihrer Bischöfe mit dem Bischof von Rom „ein grundlegendes Erfordernis – im Plan Gottes – für die volle und sichtbare Gemeinschaft“ ist und dass die volle Gemeinschaft ihren sichtbaren Ausdruck in einem Amt finden muss und dass ihre „höchste sakramentale Bekundung“ die Eucharistie ist.⁵⁴

47. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 88.

48. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 95-96.

49. Benedikt XVI., Ansprache bei der Begegnung mit Vertretern der Orthodoxen Kirchen in Freiburg im Breisgau am 24. September 2011.

50. Franziskus, *Evangelii gaudium*, Nr. 32.

51. Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche (ed.), *Il Primato del Vescovo di Roma nel primo millennio. Ricerche e testimonianze. Atti del Symposium storico-teologico* (Città del Vaticano 1991).

52. *Il primato del Successore di Pietro nel Mistero della Chiesa. Considerazioni della Congregazione per la Dottrina della fede = Documenti e Studi* 19 (Città del Vaticano 2002) 9-21.

53. W. Kasper (ed.), *Il ministero petrino. Cattolici e ortodossi in dialogo* (Roma 2004).

54. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 97.

Die damit angesprochene Zusammengehörigkeit von Primat des Bischofs von Rom und der Eucharistie erinnert an die Sicht des heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien, der in seinem Brief an die Römer im Jahre 110 die Kirche von Rom mit der Kathedra ihres Bischofs als jene Kirche gewürdigt hat, die den „Vorsitz in der Liebe“ hat. Dabei gilt es zu bedenken, dass in der frühen Kirche das Wort „Liebe“ – agape – auch und besonders das Geheimnis der Eucharistie bezeichnet, in der die Liebe Jesu Christi zu seiner Kirche besonders intensiv erfahren wird. Dies bedeutet, dass der Primat des Bischofs von Rom letztlich nur von der Eucharistie her zu verstehen ist. Denn die Kirche, die als weltweites Netz von Eucharistiegemeinschaften lebt, braucht auch auf der universalen Ebene einen vollmächtigen Dienst an der Einheit. Der Bischof von Rom nimmt deshalb seine besondere Verantwortung dadurch wahr, dass er den „Vorsitz in der Liebe“ lebt und in der Eucharistie alle Teilkirchen auf der ganzen Welt zur einen universalen Kirche verbindet und damit Kirche als *communio ecclesiarum et communio ecclesiae* erfahrbar werden lässt. Der Einheitsdienst des Bischofs von Rom ist folglich als Primat in der Liebe im eucharistischen Sinn zu verstehen, der in der Kirche um eine Einheit besorgt ist, die eucharistische Gemeinschaft ermöglicht und schützt und wirksam und glaubwürdig verhindert, dass ein Altar gegen einen anderen Altar gestellt wird. Der Primat des Bischofs von Rom steht im Dienst der eucharistischen Einheit der Kirche und trägt dafür Sorge, dass die Kirche immer wieder von der Eucharistie her Mass nimmt.

In dieser Sicht besteht Hoffnung, dass der Primat des Bischofs von Rom nicht mehr wie bisher das „Haupthindernis“ für die Wiederherstellung der vollen Kirchengemeinschaft darstellt, sondern sich als „Hauptmöglichkeit für dasselbe Anliegen“ erweist⁵⁵. Da die Katholische Kirche den petrinischen Dienst des Bischofs von Rom als ein grosses Geschenk betrachtet, das sie von Christus erhalten hat, das sie aber nicht für sich behalten darf, sondern in ökumenischer Gemeinschaft mit der ganzen Christenheit teilen möchte, muss ihr in Gemeinschaft mit Papst Johannes Paul II. in besonderer Weise daran gelegen sein, dass der Bischof von Rom als Promotor der ökumenischen Verständigung und Garant der Einheit der Kirche von den anderen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften so verstanden und angenommen werden kann.

e) *Ökumene und Mission*

Hinter der ökumenischen Sicht des Primats des Bischofs von Rom steht die weitere Überzeugung, die Papst Johannes Paul II. am Ende seiner Enzyklika entfaltet, dass nämlich der Ökumenismus „nicht nur eine interne Frage der christlichen Gemeinschaften“ ist, sondern die Liebe betrifft, „die Gott in Jesus Christus der ganzen Menschheit zugedacht hat“, und dass diese Liebe behindern eine „Beleidigung für ihn und seinen Plan“ bedeutet, „alle in Christus zusammenzuführen“. Die christliche Gemeinschaft, die an Jesus Christus glaubt und mit der Leidenschaft des Evangeliums das Heil aller Menschen ersehnt, darf sich auf keinen Fall dem Anruf des Geistes verschliessen, „der alle Christen zur vollen und sichtbaren Einheit anleitet“⁵⁶. Da der Papst in den Spaltungen in der Christenheit das schwerste Hindernis für die Verkündigung des Evangeliums

55. Briefwechsel zwischen Metropolit Damaskinos und J. Cardinal Ratzinger, in: J. Cardinal Ratzinger, *Weggemeinschaft des Glaubens. Kirche als Communio* (Augsburg 2002) 187-209, zit. 203.

56. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 99.

erblickt, versteht es sich für ihn von selbst, dass das ökumenische Bemühen mit einer missionarischen Sichtweise verbunden sein muss.

Diese Perspektive einer engen Verbindung von Mission und Ökumene ist bereits in den Anfängen der Ökumenischen Bewegung wegleitend gewesen, die zugleich eine Missionsbewegung gewesen ist. Deren Stossrichtung hat ihren besonderen Ausdruck an der Ersten Weltmissionskonferenz gefunden, die im Jahre 1910 im schottischen Edinburgh stattgefunden hat. Den an dieser Konferenz Teilnehmenden hat das Ärgernis vor Augen gestanden, dass sich die verschiedenen christlichen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften in der Missionsarbeit konkurrenziert und damit der glaubwürdigen Verkündigung des Evangeliums Jesu Christi vor allem in fernen Kontinenten geschadet haben, weil sie zusammen mit dem Evangelium auch die europäischen Kirchenspaltungen in andere Kulturen hinein getragen haben. Die Konferenzteilnehmenden sind sich deshalb der schmerzlichen Tatsache bewusst geworden, dass die fehlende Einheit unter den Christen das grösste Hindernis für die Weltmission darstellt. Da ein glaubwürdiges Zeugnis in der Welt nur möglich ist, wenn die Kirchen ihre Trennungen im Glauben und im Leben überwinden, hat in Edinburgh vor allem der anglikanische Missionsbischof Charles Brent intensive Bemühungen um die Überwindung jener Differenzen in der Glaubenslehre und in der Ordnung der Kirchen gefordert, die ihrer Einheit hinderlich im Wege stehen.

Mit diesen prophetisch zu nennenden Einsichten ist die Erste Weltmissionskonferenz nicht nur zum Ausgangspunkt der modernen Ökumenischen Bewegung geworden, sondern ist auch der missionarische Auftrag der Kirche stets deutlicher zu einem wichtigen Thema auf der ökumenischen Traktandenliste geworden. Seit Edinburgh werden das ökumenische Anliegen und das missionarische Engagement stets intensiver zusammen gesehen und erweisen sich Ökumene und Mission gleichsam als Zwillinge, die sich wechselseitig fördern und fordern, und zwar mit einer inneren Logik: „Eine missionarische Kirche muss auch eine ökumenische Kirche sein; eine ökumenisch engagierte Kirche ist die Voraussetzung für eine missionarische Kirche.“⁵⁷

Die enge Verknüpfung von Mission und ökumenischer Suche nach der Einheit der Christen ist freilich so alt wie das Christentum und geht bis in den Abendmahlssaal zurück, in dem Jesus vor seinem Leiden und Sterben um die Einheit seiner Jünger gebetet hat, „damit die Welt glaubt, dass du mich gesandt hast“ (Joh 17, 21). In diesem Finalsatz in der Bitte des Herrn in seinem Testament bringt der Evangelist Johannes zum Ausdruck, dass die Einheit unter den Jüngern Jesu kein Selbstzweck sein kann, sondern im Dienst einer überzeugenden Verkündigung des Evangeliums Jesu Christi steht und die unerlässliche Voraussetzung für die Glaubwürdigkeit der christlichen Botschaft darstellt.

3. Aufnahme und Weiterführung von „Ut unum sint“

Die Wahrnehmung einer engen Verbindung zwischen Mission und Ökumene hat auch heute nichts an Aktualität eingebüsst, wie Papst Franziskus vor allem in seinem Apostolischen Schreiben „Evangelii gaudium“ eindringlich betont. Auch heute stellt sich die Spaltung der Christenheit als das stärkste Hindernis für eine glaubwürdige Evangelisie-

57. W. Kasper, Eine missionarische Kirche ist ökumenisch, in: Ders., Wege zur Einheit der Christen = Gesammelte Schriften. Band 14 (Freiburg i. Br. 2012) 621-634, zit. 623.

rung heraus. Er insistiert darauf, dass die Glaubwürdigkeit der christlichen Verkündigung sehr viel grösser wäre, „wenn die Christen ihre Spaltungen überwinden würden“⁵⁸, die der Glaubwürdigkeit des Evangeliums Schaden zufügen: „Angesichts der Wichtigkeit, die das Negativ-Zeugnis der Spaltung unter den Christen besonders in Asien und Afrika hat, wird die Suche nach Wegen der Einheit dringend. Die Missionare in jenen Kontinenten sprechen immer wieder von Kritiken, Klagen und dem Spott, der ihnen aufgrund des Skandals der Spaltungen unter den Christen begegnet.“ Von daher ist in den Augen von Papst Franziskus der „Einsatz für eine Einheit, die die Aufnahme Jesu Christi erleichtert, nicht länger blosser Diplomatie oder eine erzwungene Pflichterfüllung und verwandelt sich in einen unumgänglichen Weg der Evangelisierung“⁵⁹.

Mit diesem Einblick in die ökumenische Situation der Gegenwart wird deutlich, dass auch nach einem Vierteljahrhundert nach Erscheinen der Enzyklika „Ut unum sint“ die Ökumenische Bewegung noch keineswegs ans Ziel gekommen ist, sondern sich dieselbe Frage stellt wie damals: „Quanta est nobis via?“ – „Wie lang ist der Weg, der noch vor uns liegt?“⁶⁰ In der Enzyklika sind aber jene wichtigen Perspektiven ausgesprochen, die uns auch heute noch beschäftigen. Von daher ist es hilfreich, im Licht der Enzyklika die heutigen Herausforderungen zu betrachten, die sich in drei Perspektiven bündeln lassen, die die Ökumenische Bewegung stets begleitet haben: Die Ökumenische Bewegung ist von allem Anfang an eine Gebetsbewegung, eine Umkehrbewegung und eine Missionsbewegung gewesen. Diese drei Bewegungen haben wesentlich dazu beigetragen, dass die Ökumenische Bewegung in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten voranschreiten konnte. Diese drei Bewegungen müssen auch in Zukunft lebendig bleiben, wenn die Ökumenische Bewegung jenen Herausforderungen begegnen will, vor denen sie heute steht.

Dazu gehört vor allem, dass die in den ökumenischen Dialogen erreichten Ergebnisse rezipiert werden, und zwar von der ganzen Kirche, wie Papst Johannes Paul II. eigens hervorhebt: „Sie dürfen nicht Aussagen der bilateralen Kommissionen bleiben, sondern müssen Gemeingut werden.“⁶¹ Eine wichtige Verantwortung weist der Papst dabei den Theologen und Theologischen Fakultäten zu, die für die ökumenische Bildung Sorge zu tragen haben. Ihre Notwendigkeit hat bereits das von Papst Johannes Paul II. am 25. März 1993 approbierte und vom Päpstlichen Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen veröffentlichte „Direktorium zur Ausführung der Prinzipien und Normen über den Ökumenismus“ dadurch betont, dass ihr das ganze Kapitel III. gewidmet ist. Dabei geht es in erster Linie um die ökumenische Bildung aller Getauften: „Die ökumenische Bildung zielt darauf ab, dass alle Christen vom ökumenischen Geist beseelt werden, was immer ihre besondere Sendung und Aufgabe in der Welt und Gesellschaft auch sein mögen.“⁶² Damit die Kirche dieser Pflicht nachkommen kann, legt das Direktorium einen besonderen Akzent auf die ökumenische Bildung der künftigen Mitarbeitenden in der Pastoral. Um diese Pflicht nochmals zu unterstreichen, hat der Päpstliche Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen im Jahre 1998 ein eigenes Do-

58. Franziskus, *Evangelii gaudium*, Nr. 244.

59. Ebd. 246.

60. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, III. Kapitel.

61. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 80.

62. Päpstlicher Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen, *Direktorium zur Ausführung der Prinzipien und Normen über den Ökumenismus*, Nr. 58.

kument „Die ökumenische Dimension in der Ausbildung / Bildung derer, die in der Pastoral tätig sind“, veröffentlicht.

Solche ökumenische Bildung ist die beste Garantie dafür, dass auch morgen die Ökumene als eine heilige Pflicht wahrgenommen wird und die Ökumenische Bewegung ihr Ziel erreichen kann, die für Papst Johannes Paul II. in der „Wiederherstellung der sichtbaren vollen Einheit aller Getauften“ besteht⁶³. Dann leuchtet von selbst ein, dass es zur Ökumene schlechterdings keine Alternative gibt. Sie ist um der Glaubwürdigkeit des christlichen Glaubens und der Mission der Kirche in der heutigen Welt Notwendend, sie entspricht dem Willen des Herrn und ist eine Frucht des Heiligen Geistes. Es wäre deshalb Kleinglaube, würde man ihm nicht zutrauen, dass er das, was er verheissungsvoll initiiert hat, auch zu Ende führen wird – freilich so und zu jener Zeit, wie er will. Auf ihn zu hören, ist das Gebot der ökumenischen Stunde heute. Dies hat Papst Johannes Paul II. mit seiner wegweisenden Enzyklika der Katholischen Kirche und der ganzen Ökumene ins Stammbuch geschrieben, wofür wir ihm anlässlich des 25-Jahr-Jubiläums der Veröffentlichung der Enzyklika „Ut unum sint“ dankbar sind

63. Johannes Paul II., Ut unum sint, Nr. 77.

Vortrag bei Pro Oriente, Sektion Salzburg
(Salzburg, 7. Oktober 2020)



Kardinal Kurt Koch hält seinen Vortrag bei der Tagung von Pro Oriente, Salzburg, 7. Oktober 2020

ÖKUMENISCHER AUSTAUSCH VON GABEN ZWISCHEN OST UND WEST
Herausforderungen – Schwierigkeiten - Perspektiven

Im Laufe der zweitausendjährigen Geschichte der Christenheit müssen wir viele und verschiedene Spaltungen konstatieren. Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil spricht in seinem Dekret über den Ökumenismus „Unitatis redintegratio“ von „zwei besonderen Kategorien von Spaltungen, durch die der nahtlose Leibbrock Christi getroffen wurde“.¹ Man kann demgemäss zwei Grundtypen von Spaltungen unterscheiden, nämlich auf der einen Seite die ersten Spaltungen im Orient im 5. Jahrhundert und das grosse Schisma in der Kirche zwischen Ost und West im 11. Jahrhundert und auf der anderen Seite die Spaltungen in der Westkirche im 16. Jahrhundert. Die Überwindung dieser beiden grossen Spaltungen muss in verschiedenen und spezifischen ökumenischen Dialogen erfolgen. Man kann und muss sie voneinander unterscheiden, man darf sie aber nicht voneinander scheiden; denn das ökumenische Bemühen um die Wiederherstellung der Einheit der Kirche ist unteilbar. Die Feier des 35. Jahrestages der Gründung von PRO ORIENTE Sektion Salzburg durch Erzbischof Karl Berg am 7. Oktober 1985 legt es aber nahe, unsere Aufmerksamkeit heute Abend auf die Überwindung der Spaltungen im Orient und zwischen Ost und West zu konzentrieren. Denn gemäss Stiftungssatzung ist PRO ORIENTE mit der spezifischen Aufgabe betraut, „die ökumenischen Beziehungen zwischen der römisch-katholischen und der orthodoxen Kirche, sowie den orientalisch-orthodoxen Kirchen zu pflegen und zu fördern, die ökumenische Gesinnung unter den Christen zu vertiefen und ökumenische Initiativen zu unterstützen“ (§3). Bei diesen ökumenischen Bemühungen hat PRO ORIENTE Pionierarbeit geleistet, und zwar vor allem dadurch, dass Franz Kardinal König diese Stiftung mit dem Ziel begründet hat, auf inoffizieller Ebene Gespräche in Bewegung zu

1. Unitatis redintegratio, Nr. 13.

bringen, die auf der offiziellen Ebene noch nicht geführt werden konnten.² Kardinal König ist mit Recht überzeugt gewesen, dass es nicht möglich gewesen wäre, „eine ähnliche freundliche Atmosphäre im Vatikan für die ersten Gespräche seit Jahrhunderten mit unseren Schwesterkirchen im Osten zu schaffen. Die Ängste und Feindseligkeiten, die sich über die Jahrhunderte gesammelt hatten, wären ein zu grosses Hindernis gewesen.“³ Dass die Stiftung PRO ORIENTE seit ihrer Gründung diesen Dienst des Brückenbaus in der Christenheit zwischen Ost und West mit grossem Ernst und christlicher Freude zugleich wahrnimmt, verdient unseren grossen Respekt und unsere tiefe Dankbarkeit, die öffentlich auszusprechen der heutige Festanlass eine willkommene Gelegenheit ist.

1. Überwindung der ersten Spaltungen im Orient

Die Konzentration auf das ökumenische Dialogbemühen zwischen Ost und West hat noch einen weiteren Grund, den Papst Benedikt XVI. bei seiner Begegnung mit Vertretern der Orthodoxen Kirchen in Freiburg im Breisgau im September 2011 mit besonderem Nachdruck ausgesprochen hat: „Unter den christlichen Kirchen und Gemeinschaften steht uns ohne Zweifel die Orthodoxie theologisch am nächsten; Katholiken und Orthodoxe haben die gleiche altkirchliche Struktur bewahrt; in diesem Sinn wird alle alte Kirche, die doch immer gegenwärtig und neu ist.“⁴ Die gleiche altkirchliche Struktur besteht dabei im Kern in der sakramental-eucharistischen und der episkopalen Grundstruktur der Kirche in dem Sinne, dass die Einheit in der Eucharistie und das Bischofsamt in apostolischer Sukzession als für das Kirchesein konstitutiv betrachtet werden. Hier liegt denn auch der theologische Grund, dass die Katholische Kirche die Kirchen des Ostens als „echte Teilkirchen“ anerkennt und würdigt, selbst wenn sie nicht in verbindlicher Einheit mit dem Bischof von Rom leben.⁵ Wenn man diese enge Gemeinschaft wahrnimmt, spürt man auch mit besonderer Intensität die Notwendigkeit, die Spaltungen in der Kirche zwischen Ost und West zu überwinden und die Eucharistiegemeinschaft wieder aufzunehmen.

Diese Perspektiven gelten bereits im Blick auf die Überwindung jener Spaltungen, die im Orient im vierten und fünften Jahrhundert stattgefunden haben, da einzelne kirchliche Gemeinschaften die christologischen Lehrentscheidungen der Konzilien von Ephesus im Jahre 431 und vor allem von Chalkedon im Jahre 451 nicht angenommen und sich von der Reichskirche getrennt haben. Zu diesen so genannten Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen gehören die Koptisch-Orthodoxe Kirche von Alexandrien, die Patriarchate der Armenisch-Apostolischen Kirche mit Sitz in Etschmiadzin und dem Katholikate von Antelias, das Syrisch-Orthodoxe Patriarchat von Antiochia – einschliesslich der Syrisch-Orthodoxen Malankarischen Kirche –, die Orthodoxen Tewahedo Kirchen von Äthiopien und Eritrea und die Orthodox-Syrische Malankarische

2. Vgl. D. Winkler, Wann kommt die Einheit? Ökumene als Programm und Herausforderung = Kardinal König Bibliothek. Band 4 (Graz 2014).

3. F. König, Offen für Gott – offen für die Welt. Kirche im Dialog (Freiburg i. Br. 2005) 72-73.

4. Benedikt XVI., Begegnung mit den Vertretern der Orthodoxen Kirchen in Freiburg i. Breisgau am 24. September 2011.

5. Kongregation für die Glaubenslehre, Erklärung Dominus Iesus über die Einzigkeit und Heilsuniversalität Jesu Christi und der Kirche, Nr. 17.

Kirche.⁶ Bei den Kirchenspaltungen im 5. Jahrhundert haben gewiss auch politische Motive eine nicht unbedeutende Rolle gespielt, zumal es im Blick auf die damalige Zeit nicht leicht ist, zwischen kirchlicher Glaubensverantwortung und Reichspolitik zu unterscheiden oder gar zu trennen. Der theologische Grund für die Spaltungen ist aber der Streit um die adäquate Formulierung des Christusbekenntnisses gewesen.

Die Teilnehmer am Konzil von Chalkedon haben sich nach einem langen theologischen Ringen für die Definition entschieden, dass Jesus Christus, da er wahrer Gott und wahrer Mensch ist, eine Person in zwei Naturen ist, die als „unvermischt, unveränderlich, ungetrennt und unteilbar“ erkannt werden. Diese Formel „in zwei Naturen“ haben die vorchalkedonischen Kirchen dahingehend verstanden, das Konzil würde von zwei Subjekten in Christus reden und vertrete dementsprechend eine Zwei-Söhne-Lehre. Um eine solche als Häresie wahrgenommene Lehre zu überwinden, sind sie der vor allem in Alexandrien lebendigen Glaubensüberzeugung treu geblieben, dass die eine göttliche Natur in Jesus von Nazareth Fleisch geworden ist, und sie haben in der Folge betont, dass in Christus nicht zwei Naturen, sondern eine Natur gegeben ist. Über diese diophysitische und miophysitische Formeln und die ihnen zugrundeliegenden Probleme, was unter Natur, hypostasis, prosopon und persona genauer zu verstehen ist, sind heftige Auseinandersetzungen geführt worden, die schliesslich zu Spaltungen in der Kirche geführt haben.

Zu einer Wiederannäherung zwischen diesen Kirchen ist es erst im ökumenischen Zeitalter gekommen. Da es bei den Spaltungen im fünften Jahrhundert um das Christusbekenntnis und damit um die innerste Mitte des christlichen Glaubens gegangen ist, versteht es sich leicht, dass bei den beginnenden ökumenischen Gesprächen zwischen der Katholischen Kirche und den Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen in erster Linie christologische Fragen zu behandeln gewesen sind.⁷ Die theologischen Dialoge haben dabei zum erfreulichen Ergebnis geführt, dass es sich bei den genannten christologischen Auseinandersetzungen im Wesentlichen auch um ein Sprachproblem gehandelt hat, insofern man verschiedene philosophische und theologische Begriffe von Person und Natur verwendet hat, im Grunde aber denselben Christusglauben bezeugen wollte.⁸

Bei der Ermöglichung dieses erfreulichen Ergebnisses kommt ein grosses Verdienst der Stiftung PRO ORIENTE zu, die auch den ökumenischen Dialog mit dem Orientalischen Christentum intensiv gepflegt hat und ihn bis heute fördert.⁹ Be-

6. Vgl. Ch. Lange, K. Pinggéra (Hrsg.), *Die altorientalischen Kirchen. Glaube und Geschichte* (Darmstadt 2010); P. Siniscalco, *Le Antiche Chiese Orientali. Storia e letteratura* (Roma 2005).

7. Vgl. K. Kardinal Koch, *Jesus der Christus: Grund der Einheit oder Motiv der Trennung?* in: Th. Hainthaler, D. Ansorge, A. Wucherpfennig (Hrsg.), *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der einen Kirche. Christologie – Kirchen des Ostens – Ökumenische Dialoge* (Freiburg i.Br. 2019) 365-384.

8. Vgl. E. Ch. Suttner, *Vorchalcedonische und chalcedonische Christologie. Die eine Wahrheit in unterschiedlicher Begrifflichkeit*, in: Ders., *Kirche in einer zueinander rückenden Welt. Neue Aufsätze zu Theologie, Geschichte und Spiritualität des christlichen Ostens* (Würzburg 2003) 155-170.

9. Vgl. D. Winkler, *Ökumene zwischen Stolper- und Meilensteinen. Der Dialog von PRO ORIENTE mit den orientalisch-orthodoxen Kirchen*, in: J. Marte, R. Prokschi (Hrsg.), *DENKWERKSTATT PRO ORIENTE. Erfolgsgeschichte eines Ost-West-Dialogs (1964-2014) = PRO ORIENTE Band XXVIII* (Innsbruck-Wien 2014) 100-123.

reits die erste PRO-ORIENTE-Konsultation, die im Jahre 1971 in Wien mit Vertretern der Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen stattgefunden und sich die Aufgabe vorgenommen hat, den grossen Konflikt um das Konzil von Chalkedon zu analysieren und damit die belastende Vergangenheit aufzuarbeiten, hat mit einem weitgehenden Konsens im Christusblauben und der Feststellung von Unterschieden in der theologischen Terminologie geendet. Dieser Konsens ist mit der so genannten „Wiener christologischen Formel“ zum Ausdruck gebracht worden, in der die Einheit von Gottheit und Menschheit in Jesus Christus und zugleich deren Unterschiedenheit deutlich festgehalten worden sind, ohne dabei die in der Geschichte umstrittenen Fachtermini wie *physis*, *hypostasis* und *prosopon* zu verwenden.

Diese wichtigen ökumenischen Gespräche haben die späteren offiziellen Dialoge und die auf sie folgenden christologischen Erklärungen zwischen dem Bischof von Rom und Oberhäuptern von verschiedenen Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen vorbereitet und ermöglicht. Besonders hervorzuheben ist dabei bereits im Jahre 1984 die Gemeinsame Erklärung von Papst Johannes Paul II. und dem Syrisch-Orthodoxen Patriarchen von Antiochien und des ganzen Ostens, Ignatius Zakk I. Iwas, in der sie betont haben: „In Worten und Leben bekennen wir die wahre Lehre bezüglich Christus, unserem Herrn, ungeachtet der Unterschiede in der Interpretation solcher Lehren, wie sie zur Zeit des Konzils von Chalkedon aufkamen.“¹⁰ Auf dieser gemeinsamen Erklärung aufbauend haben beide Kirchenführer ein pastorales Abkommen mit der Ermöglichung des wechselseitigen Empfangs der Sakramente der Busse, der Eucharistie und der Krankensalbung in Notsituationen unterzeichnet.¹¹ Dieses Abkommen verdient dabei das Attribut „historisch“, da zum ersten Mal in der Geschichte trotz weiter bestehender Kirchentrennung eine begrenzte *communicatio in sacris* zwischen beiden Kirchen ermöglicht worden ist.

Mit diesen und anderen Gemeinsamen Erklärungen konnten nach mehr als 1500 Jahren nach dem Konzil von Chalkedon die christologischen Differenzen zwischen der Katholischen Kirche und den Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen in einer offiziellen Weise bereinigt werden. Damit freilich ist die Kirchen- und Eucharistiegemeinschaft noch nicht wiederhergestellt. Um das Erreichen dieses Zieles weiter vorzubereiten, ist im Jahre 2003 eine Gemischte Internationale Kommission zwischen der Katholischen Kirche und den Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen begründet worden, die in der Zwischenzeit bereits zwei bedeutende Dokumente verabschiedet hat. Im ersten Dokument „Wesen, Verfassung und Sendung der Kirche“¹² konnte ein breiter Konsens über fundamentale ekklesiologische Prinzipien wie über das Mysterium der

10. Erklärung von Papst Johannes Paul II. und dem syrisch-orthodoxen Patriarchen von Antiochien und dem Ganzen Osten, Ignatius Zakka I. Iwas, zu gegenseitigen pastoralen Hilfen 23. Juni 1984, in: H. Meyer, H. J. Urban, L. Vischer (Hrsg.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*. Band 2: 1982-1990 (Paderborn – Frankfurt a. M. 1992) 571-574.

11. Vgl. J. Oeldemann, *Gemeinsamer Glaube und pastorale Zusammenarbeit. 25 Jahre Weggemeinschaft zwischen der Syrisch-Orthodoxen Kirche und der Römisch-Katholischen Kirche* (Basel 2011).

12. *Wesen, Verfassung und Sendung der Kirche*. Internationale Gemeinsame Kommission für den theologischen Dialog zwischen der Katholischen Kirche und den Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen, 2009, in: J. Oeldemann, F. Nüssel, U. Swarat, A. Vletsis (Hrsg.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*. Band 4: 2001-2010 (Paderborn – Leipzig 2012) 849-868.

Kirche, das Bischofsamt in apostolischer Sukzession, Synodalität, beziehungsweise Kollegialität und Primat und über die Sendung der Kirche aufgezeigt werden. Im zweiten, im Jahre 2015 veröffentlichten, Dokument über die „Ausübung der Gemeinschaft im Leben der frühen Kirche und die Implikationen für die Suche nach Gemeinschaft heute“ wird die Natur der Beziehungen untersucht, die zwischen den Kirchen in der Periode vor den Spaltungen im fünften Jahrhundert bestanden haben, und es wird gezeigt, dass die volle Gemeinschaft zwischen den Kirchen auf den folgenden sechs Feldern zum Ausdruck gebracht worden ist, nämlich im Austausch von Briefen und Besuchen, auf Synoden und Konzilien, in Gebeten und anderen liturgischen Praktiken, in der Verehrung von gemeinsamen Heiligen und Märtyrern, in der Entwicklung des Mönchtums in allen Kirchen und bei Wallfahrten zu Heiligtümern in verschiedenen Kirchen.

In ihrer dritten Phase hat sich die Kommission vor allem Fragen der Sakramententheologie gewidmet und arbeitet momentan an der Verabschiedung eines diesbezüglichen Dokuments. Danach wird sie sich mariologischen Fragen zuwenden, um anschliessend mit der Bearbeitung der ekklesiologischen Probleme den Kirchen zu helfen, die Spaltungen zu überwinden und auf dem Weg zur eucharistischen Gemeinschaft einen wesentlichen Schritt weiterkommen zu können.

2. Überwindung des grossen Schismas zwischen Ost und West

Wenden wir uns von daher dem grossen Schisma in der Kirche zwischen Ost und West zu, das zumeist mit dem Jahre 1054 verbunden wird, als die gegenseitigen Exkommunikationen zwischen Rom und Konstantinopel ausgesprochen worden sind. Dabei handelt es sich freilich weniger um ein historisches als vielmehr um ein symbolisches Datum. Denn in der westlichen und östlichen Christenheit ist das Evangelium Jesu Christi eigentlich von Anfang an in einer unterschiedlichen Art und Weise aufgenommen und in verschiedenen Traditionen und kulturellen Ausformungen gelebt und weitergegeben worden. Mit diesen Unterschieden haben die kirchlichen Gemeinschaften im ersten Jahrtausend in Ost und West in der einen Kirche gelebt. Sie haben sich aber immer mehr voneinander entfremdet und konnten sich immer weniger verstehen.¹³ Es sind vor allem unterschiedliche Verstehensweisen und verschiedene Spiritualitäten gewesen, die zu einem grossen Teil die Kirchenspaltung verursacht haben, wie Walter Kardinal Kasper mit Recht feststellt: „Die Christenheit hat sich nicht primär auseinander diskutiert und über unterschiedlichen Lehrformeln zerstritten, sondern auseinander gelebt.“¹⁴

Angesichts dieser Entfremdungsprozesse, die nach der Trennung im zweiten Jahrtausend nochmals wesentlich vertieft worden sind, darf man es als bedeutsamen Schritt würdigen, dass in der zweiten Hälfte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts intensive Bemühungen um Verständigung und Versöhnung in der Kirche zwischen Ost und West unternommen worden sind. Deren Höhepunkt ist zweifellos das grossartige Ereignis am 7. Dezember 1965 gewesen, als unmittelbar vor Abschluss des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils in der Patriarchalkirche St. Georg im Phanar in Konstantinopel und in der Petersbasilika in Rom die gemeinsame Erklärung der höchsten Repräsentanten der beiden kirchlichen Gemeinschaften, des Ökumenischen Patriarchen Athenagoras

13. Vgl. Y. Congar, *Zerstrittene Christenheit. Wo trennten sich Ost und West* (Wien 1959).

14. W. Kardinal Kasper, *Wege der Einheit. Perspektiven für die Ökumene* (Freiburg i. Br. 2005) 208.

und von Papst Paul VI., verlesen wurde, mit der die beiderseitigen Anathemata von 1054 „aus dem Gedächtnis und der Mitte der Kirche entfernt“ worden sind, „damit sie für die Wiederannäherung in der Liebe kein Hindernis mehr darstellen können“.¹⁵ In dem in dieser Weise die Exkommunikationen von 1054 dem Vergessen überantwortet worden sind, ist zugleich erklärt worden, dass sie nicht mehr zum amtlichen Bestand der Kirchen gehören. Mit diesem Akt ist das Gift der Exkommunikation aus dem Organismus der Kirche gezogen und das „Symbol der Spaltung“ durch das „Symbol der Liebe“ ersetzt worden,¹⁶ und er ist zum Ausgangspunkt für den ökumenischen Dialog der Liebe und der Wahrheit geworden.¹⁷

Der Dialog der Wahrheit, nämlich die theologische Bearbeitung der von der Vergangenheit her strittigen Fragen wird von der Gemischten Internationalen Kommission für den theologischen Dialog zwischen der Katholischen Kirche und der Orthodoxen Kirche in ihrer Gesamtheit wahrgenommen, die im Jahre 1979 von Papst Johannes Paul II. und dem Ökumenischen Patriarchen Dimitrios I. ins Leben gerufen worden ist und in der vierzehn autokephale oder autonome Orthodoxe Kirchen, mit Ausnahme derjenigen von Bulgarien, Mitglieder sind. Der theologische Dialog der Wahrheit kann von der erfreulichen Feststellung ausgehen, dass die Katholische Kirche mit den Orthodoxen Kirchen eine grosse gemeinsame Basis an Glaubensüberzeugungen teilt. Von daher konnte sich der ökumenische Dialog zunächst auf die Konsolidierung des gemeinsamen Glaubensfundamentes konzentrieren.¹⁸

Dies gilt zumal für die erste Dekade des Dialogs in den Jahren 1980 bis 1990, in der auf verschiedenen Vollversammlungen der Kommission weitgehende Konvergenzen zwischen der orthodoxen und katholischen Theologie festgestellt und in drei bedeutsamen Dokumenten veröffentlicht werden konnten wie im Jahre 1982 über „Das Geheimnis der Kirche und der Eucharistie im Licht des Geheimnisses der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit“¹⁹, im Jahre 1987 über „Glaube, Sakramente und Einheit der Kirche“²⁰ und im Jahre 1988 über „Das Weihesakrament in der sakramentalen Struktur der Kirche, insbesondere die Bedeutung der Apostolischen Sukzession für die Heiligung und

15. Déclaration commune du pape Paul VI et du Patriarche Athénagoras exprimant leur décision d'enlever de la mémoire et du milieu de l'Église les sentences d'excommunication de l'année 1054, in: Tomos Agapis. Vatican-Phanar (1958-1970) (Rome – Istanbul 1971), Nr. 127.

16. J. Ratzinger, Rom und die Kirchen des Ostens nach der Aufhebung der Exkommunikation von 1054, in: Ders., Theologische Prinzipienlehre. Bausteine zur Fundamentaltheologie (München 1982) 214-230.

17. Vgl. K. Cardinal Koch, Auf dem Weg zur Wiederherstellung der einen Kirche in Ost und West, in: D. Schon (Hrsg.), Dialog 2.0 – Braucht der orthodox-katholische Dialog neue Impulse? (Regensburg 2017) 19-41.

18. Vgl. Frère Patrice Mahieu, O.S.B., Se préparer au don de l'unité. La commission internationale catholique-orthodoxe, 1975-2000 (Paris 2014); G. Martzelos, Der theologische Dialog zwischen der Orthodoxen und der Römisch-katholischen Kirche: Chronik – Bewertung – Aussichten, in: K. Nikolakopoulos (Hrsg.), Benedikt XVI. und die Orthodoxe Kirche. Bestandsaufnahmen, Erwartungen, Perspektiven (St. Ottilien 2008) 289-327; R. G. Robertson, Eastern Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue (From 1980), in: H. A. Rodano (Ed.), Celebrating a Century of Ecumenism. Exploring the Achievements of International Dialogue (Geneva 2012) 249-263.

19. Dokumentiert in: H. Meyer, H. J. Urban, L. Vischer (Hrsg.), Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung. Band 2: 1982-1990 (Paderborn – Frankfurt a. M. 1992) 531-539.

20. Dokumentiert in: a.a.O., 542-551.

die Einheit des Volkes Gottes²¹. Mit diesem Dokument hat die Kommission in Aussicht genommen, dass sich der ökumenische Dialog inskünftig dem Thema des Primats widmen und im Sinne eines ersten Schrittes die theologischen und kanonischen Konsequenzen aus der sakramentalen Natur der Kirche und dabei vor allem die Frage nach den gegenseitigen Beziehungen zwischen Autorität und Konziliarität in der Kirche besprochen werden sollten.

Dazu ist es allerdings nicht gekommen, weil in der zweiten Dekade in den Jahren 1990 bis 2000 die ökumenischen Gespräche immer schwieriger geworden sind und der theologische Dialog beinahe zum Erliegen gekommen ist. Ein wesentlicher Grund dafür lag in der neuen Situation, die nach der politischen Wende im Jahre 1989 eingetreten ist. Denn die politischen Veränderungen in Osteuropa haben dazu geführt, dass vor allem in der Ukraine, in Siebenbürgen und in Rumänien die Katholischen Ostkirchen, die während der Diktatur unter Stalin in brutaler Weise verfolgt und der Orthodoxen Kirche zugeschlagen worden sind, wieder aus den Katakomben in das öffentliche Leben zurückkehren konnten. Diese Entwicklung hat auf orthodoxer Seite die alten Polemiken hinsichtlich von Uniatismus und Proselytismus wieder aufflammen lassen, was zu einer dramatischen Verschlechterung der Dialogatmosphäre und zu einer Abänderung vor vorgesehenen ökumenischen Traktandenliste geführt hat. Auf zwei Vollversammlungen der Kommission in Balamand im Libanon im Jahre 1993 mit dem verabschiedeten Dokument „Der Uniatismus – eine überholte Unionsmethode – und die derzeitige Suche nach der vollen Gemeinschaft“²² und in Baltimore im Jahre 2000 wurde versucht, eine Lösung des Uniatismusproblems zu finden, was jedoch gescheitert ist, so dass von orthodoxer Seite die Kommissionsarbeit beendet wurde. Trotz einer langen Periode des theologischen Fortschritts hat der theologische Dialog wegen der Problematik des Uniatismus Schiffbruch erlitten; und er schien, was zumindest die Bewältigung dieses heiklen Problems betrifft, wieder am Nullpunkt angelangt zu sein.

Kurz nach Beginn des Pontifikats von Papst Benedikt XVI. und aufgrund seiner Vermittlungsbemühungen konnte der im Jahre 2000 abgebrochene Dialog wieder aufgenommen werden, so dass die Gemischte Internationale Kommission ihre Arbeit weiterführen konnte, und zwar mit der Verabschiedung des bedeutsamen Dokuments „Ekklesiologische und kanonische Konsequenzen der sakramentalen Natur der Kirche. Kirchliche Communio, Konziliarität und Autorität“²³ auf der Vollversammlung in Ravenna im Jahre 2007. In diesem Dokument wird dargelegt, dass Synodalität und Primat auf allen Ebenen des Lebens der Kirche wechselseitig voneinander abhängig sind und dass die Kirche auf allen Ebenen und damit auch auf der universalen Ebene einen Protos oder eine kephale braucht. Dass Katholiken und Orthodoxe dies zum ersten Mal gemeinsam erklären konnten, darf als Meilenstein im katholisch-orthodoxen Dialog gewürdigt werden.

In Ravenna ist ferner der Plan gefasst worden, dass die Kommission auf dem theologischen Fundament des verabschiedeten Dokumentes in einem nächsten Schritt in einer historischen Studie die Frage erörtern soll, welche Rolle der Bischof von Rom

21. Dokumentiert in: a.a.O., 556-565.

22. Dokumentiert in: H. Meyer, D. Papandreou, H. J. Urban, L. Vischer (Hrsg.), Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung. Band 3: 1990-2001 (Paderborn – Frankfurt a. M. 2003) 560-567.

23. Dokumentiert in: J. Oeldemann, F. Nüssel, U. Swarat, A. Vletsis (Hrsg.), Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung. Band 4: 2001-2010 (Paderborn – Leipzig 2012) 833-848.

im ersten, in Ost und West gemeinsamen Jahrtausend gespielt hat, um in einem zweiten Schritt die unterschiedlichen Entwicklungen in Ost und West im zweiten Jahrtausend zu analysieren und in einem dritten Schritt ein gemeinsames Verständnis des Primats und seiner Praxis für das dritte Jahrtausend zu entwickeln. Nach einer längeren Phase und nach schwierigen Vollversammlungen konnte die Kommission im Jahre 2016 das so genannte Chieti-Dokument „Synodalität und Primat im Ersten Jahrtausend. Auf dem Weg zu einem gemeinsamen Verständnis im Dienst an der Einheit der Kirche“ verabschieden. Als nächste Aufgabe steht die Bearbeitung der Fortsetzung mit dem Thema „Primat und Synodalität im Zweiten Jahrtausend und heute“ an. Da während dieses Zeitraumes, in dem die Christen im Osten wie im Westen zum überwiegenden Teil getrennt voneinander gelebt haben, in der Lehre und Praxis der Kirche auf katholischer und orthodoxer Seite unterschiedliche Entwicklungen festzustellen sind, muss im neuen Dokument versucht werden, näher auf die Hintergründe und die Art und Weise des in den verschiedenen kirchlichen Gemeinschaften gelebten Verhältnisses von Synodalität und Primat im Zweiten Jahrtausend einzugehen, indem die geschichtlichen Daten mit theologischen Reflexionen beleuchtet werden.

Anschließend wird sich die Kommission in der künftigen Arbeit dem Thema widmen: „Auf dem Weg zu Einheit im Glauben. Theologische und kanonische Fragen“. Dabei wird es darum gehen, in einem ersten Schritt zusammenzutragen, was im theologischen Dialog bereits geleistet worden ist, und in einem zweiten Schritt jene theologischen und kanonischen Fragen zu benennen, die noch gelöst werden müssen, um die Einheit im Glauben zwischen Orthodoxer und Katholischer Kirche zu finden, die den Weg öffnen wird zur eucharistischen Gemeinschaft.

Überschattet ist der orthodox-katholische Dialog gegenwärtig von den tief liegenden Spannungen zwischen dem Russisch-Orthodoxen Patriarchat von Moskau und dem Ökumenischen Patriarchat von Konstantinopel zur Frage der Autokephalie der Orthodoxen Kirche in der Ukraine.²⁴ Da der Heilige Synod des Patriarchats von Moskau als Reaktion auf die diesbezüglichen Entscheidungen des Ökumenischen Patriarchen Bartholomaios I. das Verbot der Teilnahme von Vertretern des Patriarchats von Moskau an allen durch einen Bischof des Ökumenischen Patriarchats co-präsidierten Kommissionen beschlossen hat, ist davon auch die Gemischte Internationale Kommission für den theologischen Dialog betroffen. Da die Orthodoxen Kirchen jedoch festgelegt haben, dass die Abwesenheit einer oder mehrerer Orthodoxer Kirchen nicht die gänzliche Aufhebung des Dialogs bedeuten kann, wird die Kommission mit ihrer Dialogarbeit fortfahren.

3. Ökumenischer Austausch von Gaben

Der geraffte Überblick über die Geschichte der theologischen Arbeit in der Internationalen Kommission zeigt, dass es gegenwärtig noch unabsehbar ist, wann sie eine glaubwürdige und tragfähige Übereinkunft über den wunden Punkt, der bisher die Aufnahme von Kirchengemeinschaft verhindert hat, nämlich über die Frage des Primats des Bischofs von Rom, erreichen wird. Denn bei dieser Frage handelt es sich um ein

24. Vgl. B. Hallensleben (Hrsg.), *Orthodoxe Kirche in der Ukraine – wohin? Dokumente zur Debatte um die Autokephalie* = *Studia Oecumenica Friburgensia* 92 (Münster 2019); J. Oeldemann, *Orthodoxe Kirchen in der Ukraine. Zum Spannungsfeld zwischen Konstantinopel und Moskau*, in: *Stimmen der Zeit* 144 (2019) 279-294.

schwieriges Problem, dem noch viel historische Erkundung und theologische Reflexionsarbeit gewidmet werden müssen. Angesichts dieser grossen Herausforderung wird der theologische Dialog nur in die Zukunft führen, wenn die jeweiligen starken Seiten beider Kirchen miteinander ins Gespräch gebracht werden, und zwar in der Hoffnung auf Lernbereitschaft auf beiden Seiten und in der Bewährung des Grundprinzips des ökumenischen Dialogs, der im gegenseitigen Austausch von Gaben besteht, in dem wir von den anderen lernen können.

Die Stärke der Orthodoxen Kirchen ist ihre Synodalität, weshalb Papst Franziskus immer wieder betont, die Katholische Kirche habe im Dialog mit den orthodoxen Brüdern die Möglichkeit, „etwas mehr über die Bedeutung der bischöflichen Kollegialität und ihre Erfahrung der Synodalität zu lernen“²⁵. Im Spiegel der Tradition der Orthodoxen Kirchen wird die Katholische Kirche in der Tat eingestehen müssen, dass sie in ihrem Leben und in ihren ekklesialen Strukturen noch nicht jenes Mass an Synodalität ausgebildet hat, das theologisch möglich und notwendig wäre, und dass eine glaubwürdige Verbindung des primatial-hierarchischen Prinzips mit dem synodal-communialen Prinzip eine wesentliche Hilfe für das weitere ökumenische Gespräch mit der Orthodoxie sein könnte. Die Verstärkung der Synodalität stellt jedenfalls einen wichtigen ökumenischen Beitrag der Katholischen Kirche für eine mögliche Anerkennung des Primats dar. Für Papst Franziskus ist es evident, „dass das katholische Engagement, eine synodale Kirche aufzubauen, „reich an Auswirkungen auf die Ökumene“ ist und auch eine neue Sicht über den Primat des Bischofs von Rom ermöglicht: „Ich bin überzeugt, dass in einer synodalen Kirche auch die Ausübung des petrinischen Primats besser geklärt werden kann. Der Papst steht nicht allein über der Kirche, sondern er steht in ihr als Getaufte unter den Getauften, im Bischofskollegium als Bischof unter den Bischöfen und ist – als Nachfolger des Apostels Petrus – zugleich berufen, die Kirche von Rom zu leiten, die in der Liebe allen Kirchen vorsteht.“²⁶

Auf der anderen Seite wird man von den Orthodoxen Kirchen erwarten dürfen, dass sie im ökumenischen Dialog lernen, dass ein Primat auch auf der universalen Ebene der Kirche nicht nur möglich und theologisch legitim, sondern auch notwendig ist, dass auch die innerorthodoxen Spannungen und Konflikte, die vor allem bei der „Heiligen und Grossen Synode“ von Kreta im Jahre 2016 deutlich zum Ausdruck gekommen sind²⁷, es nahelegen, auch auf der universalen Ebene der Kirche über ein Amt der Einheit nachzudenken, und dass dies keineswegs im Gegensatz zu einer eucharistischen Ekklesiologie steht, sondern mit ihr kompatibel ist, wie der orthodoxe Metropolit und ehemalige Co-Präsident der Gemischten Internationalen Kommission, John D. Zizioulas, immer wieder in Erinnerung gerufen hat²⁸.

25. Franziskus, *Evangelii gaudium*, Nr. 246.

26. Franziskus, Ansprache bei der 50-Jahr-Feier der Errichtung der Bischofssynode am 17. Oktober 2015.

27. Vgl. Th. Hainthaler, Nach der „Heiligen und Grossen Synode“ von Kreta 2016. Fragen und Überlegungen zu einem Neuansatz des orthodox-katholischen Dialogs, in: D. Schon (Hrsg.), *Dialog 2.0 – Braucht der orthodox-katholische Dialog neue Impulse?* = Schriften des Ostkircheninstituts der Diözese Regensburg. Band 1 (Regensburg 2017) 118-133.

28. J. D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (New York 1985); Idem, *The One and the Many. Studies on God, Man, the Church and the World Today* (Alhambra 2010).

Den Orthodoxen Kirchen ist ebenso die Einsicht zuzumuten, dass ein solches Amt der Einheit mehr sein muss als ein reiner Ehrenprimat, sondern auch jurisdiktionelle Elemente einschliesst. Dass der Papst „Erster unter Gleichen“ ist, dies würde auch die Orthodoxie ohne Weiteres akzeptieren. Denn sie anerkennt, dass auf der universalen Ebene der Bischof von Rom der Protos ist, wie es bereits im Konzil von Nizäa festgelegt ist. In katholischer Sicht ist der Bischof von Rom ebenfalls „Erster“, aber er hat als solcher „spezifische Funktionen und Aufgaben“²⁹. Doch auch in katholischer Sicht darf der Primat des Bischofs von Rom nicht allein als eine juristische und schon gar nicht als eine rein äusserliche Zutat zur eucharistischen Ekklesiologie, sondern als in ihr selbst begründet verstanden werden, insofern die Kirche, die als weltweites Netz von Eucharistiegemeinschaften lebt, auch auf der universalen Ebene einen vollmächtigen Dienst an der Einheit braucht.³⁰ Der Dienst des Bischofs von Rom ist deshalb zutiefst nur von der Eucharistie her zu verstehen, nämlich als Primat in der Liebe im eucharistischen Sinn, der in der Kirche um eine Einheit besorgt ist, die eucharistische Gemeinschaft ermöglicht und schützt und glaubwürdig und wirksam verhindert, dass ein Altar gegen einen anderen Altar gestellt wird. Von daher muss der Liebesdienst des Bischofs von Rom aber auch „ein mit jurisdiktionellen Mitteln ausgestatteter Dienst“ sein, „welcher nicht über die Kirche herrscht, sondern mit den ihm zur Verfügung stehenden Mitteln die Einheit zu wahren vermag und damit diesem Liebesbund Bestand gibt“³¹.

Wenn in diesem Sinn die Stärken der Orthodoxen und der Katholischen Kirche miteinander ins ökumenische Gespräch gebracht werden, könnte die Entwicklung einer glaubwürdigen theologischen Synthese von Primat und Synodalität eine weiterführende Etappe auf dem Weg zur Einheit sein. Ein solcher ökumenischer Austausch der Gaben zwischen Ost und West könnte sich auch in noch grundlegenden theologischen Fragen als fruchtbar erweisen, was ich abschliessend nur an einem Beispiel zeigen möchte.

Wenn man die dreibändige Dogmatik des rumänisch-orthodoxen Theologen Dumitru Staniloae aufschlägt, findet man nach dem ersten Teil, der der orthodoxen Lehre von Gott gewidmet ist, für den zweiten Teil die Überschrift: „Die Welt als Werk der Liebe Gottes, dazu bestimmt, vergöttlicht zu werden“. Dieser Teil ist seinerseits untergliedert in 1. „Die Schöpfung der sichtbaren Welt“, und 2. „Die Erschaffung der unsichtbaren Welt“. Staniloae ist sich dabei dessen bewusst, dass er sich mit diesem Ansatz von der westlichen Tradition unterscheidet, wenn er festhält: „In der abendländischen Theologie gab es des öfteren Bestrebungen, die Erlösung des Menschen von der der Natur zu trennen. Das morgenländische Christentum hat beide nie voneinander

29. Benedikt XVI., *Licht der Welt. Der Papst, die Kirche und die Zeichen der Zeit. Ein Gespräch mit Peter Seewald* (Freiburg i. Br. 2010) 114.

30. Vgl. B. Forte, *Il primato nell'eucaristia. Considerazioni ecumeniche intorno al ministero petrino nella Chiesa*, in: *Aspenas* 23 (1976) 391-410; A. Garuti, *Ecclesiologia Eucaristica e primato del Vescovo di Roma*, in: R. Karwacki (Hrsg.), *Benedictus qui venit in Nomine Domini* (Radom 200) 455-472.

31. M. Kunzler, *Ergänzungen aus dem christlichen Osten*, in: M. Heim – J. C. Pech (Hrsg.), *Zur Mitte der Theologie im Werk von Joseph Ratzinger / Benedikt XVI. = Ratzinger Studien. Band 6* (Regensburg 2013) 122-140, zit. 139.

getrennt.³² In der Tat ist in der westlichen Tradition vor allem in der Neuzeit die kosmische Dimension des christlichen Glaubens und theologischen Denkens weithin aus dem Bewusstsein entschwunden und durch eine starke Anthropozentrik ersetzt worden. Wohl deshalb steht in der westlichen Tradition in der Christologie seit längerer Zeit bis heute die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus im Vordergrund, während in der orthodoxen Theologie nach wie vor eine kosmische Christologie vertreten wird, und zwar in treuer Erbschaft zur altkirchlichen Christologie.

Noch deutlicher zeigt sich der Unterschied im theologischen Verständnis des Gottesdienstes. In der westlichen Tradition liegt in der liturgischen Praxis und in der Liturgiewissenschaft der Akzent weitgehend auf der Versammlung der Gemeinde und folglich auch auf der Frage, wie die Liturgie zu gestalten ist, so dass sie dem Glaubensbewusstsein der Gemeinde entspricht. Im Unterschied zu dieser forcierten Konzentration der Liturgie auf die Gemeindeperspektive wird die Liturgie in der ostkirchlichen Tradition immer auch und sogar prioritär als ein kosmisches Geschehen verstanden, und zwar in dem Sinn, dass die Liturgie vor allem der Eucharistie den eschatologischen Lobgesang des gesamten Kosmos vorwegnimmt und die himmlische Liturgie bereits in die irdische Liturgie hinein ragt und in ihr gegenwärtig ist, so dass sich Himmel und Erde berühren. Im ostkirchlichen Verständnis ist Liturgie sehr viel mehr als die Zusammenkunft einer mehr oder weniger grossen Gemeinschaft von Menschen. Sie wird vielmehr in die Weite des Kosmos hinein gefeiert, sie umgreift Geschichte und Schöpfung zugleich und macht die Wand zwischen der irdischen und der himmlischen Liturgie durchsichtig. Vor allem die Feier der Eucharistie wird nicht einfach in einem historischen Rückblick auf das Letzte Abendmahl verstanden, sondern im eschatologischen Vorausblick auch und vor allem als Vorwegfeier der eschatologischen Vollendung des Kosmos und der himmlischen Verherrlichung Gottes.

Nur auf diesem Hintergrund des ostkirchlichen Liturgieverständnisses kann man, um nur ein Beispiel zu nennen, die in den Orthodoxen Kirchen selbstverständliche Ostrichtung des liturgischen Betens und Feierns in adäquater Weise verstehen und würdigen. Denn in der östlichen Tradition wird die gemeinsame Ausrichtung der Gemeinde und des Priesters auf den Osten hin als „kosmisches Symbol für den wiederkommenden Christus“ verstanden³³. Die Frage der Zelebrationsrichtung ist deshalb in erster Linie mit einer christologisch-eschatologischen und nicht mit einer ekklesiologischen Botschaft verbunden.

Müssten nicht auch wir Christen im Westen diese kosmische Dimension des Glaubens und des theologischen Denkens neu entdecken und uns von der orthodoxen Theologie bereichern lassen, zumal in der heutigen Zeit, in der wir uns um die bedrohte Schöpfung berechnete Sorge machen? Denn auf die ökologische Herausforderung müssen wir eine Antwort aus der Kernmitte des christlichen Glaubens heraus geben. Zugleich will dieses Beispiel eines theologisch-ökumenischen Austausches der Gaben verdeutlichen, dass solche gegenseitige Lernbereitschaft notwendig ist, damit Katholiken und Orthodoxe auf dem Weg der Wiedergewinnung der einen und ungeteilten Kirche in Ost und West vorankommen, die ihre Sinnbestimmung in der Wiederaufnahme

32. D. Staniloae, *Orthodoxe Dogmatik*. Band I (Zürich-Gütersloh 1985) 293.

33. M. Kunzler, *Ergänzungen aus dem christlichen Osten*, in: M. Heim / J. C. Pech (Hrsg.), *Zur Mitte der Theologie im Werk von Joseph Ratzinger / Benedikt XVI.* = *Ratzinger-Studien*. Band 6 (Regensburg 2013) 122-140, zit. 133.

der Eucharistiegemeinschaft finden muss, wie dies der Ökumenische Patriarch Athenagoras bereits im Jahre 1968 mit diesen eindringlichen Worten ausgesprochen hat: „Die Stunde des christlichen Mutes ist gekommen. Wir lieben einander; wir bekennen den gleichen gemeinsamen Glauben; machen wir uns zusammen auf den Weg vor die Herrlichkeit des gemeinsamen heiligen Altars, um den Willen des Herrn zu erfüllen, damit die Kirche strahlt, damit die Welt glaubt und der Friede Gottes auf alle kommt.“³⁴

Daran mitwirken zu dürfen, dass dieser Weg, der vor über fünfzig Jahren so verheissungsvoll begonnen hat, sein Ziel in der eucharistischen Agape finden kann, ist eine schwere Verpflichtung, in erster Linie aber eine grosse Gnade, die ich PRO ORIENTE Sektion Salzburg auch weiterhin wünsche, indem ich ihr für ihren grossen Dienst des Dialogs der Liebe und des Dialogs der Wahrheit mit dem Ziel des Wiedergewinnens der einen und ungeteilten Kirche in Ost und West nochmals herzlich danke.

34. Télégramme du patriarche Athénagoras au pape Paul VI, à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de la levée des anathèmes le 7 décembre 1969, in: Tomos Agapis. Vatican-Phanar (1958-1970) (Rome – Istanbul 1971) Nr. 277.

Vortrag bei Pro Oriente, Sektion Linz
(Linz, 8. Oktober 2020)



Kardinal Kurt Koch hält seinen Vortrag bei der Tagung von Pro Oriente, Linz, 8. Oktober 2020

WIE STEHT ES UM DIE CHRISTLICHE ZUKUNFT EUROPAS?

Reflexionen über Europas geistige Identität

„Europa kann nur bestehen, wenn es um seine geistigen Fundamente weiss. Ein Europa ohne geistige Ordnung wird zum Spielball der Mächte.“ Mit diesem weisen Wort hat der ehemalige Erzbischof von Wien, Franz Kardinal König, eine dramatische Erfahrung in der Geschichte Europas zusammengefasst. Denn dass Europa ohne geistige Orientierung oder mit geistiger Umnachtung zum Spielball politischer Mächte werden kann und geworden ist, hat das vergangene Jahrhundert in grausamer und verbrecherischer Weise gezeigt. Mit seinem weisen Wort hat Kardinal König deshalb auch an die Grundüberzeugung der Gründungsväter eines neuen Europa wie Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schumann, Alcide de Gasperi und Jean Monnet¹ erinnert, dass nach der Verwüstung der europäischen Landschaft durch die schrecklichen Terrorherrschaften des Faschismus in Italien, des Nationalsozialismus in Deutschland und des Leninismus-Stalinismus in Russland, die sich alle als antichristliche und neuheidnische Ideologien entlarvt haben², die Schrecknisse des Weltkrieges, die furchtbaren Zerstörungen und das Drama der grossen Ideologien, die die Menschen und die Völker in das Inferno des Krieges gestürzt hatten, in einem konstruktiven Geist aufgearbeitet werden müssen und dass folglich ein Wiederaufbau Europas nur gelingen würde, wenn sich Europa in frischer Weise auf seine eigenen Ursprünge und damit auch auf seine christlichen Wurzeln zurückbesinnen würde. Nach über siebzig Jahren stellt sich aber die Frage, was von dieser damaligen Atmosphäre des Aufbruchs und des Neubeginns geblieben ist und wie es heute um die christlichen Wurzeln in Europa steht. Im Blick auf den christlichen

1. Vgl. Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche (Ed.), *Padri dell'Europa. Alle radici dell'Unione Europea* (Città del Vaticano 2010).

2. Vgl. A. Besancon, *Le malheur du siècle. Sur le communisme, le nazisme et l'unicité de la Shoah* (Paris 1998).

Geist, der in den Grundüberzeugungen der Gründungsväter eines neuen Europa lebendig gewesen ist, muss die Frage in folgender Weise zugespitzt werden:

1. Befindet sich Europa heute noch auf seiner Höhe?

Diese Frage ist keineswegs rhetorisch, sondern ganz konkret und realistisch zu verstehen. Denn Europa ist auf Anhöhen gegründet und gebaut worden, genauer auf drei Hügeln, mit denen der frühere Deutsche Bundespräsident Theodor Heuss die Entstehung und die Identität Europas umschrieben hat, nämlich die Akropolis in Athen, das Capitol in Rom und Golgotha in Jerusalem. Es wären gewiss noch weitere Hügel zu erwähnen wie der Berg Sinai als Ort der Offenbarung Gottes und seiner Gebote oder der Berg Montecassino, auf dem der heilige Benedikt, der Patron Europas, im Jahre 529 und damit in einer sehr schwierigen Zeit sein erstes Kloster begründet hat, oder auch der Hügel, auf dem der Vatikan erbaut ist. Konzentrieren wir uns aber auf die zuerst genannten drei Hügel, in denen die anderen eingeschlossen sind.

Die Akropolis in Athen steht auf der einen Seite für die grosse Bedeutung der griechischen Philosophie, die im Vertrauen auf die Wahrheitsfähigkeit der menschlichen Vernunft nach den letzten Gründen der Weltwirklichkeit gefragt hat, und auf der anderen Seite für die Entstehung der Demokratie als der geeignetsten Form des gesellschaftlichen Zusammenlebens der Menschen in der Polis. Das Capitol in Rom stellt den Ort dar, wo die Tradition des römischen Rechts seinen Ausgang genommen hat, in der alle in Europa entwickelten Rechtssysteme, auch das Kirchenrecht der Katholischen Kirche, gründen. Und der dritte Hügel, nämlich Golgotha vor den Toren Jerusalems verkündet das Kreuz Jesu Christi als Zeichen der grenzenlosen Liebe Gottes zu uns Menschen und der darin begründeten unbedingten Würde des Lebens jedes einzelnen Menschen. Diese drei Hügel repräsentieren die tiefen Wurzeln in der Geschichte Europas, auf die Papst Benedikt XVI. in seiner grossen Rede vor dem Deutschen Bundestag im September 2011 hingewiesen hat: „Die Kultur Europas ist aus der Begegnung von Jerusalem, Athen und Rom – aus der Begegnung zwischen dem Gottesglauben Israels, der philosophischen Vernunft der Griechen und dem Rechtsdenken Roms entstanden. Diese dreifache Begegnung bildet die innere Identität Europas.“³

Führt man sich diese dreifache Wurzel der Identität Europas vor Augen, ergeben sich für unsere Fragestellung zunächst drei wichtige Einsichten. Bereits die Feststellung, dass sich der Golgotha-Hügel in Jerusalem nicht in jener Gegend befindet, die geographisch zu Europa gehört, das Heilige Land vielmehr Asien zugerechnet wird, weist darauf hin, dass es sich bei Europa in erster Linie nicht um eine geographische Grösse handelt, jedenfalls nicht in einem strengen Sinn. Man kann Europa nicht, wie beispielsweise Afrika, Asien und Australien, Nord- und Süd-Amerika, in geographischer Hinsicht präzise umschreiben. Denn die Fragen, wo Europa geographisch beginnt und wo es endet, sind kaum zu beantworten. Europa ist kein geographisch eindeutig umschreibbarer, sondern ein kultureller, historischer und geistiger Begriff. Europa ist eine geschichtlich gewordene Wirklichkeit und eine historisch gewachsene Werte- und Schicksalsgemeinschaft und wird nur als solche Zukunft haben können.

3. Benedikt XVI., Besuch des Deutschen Bundestages im Berliner Reichstagsgebäude am 22. September 2011.

Europa ist zweitens dadurch geworden, dass die drei genannten Wurzeln im Christentum zusammengewachsen sind. Europa ist durch das Christentum Europa geworden. Die Geschichte Europas ist mit der Geschichte des Christentums unlösbar verbunden, und das Christentum gehört zur europäischen Identität. Dieser Realität kann jeder begegnen, der Europa durchquert und beispielsweise von Estland nach Gibraltar reist. Er wird dabei den unterschiedlichsten Völkern mit sehr verschiedenen Sprachen begegnen, aber er wird in allen grossen und alten Städten Kathedralen und überall das Zeichen des Kreuzes finden. Wer sich in der Geschichte Europas auch nur ein wenig auskennt, kann die christlichen Wurzeln Europas nicht leugnen.

Von daher ist es drittens zu verstehen, dass die Bildrede üblich geworden ist, dass Europa eine Seele hat und dass seine Seele der christliche Glaube ist.⁴ Dieses Bild hat bereits der frühere Präsident der europäischen Kommission, Jacques Delors, geprägt. An dieses Wort hat Papst Franziskus in seinen grossen Reden bei den europäischen Institutionen in Strasbourg im Jahre 2014 erinnert, indem er betonte, Europa müsse seine Seele wiederentdecken. In diesen Zusammenhang gehört auch das bereits zitierte weise Wort von Kardinal König, dass ein Europa ohne geistige Orientierung zum Spielball politischer Mächte werden könne. In der Zwischenzeit sind weitere Bewährungsproben für die europäische Seele hinzugekommen. Dass Europa ohne geistige Orientierung zum Spielball von ökonomischen Mächten werden kann, dies haben wir in den vergangenen Jahren, vor allem während der grossen Finanzkrise, drastisch erfahren und dies hat in der Corona-Krise eine neue, bisher nie da gewesene Zuspitzung erfahren. Auch in kultureller Hinsicht steht Europa vor brisanten Herausforderungen, wenn wir beispielsweise an den Ansturm von Millionen von Flüchtlingen aus anderen Kultur- und Religionskreisen auf Europa denken. Da gelingende Inkulturation und Integration nur auf der Grundlage einer eigenen Identität und von ihr zugehörigen verpflichtenden Werten möglich sind, braucht Europa auch aus diesem Grund dringend eine Rückbesinnung auf die tragfähigen Fundamente seiner Identität.⁵

2. Die christlichen Werte in der Identität Europas

Wir stehen damit vor den elementaren Fragen, worin die christlichen Wurzeln Europas inhaltlich genauer bestehen, wie es in der Gegenwart um sie steht und wie sie in den heutigen europäischen Gesellschaften revitalisiert werden können. Auch im Blick auf diese Herausforderung hat Papst Benedikt XVI. vor dem Deutschen Bundestag eine klare Wegweisung gegeben: Die Identität Europas „hat im Bewusstsein der Verantwortung des Menschen vor Gott und in der Anerkennung der unantastbaren Würde des Menschen, eines jeden Menschen, Masstäbe des Rechts gesetzt, die zu verteidigen uns in unserer historischen Stunde aufgegeben ist.“ Das grosse Erbe des Christentums in der europäischen Geschichte lässt sich von daher in drei Prinzipien zusammenfassen, die im Gegenzug zu gefährlichen Entwicklungen heute zum Tragen gebracht werden müssen, nämlich die Prinzipien der Divinität, der Humanität und der personalen Sozialität.

4. Vgl. R. Voderholzer, Die Seele Europas ist der christliche Glaube. Prägung des Abendlandes – auch in Zukunft? in: Ders., Zur Erneuerung der Kirche. Geistliche Impulse zu aktuellen Herausforderungen (Regensburg 2020) 115-127.

5. Vgl. K. Koch, Christsein in einem neuen Europa. Provokationen und Perspektiven (Freiburg / Schweiz 1992).

a) *Prinzip der Divinität: Gegen neue Götterdämmerungen*

Blicken wir zunächst auf den Golgotha-Hügel in Jerusalem und das dort begründete Prinzip der Divinität. Mit diesem Prinzip, genauer mit dem Bekenntnis zu Gott als Schöpfer, Erlöser und Vollender der Welt bringt das Christentum seine grundlegende Überzeugung zum Ausdruck, dass Menschen und Gesellschaften ohne ein transzendentes Fundament, ohne Beziehung zum Schöpfergott nicht wirklich gedeihen können. Das Prinzip der Divinität findet seinen deutlichsten Ausdruck im Ersten Gebot des Dekalogs, nämlich im Gebot der Ehrfurcht gegenüber Gott, dem Schöpfer der Welt. Denn wer das Gottsein Gottes erkennt und anerkennt und sich vor ihm zur Rechenschaft verpflichtet weiss, ist am ehesten davor geschützt, jenen heimlichen und unheimlichen Götterdämmerungen zu verfallen, die im persönlichen, gesellschaftlichen und politischen Leben immer dann auftreten, wenn irdische und weltliche Wirklichkeiten an die Stelle Gottes gesetzt und damit vergöttert werden.

Mit einer erschütternden Eindeutigkeit hat diese Einsicht im Jahre 1927 der deutsche Maler Max Beckmann zum Ausdruck gebracht, als er seine Vision mit den Worten ausgesprochen hat: „Wenn wir uns nicht zu dem Glauben bekennen wollen, einmal im Verlauf der Entwicklung... selber Gott, d.h. selber frei zu werden,... wird das Ganze der Menschheit... eine Farce bleiben.... Jetzt wollen wir an uns selbst glauben. Ein jeder Einzelne ist mitverantwortlich an der Entwicklung des Ganzen, um selbst Gott zu sein. Auf nichts sich mehr verlassen als auf sich selbst.“⁶ Dieser Traum, selbst an die Stelle Gottes zu treten, ist im vergangenen Jahrhundert für uns freilich zum Albtraum geworden. Denn die Geschichte hat gezeigt, dass die schlimmsten Untaten immer dann aufgetreten sind, wenn irdische Wirklichkeiten wie Blut und Boden, Nation und Parteidoktrin die Stelle Gottes einnehmen und damit vergöttert werden. Es muss bleibend zu denken geben, dass die schrecklichsten Massenmorde in der so genannten aufgeklärten europäischen Neuzeit im Namen von antichristlichen und neuheidnischen Ideologien wie des Stalinismus und des Nationalsozialismus verübt worden sind.

Letzterer hat mit seinem primitiven rassistischen Antisemitismus zusammen mit dem Judentum auch die jüdische Wurzel im Christentum vernichten wollen. Denn der Nationalsozialismus war von der Überzeugung getragen, der christliche Glaube, zumal der katholische, sei eine jüdische und römische Verfremdung des exceptionellen germanischen Wesens, von der das Deutsche Volk befreit werden müsse, damit hinter der erbärmlichen Erniedrigung des Menschen durch die christliche Demut das Grosse des Germanischen wieder zur Geltung gebracht werden könne. Des eigentlichen Unwesens des Nationalsozialismus wird man deshalb nur ansichtig, wenn man ihn als eine germanische Pseudoreligion versteht, wie sie in den veröffentlichten Tagebüchern Goebbels unmissverständlich deutlich geworden ist, in denen er über Hitler geschrieben hat: „Der Führer ist tief religiös, aber ganz antichristlich. Er sehe im Christentum ein Verfallssymptom, eine Abzweigung der jüdischen Rasse, eine Absurdität, der er allmählich auf allen Gebieten das Wasser abgraben werde. Er hasst das Christentum,

6. M. Beckmann, Die Realität der Träume in den Bildern. Schriften und Gespräche 1911 bis 1950 (München 1990) 40.

das den freien, heilen, antiken Tempel in einen düsteren Dom, mit einem schmerzverzerrten, gekreuzigten Christus verwandelt habe.“⁷

In diesem schrecklichen Sinn hat das Zwanzigste Jahrhundert den Basalsatz des christlichen Glaubens mehr als bestätigt, dass Humanität, die nicht in der Divinität begründet ist, nur allzu schnell in Bestialität umschlägt. Denn dort, wo Gott aus dem Bewusstsein verdrängt wird, wird der Mensch keineswegs frei, sondern gerät er erst recht in die Gefangenschaft von Götzendiensten und schrecklichen Ideologien. Deren Abwehr setzt umgekehrt die öffentliche Erwähnung Gottes und das Bewusstsein der Verantwortung aller im persönlichen, gesellschaftlichen und politischen Leben vor Gott voraus.

Angesichts dieser tragischen Geschichte des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts in Europa muss man es bedauern, dass man bei der Erarbeitung der Präambel des Reformvertrags der Europäischen Union dem Vertrag keinen verpflichtenden Hinweis auf die Transzendenz Gottes vorausgesetzt hat und damit den Überzeugungen der Gründungsväter eines neuen Europa nicht gefolgt ist. Denn auch in einem weltanschaulich neutralen Staat ist die Erwähnung Gottes im Sinne einer „*nominatio Dei*“, freilich nicht einer „*invocatio Dei*“ angebracht. Der Hinweis auf Gott in einer Verfassungspräambel erfolgt ja nicht, um die Bürger auf ein bestimmtes Gottesverständnis zu verpflichten, sondern in dem Sinn, dass der Staat sich selbst in seine ihm eigenen säkularen Grenzen verweist, wie der katholische Dogmatiker Karl-Heinz Menke prägnant hervorhebt: „Der einzelne Mensch mit seiner unantastbaren Freiheit und Würde ist nicht um des Staates willen da, sondern umgekehrt der Staat für den Schutz und die Wahrung der personalen Rechte des je Einzelnen seiner Bürgerinnen und Bürger. Deshalb und *nur* deshalb sollte sich jeder Staat durch die ausdrückliche Unterscheidung seiner selbst von Gott relativieren.“⁸ Statt solche Verantwortung der europäischen Politik vor Gott auszusprechen, hat die Europäische Union im Gegenteil in der Vertragspräambel sowohl einen Gottesbezug als auch eine anerkennende Nennung der christlichen Wurzeln der europäischen Identität unterlassen. Von daher stellt sich die besorgte Frage, ob die öffentliche Erwähnung Gottes in Europa nicht mehr mehrheitsfähig ist und ob man daraus den Schluss ziehen muss, dass das künftige Europa noch entschiedener auf einer atheistischen oder agnostizistischen Basis errichtet werden soll, die freilich auch nicht weltanschaulich neutral ist, sondern eine spezifische Weltanschauung darstellt.

Europa unternimmt jedenfalls seit einiger Zeit ein ebenso einmaliges wie schwieriges Experiment, hinsichtlich dessen niemand voraussagen kann, wie es ausgehen wird. Denn Europas Versuch, Gesellschaften und eine Gemeinschaft von Staaten zu bauen, die von einem religiösen Fundament prinzipiell absehen, stellt ein kulturgeschichtliches Novum dar, und zwar so sehr, dass sich das Urteil aufdrängt, Europa sei der einzig wirklich säkularisierte Kontinent. Von daher kann man nur hoffen, dass diese herausfordernde Frage nach der Gegenwart des Gottesbewusstseins in Europa zumindest wach gehalten und nicht als bereits historisch verbraucht beurteilt wird. Denn Europa mit dem Euro als der vereinheitlichen Währung allein wird keine Zukunft haben;

7. Vgl. H. G. Hoeckerts, Die Goebbels-Tagebücher 1932-1941. Eine neue Hauptquelle zur Erforschung der nationalsozialistischen Kirchenpolitik, in: D. Albrecht (Hrsg.), Politik und Konfession. Festschrift für Konrad Repgen zum 60. Geburtstag (Berlin 1983) 359-392.

8. K.-H. Menke, Christsein als Stellvertretung, oder: Die Patronin Europas, in: Ders., Das unterscheidend Christliche. Beiträge zur Bestimmung seiner Einzigkeit (Regensburg 2015) 226-252, zit. 228.

Europa braucht vielmehr auch eine geistige und geistliche Leitwährung⁹, die es seit seinen Ursprüngen im christlichen Glauben hat, wie Papst Benedikt XVI. mit Recht betont hat: „Europa ist überhaupt erst durch die Begegnung mit Christus entstanden. Wo es sich dieser Begegnung entzieht, löst es sich auf.“¹⁰

b) *Prinzip der Humanität: Gegen Erosionen der Menschenwürde*

Aus dem Prinzip der Divinität folgt von selbst das Prinzip der Humanität, wie es dem Doppelgebot der Gottes- und Nächstenliebe als Summe des biblischen Glaubens entspricht. Bereits die historische Feststellung, dass aus dem christlichen Glauben an den Schöpfergott die Erkenntnis der Unantastbarkeit der Menschenwürde, die jedem einzelnen Menschen zukommt, die Idee der Gleichheit aller Menschen vor dem Recht und letztlich die Idee der Menschenrechte entwickelt worden sind, dokumentiert, dass das Prinzip der Divinität dem Menschen, der Anerkennung seiner Würde und dem Schutz seines Lebens zugute kommt. Die jeden Menschen auszeichnende Würde beruht genauer auf seiner Zuordnung zu Gott, zu dessen Ebenbild er berufen ist. Durch diese Zuordnung zu Gott steht jeder Mensch unter dem Vorbehaltsrecht Gottes und ist sein Leben unantastbar, so dass die Menschenwürde ohne Anerkennung Gottes letztlich kein tragfähiges Fundament mehr hätte. Diesbezüglich hat der evangelische Theologe Wolfhart Pannenberg mit Recht angemerkt, „dass der Begriff der Menschenwürde nicht ohne weiteres ablösbar sein dürfte von dem Begründungszusammenhang der christlich-abendländischen Überlieferung“¹¹.

Der unlösbare Zusammenhang zwischen beiden Prinzipien der Divinität und der Humanität zeigt sich in negativer Hinsicht auch an dem Sachverhalt, dass der radikalen Krise des Gottesbewusstseins, von der die europäischen Gesellschaften weithin befallen sind, eine ebenso gefährliche Krise des Menschenbildes auf dem Fuss folgt, und zwar mit einer inhärenten Logik. Wenn nämlich gemäss biblisch-christlicher Überzeugung der Mensch das Ebenbild Gottes ist, das Gott hütet wie seinen eigenen Augapfel, dann nagt das Verdunsten des Gottesbewusstseins in der heutigen gesellschaftlichen Öffentlichkeit in einer gefährlichen Weise auch an der Würde des menschlichen Lebens: Wo Gott aus dem gesellschaftlichen Leben verabschiedet oder mit überstrapazierter so genannter „Toleranz“ hinauskomplimentiert wird, besteht höchste Gefahr, dass auch die Würde des Menschen mit Füßen getreten wird. Auf diesen Schicksalszusammenhang hat der katholische Theologe Johann B. Metz mit Recht seinen warnenden Finger gelegt: „War es nicht dieses späte Europa, in dem erstmals in der Welt der <Tod Gottes> öffentlich verkündet wurde? Und ist es nicht dieses Europa, in dem wir seit geraumer Zeit auf den <Tod des Menschen>, so wie wir ihn aus unserer bisherigen Geschichte kennen, vorbereitet werden?“¹²

9. Vgl. R. Weimann, Europäische Identität. Zwischen Willkommens-, Wohlstands- und Leitkultur, in: Die Neue Ordnung 70 (1/2016) 25-33.

¹⁰ [10] J. Ratzinger, Der Heilige Geist - Kraft der Vereinigung, in: Ders., Predigten = Gesammelte Schriften. Band 14/1 (Freiburg i. Br. 2019) 598-602, zit. 600.

11. W. Pannenberg, Christliche Wurzeln des Gedankens der Menschenwürde, in: Ders., Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie. Band 2: Natur und Mensch – und die Zukunft der Schöpfung (Göttingen 2000) 191-201, zit. 200.

12. F.-X. Kaufmann / J. B. Metz, Zukunftsfähigkeit. Suchbewegungen im Christentum (Freiburg i. Br. 1987) 130.

Die Symptome des Schicksalszusammenhangs, dass das Verschweigen Gottes in der gesellschaftlichen Öffentlichkeit dem Menschen keineswegs zu gute kommt, sind heute mit Händen zu greifen. Das deutlichste Symptom dafür muss man im Ungleichgewicht zwischen dem moralisch-rechtlichen Schutz von Sachen und demjenigen des menschlichen Lebens diagnostizieren. Der Schutz von Sachen ist in der heutigen Gesellschaft erheblich eindeutiger geregelt als der Schutz des menschlichen Lebens in seinen verschiedenen Phasen und vielfältigen Dimensionen. Autos sind beispielsweise besser geschützt als die Ungeborenen und Sterbenden, so dass man dem katholischen Pastoraltheologen Paul M. Zulehner zustimmen muss, wenn er zu bedenken gibt, dass man in der heutigen Welt das Glück haben müsste, „als Auto zur Welt zu kommen“¹³.

Wenn wir uns zudem die anthropologischen Revolutionen vor Augen führen, die bei den rasanten Entwicklungen der medizinischen Bio-Wissenschaften festzustellen sind, dürfte man bald zur Überzeugung gelangen, dass diese grossen Herausforderungen nicht mehr allein ethisch bewältigt werden können, sondern nur noch strikt Theologisch und damit im Licht des christlichen Glaubens an den Schöpfergott.¹⁴ Die heutigen bioethischen Fragestellungen, die europaweit geführten Euthanasiedebatten und die radikalen Infragestellungen des grundlegenden Gedankens der Menschenwürde im öffentlichen Diskurs bringen es an den Tag, dass die Würde des menschlichen Lebens von seinem Beginn bis zu seinem natürlichen Ende ohne Transzendenzbezug kaum mehr erkannt, geschweige denn geschützt werden kann. Es wird immer offensichtlicher, dass die einzig wirklich tragfähige Fundierung der Personwürde des Menschen und der sie charakterisierenden Unantastbarkeit in einer transzendenten Begründung liegt, wie Wolfhart Pannenberg entschieden betont hat: Die Personwürde des Menschen „gilt dann, weil in der Bestimmung des Menschen begründet und nicht in irgendwelchen vorfindlichen Merkmalen auch für die Menschen, die den Gebrauch ihrer Vernunft noch nicht oder nicht mehr haben“¹⁵. Denn die unbedingte Würde des Menschen kann nur theologisch begründet werden.

c) *Prinzip der sozialen Personalität: Gegen kollektivistische und individualistische Extremismen*

Der christlichen Überzeugung von der unveräusserlichen Menschenwürde liegt das Verständnis des Menschen als Person zugrunde, das seinerseits zum grossen Erbe des christlichen Glaubens in der Menschheitsgeschichte gehört. Denn der für das Verständnis des Menschen fundamentale Gedanke des Personseins hat seinen Ursprung im christlichen Glauben an den Dreieinen Gott und ist deshalb wesentlich durch die Kategorie der Beziehung charakterisiert.¹⁶ Von daher ergibt sich das dritte Grundprinzip der sozialen Personalität von selbst. In diesem Prinzip ist die grundlegende Spannung zwischen Individualität und Sozialität eingeschrieben, mit der sich die Herausforderung

13. P. M. Zulehner, Ein Obdach der Seele. Geistliche Übungen – nicht nur für fromme Zeitgenossen (Düsseldorf 1994) 54.

14. Vgl. R. Weimann, Bioethik in einer säkularisierten Gesellschaft. Ethische Probleme der PID (Paderborn 2015), bes. 161- 194: Viertes Kapitel: Die PID und das Menschenbild.

15. W. Pannenberg, Christliche Rechtsüberzeugungen im Kontext einer pluralistischen Gesellschaft, in: Ders., Beiträge zur Ethik (Göttingen 2004) 55-68, zit. 60.

16. Vgl. W. Pannenberg, Person und Subjekt, in: Ders., Grundfragen systematischer Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze. Band 2 (Göttingen 1980) 80-95; J. Ratzinger, Zum Personenverständnis in der Theologie, in: Ders., Dogma und Verkündigung (München 1973) 205-223.

stellt, wie sich die berechtigten Anliegen der einzelnen Individuen und die Notwendigkeit von sozialer Verantwortung miteinander verbinden und versöhnen lassen, ohne einem egoistischen Individualismus oder einem sozialistischen Kollektivismus zu verfallen.

In der Geschichte der Menschheit zeigt sich freilich bis auf den heutigen Tag, dass sie sich immer wieder zwischen diesen beiden Extremen bewegt. Nach dem historischen Scheitern des sozialistischen Kollektivismus hat in der jüngeren Vergangenheit der Individualismus bei vielen Menschen eine neue Anziehungskraft erhalten. Mit dem elektrisierenden Stichwort der individuellen Selbstbestimmung und Selbstverwirklichung verbindet sich leicht die Mentalität, der Mensch vermöge sich selbst seine eigene Individualität nur zu garantieren und zu erhalten, wenn er sich aus den gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen löst und sich in den geschützten Raum einer reinen Privatheit zurückzieht. Dabei machen die Menschen freilich immer mehr die Erfahrung, dass der Rückzug in die Privatheit gerade nicht integrale Freiheit und das erwünschte Glück beschert, sondern das bedrückende und entfremdende Gefühl der Einsamkeit provoziert, wie der amerikanische Diagnostiker Philip Slater sensibel feststellt: „Wir suchen mehr und mehr Privatheit und fühlen uns mehr und mehr entfremdet und allein gelassen, wenn wir sie erreichen.“¹⁷ Diese Paradoxie bringt es an den Tag, dass sich auf der einen Seite der historisch gescheiterte Kollektivismus nicht mit einem neuen Individualismus überwinden lässt, dass aber auf der anderen Seite auch der Kollektivismus keine Lösung der Probleme des modernen Individualismus bieten kann. Der Individualismus und der Kollektivismus stellen sich vielmehr als die zwei einander entgegengesetzten Extreme heraus, die sich freilich darin berühren, dass beide das Wesen des Menschen als Person von Grund auf verfehlen, die sich nur in personaler Verbundenheit und sozialer Verbindlichkeit verwirklichen kann.

Von daher erklärt sich die in den europäischen Gesellschaften neu aufkommende Sehnsucht nach einer Versöhnung von individueller Freiheit und sozialer Gemeinschaftlichkeit und damit nach einem echten und ursprünglichen Menschsein, das sich nur in Gemeinschaft mit anderen Menschen verwirklichen kann. Denn Individualität und Sozialität sind gleichursprüngliche Wirklichkeiten, die es miteinander zu versöhnen gilt und die gleichsam die anthropologische Basis für das Gleichgewicht von Autonomie und Gemeinschaft im Projekt der Vereinigten Staaten von Europa darstellen. Ein solches Projekt kann freilich nur gelingen, wenn jenseits von egoistischem Individualismus und sozialistischem Kollektivismus die Freiheit der Individuen und die Notwendigkeit von sozialer Verantwortung in einer kommunikativen Freiheit versöhnt sind, die die Ehrenbezeichnung „Solidarität“ trägt.¹⁸

Damit stellt sich die entscheidende Frage, wie es in den europäischen Gesellschaften um die lebensnotwendige Ressource „Solidarität“ bestellt ist. Diesbezüglich haben in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten bedeutende kulturdiagnostische Studien das Ergebnis zu Tage gefördert¹⁹, dass auf der einen Seite ein enger Zusammenhang zwischen dem Freiheitsstreben des modernen Menschen und einer weitgehenden Tendenz zur Desolidiarisierung in dem Sinne besteht, dass der Freiheitsanspruch des heutigen

17. P. Slater, *The pursuit of loniless. American culture at the breaking point* (Boston 1976) 13.

18. Vgl. K. Koch, *Solidarität. Lebenselixier christlichen Glaubens* (Freiburg / Schweiz 1998).

19. Vgl. P. M. Zulehner, *Woraus Europa lebt und glaubt. Europäische Wertestudie* (Düsseldorf 1993).

Menschen im Kontext mangelnder Solidarität aufkommt und massgeblich durch das moderne Lebenskonzept einer angestregten Disseitigkeit gefördert wird, und dass auf der anderen Seite die den unsolidarischen Individualismus am meisten hemmende und Solidarität fördernde Kraft in der praktizierten Religion besteht. Aus diesen soziologischen Feststellungen hat der katholische Pastoraltheologe Paul M. Zulehner den wichtigen Schluss gezogen, dass Solidaritätsquellen zu erschliessen vor allem bedeuten müsse, „den Menschen im lebendigen Gott zu verwurzeln und aus dem Gefängnis purer Diesseitigkeit freizumachen“: „Solidarität entsteht vor allem im Umkreis der Auferstehungshoffnung.“²⁰

3. Wert oder Würde: die moderne Gretchenfrage

Mit dieser Schlussfolgerung kehren wir an den Beginn unserer Besinnung auf die christlichen Wurzeln Europas zurück und können nun sehen, wie die drei Prinzipien der Divinität, der Humanität und der personalen Sozialität unlösbar zusammenhängen. Von daher stellt sich erst recht die Frage, wie die christlichen Wurzeln in den heutigen europäischen Gesellschaften zum Tragen gebracht und die in ihnen erkannten grundlegenden Werte revitalisiert werden können. Im Licht des christlichen Glaubens lässt sich diese Frage aber nur beantworten, wenn der Begriff des Wertes nicht undiskutiert übernommen, sondern wenn hinter ihn auch ein deutliches Fragezeichen gesetzt wird.

Dies erweist sich deshalb als notwendig, weil der Begriff des Wertes heute vor allem ökonomische Konnotationen aufweist und damit im Zusammenhang einer Kosten-Nutzen-Kalkulation steht, die ein elementarer Ausdruck des ökonomistischen Wertedenkens ist. Die damit gegebene Problematik hat der Staats- und Völkerrechtlicher Carl Schmitt auf die lapidare Kurzformel gebracht, dass niemand werten könne, „ohne abzuwerten, aufzuwerten und zu verwerten“. Denn wer Werte setze, setze sich damit gegen Unwerte ab, und der Geltungsdrang des Wertes sei unwiderstehlich, so dass der „Streit der Werter, Aufwerter und Verwerter“ unvermeidlich sei²¹. In dieser klassisch gewordenen Definition wird sichtbar, dass pures Wertedenken eindimensional ökonomisch geprägt ist und in den Geltungsbereich der Tauschgerechtigkeit gehört: Wie beispielsweise die menschliche Arbeit in ihrer total entfremdeten Gestalt als Ware Tauschwert für den Arbeiter und Gebrauchs-Wert für den Besitzer der Produktionsmittel hat, der mit ihr einen Mehr-Wert erzeugt und Profit erzielt, so besteht auch in den heutigen europäischen Gesellschaften die Gefahr, dass die verschiedenen postulierten Werte einer Kosten-Nutzen-Kalkulation unterzogen und damit ökonomisch verwertet werden.

Weil in dieser Weise die menschlichen Werte nicht verteidigt werden können, muss es sich von selbst verstehen, dass sich der Beitrag des Christentums zur Revitalisierung von wichtigen Werten in den heutigen Gesellschaften Europas von dieser ökonomischen Logik der Verwertung in grundlegender Weise unterscheiden muss. Doch wie lassen sich dann die fundamentalen Werte in den heutigen Gesellschaften retten und bewahren? Ein wichtiger Hinweis lässt sich zunächst jener Wegweisung entnehmen, die der grosse Philosoph Immanuel Kant in seiner „Grundlegung der Metaphysik

20. P. M. Zulehner, Religion und Autoritarismus. Inkulturation des Evangeliums in den Kontext der Freiheitlichkeit, in: Stimmen der Zeit 209 (1991) 597-608, zit. 604.

21. C. Schmitt, Die Tyrannei der Werte, in: S. Schelz (Hrsg.), Die Tyrannei der Werte (Hamburg 1979) 9-43, zit. 35-36.

der Sitten“ gegeben hat: „Im Reich der Zwecke hat alles entweder einen *Preis* oder eine *Würde*. Was einen Preis hat, an dessen Stelle kann auch etwas anderes als Äquivalent gesetzt werden; was dagegen über allen Preis erhaben ist, mithin kein Äquivalent gestattet, das hat eine Würde.“²²

Diese fundamentale Unterscheidung gilt zunächst im Blick auf das Leben des Menschen, das im tiefsten Sinn keinen Wert, wohl aber Würde hat, die sich nicht auf-, ab- und verwerten lässt. Diese grundlegende Unterscheidung wird erst recht vom christlichen Glauben favorisiert, weil er nicht für Werte, sondern für Wahrheit steht, wie der evangelische Theologe Eberhard Jüngel eindringlich betont: „Christliche Wahrheitserfahrung ist die radikale Infragestellung der Rede von Werten und des Denkens in Werten.“²³ Diese Unterscheidung bringt der christliche Glaube auch und sogar in erster Linie im Blick auf jene wertloseste und prinzipiell nicht verwertbare Wahrheit, die Gott selbst ist, zum Tragen. Denn Gott hat letztlich keinen Wert; er ist weder brauchbar noch verwertbar; er wird vielmehr allein dadurch geehrt, dass wir Menschen seine Würde erkennen und anerkennen, ihn wirklich Gott sein lassen und ihn in dieser Weise verehren.

Die absolut wertlose Wahrheit Gottes zu verkünden, macht die grundlegende Sendung des Christentums in der gesellschaftlichen Öffentlichkeit aus, und darin muss man seinen wichtigsten Beitrag zur Rettung und Revitalisierung der menschlichen Werte in Europa erblicken. Denn das Christentum hat in der heutigen europäischen Lebenswelt nichts Wichtigeres zu tun, als dies: das Gottesgeheimnis als bergendes Obdach für den Menschen verkünden und so ein solidarisches Zusammenleben der Menschen ermöglichen.

4. Neuzeitliche Säkularisierung und ökumenische Verantwortung in Europa

Im Bewusstsein der grossen Bedeutung der christlichen Wurzeln Europas stellt sich heute vor allem die Frage, wie sie in den heutigen Gesellschaften zum Tragen gebracht werden können, die sich als säkularisiert verstehen und sich deshalb einem Lebensgefühl verpflichtet wissen, das sich von der Religion überhaupt und vom Christentum im speziellen weithin emanzipiert hat. Um Antwort auf diese Frage zu finden, sind wir Christen gut beraten, wenn wir zunächst im Sinne einer eigenen Situationsvergewisserung in den heutigen Gesellschaften unsere eigene Mitschuld an der in ihnen prekär gewordenen Situation der Religion eingestehen.

Wir Christen müssen vor allem erkennen und bekennen, dass die in den neuzeitlichen Gesellschaften Europas dominant gewordene Säkularisierung der Religion, genauer der Prozess der Entkleidung des christlichen Glaubens von seiner Sendung für den gesellschaftlichen Frieden im Sinne der Grundlegung, Erhaltung und Erneuerung der gesellschaftlichen Lebensordnung, als zwar ungewollte und unbeabsichtigte, aber tragische und verhängnisvolle Folgewirkung der abendländischen Kirchenspaltung im 16. Jahrhundert, als „sozusagen <hausgemachte> Privatisierung des Christentums“ zu

22. I. Kant, Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten BA 77, in: W. Weischedel (Hrsg.), Werke in sechs Bänden. Band IV: Schriften zur Ethik und Religionsphilosophie (Darmstadt 1966) 9-102, zit. 68.

23. E. Jüngel, Wertlose Wahrheit. Christliche Wahrheitserfahrung im christlichen Streit gegen die „Tyrannei der Werte“, in: Ders., Wertlose Wahrheit. Zur Identität und Relevanz des christlichen Glaubens. Theologische Erörterungen III (München 1990) 90-109, zit. 100.

verstehen ist²⁴. Denn die Emanzipation der neuzeitlichen Kulturwelt zunächst von den Gegensätzen der unter sich zerstrittenen Konfessionskirchen und letztlich vom Christentum überhaupt muss als Ergebnis und Erschöpfungsende der Kirchenspaltung und der anschließenden blutigen Konfessionskriege des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts, besonders des Dreissigjährigen Krieges, beurteilt werden. Weil in deren tragischen Folge das Christentum historisch nur noch greifbar gewesen ist in der Gestalt der verschiedenen Konfessionen, die einander bis aufs Blut bekämpft haben, musste diese historische Konstellation zur unvermeidlichen Konsequenz haben, dass der konfessionelle Friede um den für das Christentum teuren Preis erkaufte werden musste, dass von den konfessionellen Differenzen und, in Fernwirkung, vom Christentum überhaupt abgesehen wurde, um dem gesellschaftlichen Frieden eine neue Basis geben zu können, wie der evangelische Ökumeniker Wolfhart Pannenberg diagnostiziert hat: „Wo die Säkularisierung der Neuzeit die Form einer Entfremdung vom Christentum angenommen hat, da ist das nicht als ein äusserliches Schicksal über die Kirchen gekommen, sondern als die Folgen ihrer eigenen Sünden gegen die Einheit, als Folge der Kirchenspaltung des 16. Jahrhunderts und der unentschiedenen Religionskriege des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts, die den Menschen in konfessionell gemischten Territorien keine andere Wahl liessen, als ihr Zusammenleben auf einer von den konfessionellen Gegensätzen unberührten gemeinsamen Grundlage neu aufzubauen.“²⁵

Diese Diagnose impliziert umgekehrt, dass die Wiedergewinnung der öffentlichen Sendung des Christentums in den säkularisierten Gesellschaften Europas heute die Überwindung der ererbten Spaltungen in einer wiedergefundenen Einheit der Christen voraussetzt. Wenn die neuzeitliche Säkularisierung historisch nicht unwesentlich auch in der europäischen Kirchenspaltung und ihren gesellschaftlichen Folgen begründet liegt, dann kann das Christentum in Europa nur dann wieder eine gesamtgesellschaftliche Bedeutung erlangen, wenn die Kirchenspaltung überwunden sein wird. Die Ökumenische Bewegung kann deshalb nicht ohne Konsequenzen für das Verhältnis der säkularen Kultur der Moderne zum Thema der Religion überhaupt und des Christentums im Besonderen sein. Wesentliche Gründe, die in historischer Sicht zur Abwendung der säkularen Kultur von der Religion und den christlichen Kirchen geführt haben, könnten jedenfalls gegenüber einer Gestalt des Christentums, das die Spaltungen überwunden haben wird, nicht mehr geltend gemacht werden. Das Christentum in Europa wird deshalb erst durch die Überwindung seiner Spaltungen befähigt sein, „dem Säkularismus gegenüber glaubwürdig die Wahrheit der Religion geltend zu machen“²⁶, und zwar in der gesellschaftlichen Öffentlichkeit von heute.

Die Erinnerung an diese komplexen historischen Hintergründe der heutigen gesellschaftlichen Situation des Christentums in Europa ist auch geeignet, auf die grundlegende Bedeutung der Ökumenischen Bewegung für das Zusammenleben der Menschen im modernen Europa hinzuweisen. Bereits bei ihrer Entstehung im 20. Jahr-

24. J. B. Metz, *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (Mainz 1977) 31.

25. W. Pannenberg, *Einheit der Kirche als Glaubenswirklichkeit und als ökumenisches Ziel*, in: Ders., *Ethik und Ekklesiologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Göttingen 1977) 201-210, zit. 201. Zum Ganzen vgl. Ders., *Christentum in einer säkularisierten Welt* (Freiburg i. Br. 1988).

26. W. Pannenberg, *Die zukünftige Rolle von „Glauben und Kirchenverfassung“ in einer säkularisierten Welt*, in: Ders., *Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie. Band 3: Kirche und Ökumene* (Göttingen 2000) 234-244, zit. 243.

hundert, das als eines der grausamsten und unmenschlichsten Jahrhunderte in die Geschichte eingegangen ist, ist die Ökumenische Bewegung wie ein Leuchtturm im Roten Meer des von Blut getränkten Europa aufgeschieden. Die epochale Bedeutung der Ökumenischen Bewegung ist sodann in der Katholischen Kirche vollends mit dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil erkannt worden, mit dem sie in offizieller Weise in die Ökumenische Bewegung eingetreten ist, die das Konzil ausdrücklich auf die „Einwirkung der Gnade des Heiligen Geistes“ zurückgeführt hat²⁷. Die Einsicht in die dringende Notwendigkeit der Ökumenischen Bewegung für eine glaubwürdige Wahrnehmung der Sendung der Christen in der gesellschaftlichen Öffentlichkeit ist dabei von der Hoffnung getragen, die Papst Johannes Paul II. mit der bewegenden Zuversicht ausgesprochen hat, dass nach dem ersten Jahrtausend der Christentumsgeschichte, das die Zeit der ungeteilten Kirche gewesen ist, und nach dem zweiten Jahrtausend, das im Osten wie im Westen zu tiefen Spaltungen in der Christenheit geführt hat, das dritte Jahrtausend die grosse Aufgabe zu bewältigen haben wird, die verloren gegangene Einheit wiederherzugewinnen, und dass alle Christen bereit sein müssen, „den Weg jener Einheit einzuschlagen, für die Christus am Vorabend seines Leidens gebetet hat. Der Wert dieser Einheit ist enorm. Es geht gewissermassen um die Zukunft der Welt, es geht um die Zukunft des Gottesreiches in der Welt“²⁸.

In diesem Sinn ist die Christenheit heute herausgefordert, in mutiger Weise nach ihrer ökumenischen Verantwortung in den säkularisierten Gesellschaften Europas und zunächst nach ihrer eigenen Friedensfähigkeit und Versöhnungsbereitschaft zu fragen. Denn nur wenn es gelingt, dass sich die christlichen Kirchen versöhnen und diesen notwendigen Prozess der historischen Reinigung gehen, vermögen sie wirksam und in glaubwürdiger Weise für die Erhaltung, Förderung und Erneuerung des gesellschaftlichen Friedens zu arbeiten. Nur eine in sich selbst geeinte Christenheit kann sich als für das gesellschaftliche Zusammenleben der Menschen in Frieden und Gerechtigkeit, in Einheit und Toleranz exemplarisch erweisen. Und nur eine ökumenisch versöhnte Christenheit vermag jene Sendung wahrzunehmen, die das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil der Kirche zugewiesen hat, nämlich in einer von Spaltungen, Feindschaften und unversöhnten Interessengegensätzen so sehr zerrissenen Welt als „Sakrament, das heisst Zeichen und Werkzeug für die innigste Vereinigung mit Gott wie für die Einheit der ganzen Menschheit“ zu leben und zu wirken²⁹. Zeichen und Werkzeug für die Einheit der Menschheit kann die Christenheit in unserer Welt aber nur sein, wenn sie in sich selbst die Einheit wiederfindet. Von daher darf und muss man im Prozess der Ökumenischen Wiedervereinigung den bedeutsamsten und weitreichendsten Beitrag des gegenwärtigen Christentums zur politischen Zukunft der Menschheit und insbesondere der der säkularen Gesellschaften in Europa wahrnehmen.

5. Positive Laizität gegen säkularistischen Laizismus

Von daher stellt sich erneut die Frage, wie das Christentum seine Sendung in den säkularisierten Gesellschaften im heutigen Europa wahrnehmen kann und soll. Auf dem Hintergrund der bisherigen Überlegungen versteht es sich von selbst, dass kein Weg

27. Unitatis redintegratio, Nr. 1; vgl. auch Nr. 4.

28. Johannes Paul II., Die Schwelle der Hoffnung überschreiten (Hamburg 1994) 178.

29. Lumen gentium, Nr. 1.

hinter die neuzeitliche Säkularisierung und die mit ihr verbundene gesellschaftliche Ausdifferenzierung zurückführen kann. Denn zu den wesentlichen und vom Christentum selbst geförderten Errungenschaften der neuzeitlichen Gesellschaften gehört auch die Tatsache, dass das adäquate Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche immer deutlicher und konsequenter mit dem Vorzeichen einer weitgehenden Trennung verstanden und gestaltet worden ist, die freilich eine loyal-kritische Partnerschaft und konstruktive Zusammenarbeit zwischen beiden nicht ausschliesst, sondern vielmehr ermöglicht.³⁰

Auch der Christ kann und muss deshalb von seinem Glaubensverständnis her ein positives Verhältnis zu einer gesunden Laizität des Staates haben. Vor allem in der heutigen geschichtlichen Situation, in der sich auch die verschiedenen Kulturen immer mehr verflechten, ist eine neue Reflexion über den wahren Sinn von Laizität angezeigt, und zwar in zweifacher Richtung: Auf der einen Seite ist und bleibt im christlichen Denken die Unterscheidung zwischen dem politischen und dem religiösen Bereich grundlegend, um die Religionsfreiheit der Bürger und die Verantwortung des Staates ihr gegenüber zu ermöglichen. Auf der anderen Seite braucht es aber auch ein neues Bewusstsein von der unersetzbaren Funktion der Religion für die Gewissensbildung der Menschen und für den Beitrag, den die Religion zusammen mit anderen Institutionen für die Bildung und Vertiefung eines ethischen Grundkonsenses innerhalb der Gesellschaft erbringen kann, worauf der Rechtsphilosoph Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde eindringlich hingewiesen hat. Da in seiner Sicht der säkulare und weltanschaulich neutrale Staat selbst nicht mehr über seine eigenen Grundlagen verfügt, ist er auf die öffentliche Erneuerung von religiösen und ethischen Orientierungen angewiesen und muss er letztlich „aus jenen inneren Antrieben und Bildungskräften“ leben „die der religiöse Glaube seiner Bürger vermittelt“³¹. Um ihrer eigenen Existenz und Zukunft willen sind deshalb die neuzeitlichen Gesellschaften auf religiöse Gruppierungen wie die Kirchen angewiesen, die die fundamentalen Werte, Normen und Rechte, die sich in der gesellschaftlichen Öffentlichkeit immer wieder in verhängnisvollen Prozessen der Erosion befinden, aus ihrer letzten Verankerung im transzendenten Bereich schützen und das religiös-kulturelle Erbe wachhalten, aus dem auch und gerade die säkularen und weltanschaulich neutralen Gesellschaften leben können müssen.

In diesem doppelten Sinn kann sich auch der Christ zu einer gesunden Laizität positiv verhalten. Auf der anderen Seite ist er dann aber auch berechtigt, ein kritisches Wort einzulegen gegen die schwerwiegenden Folgewirkungen eines prinzipiellen Laizismus und Säkularismus, die sich vor allem in einem gebrochenen oder zumindest weithin ungeklärten Verhältnis der heutigen Gesellschaften zum Phänomen der Religion anzeigen. Denn in den heutigen Gesellschaften sind starke Tendenzen festzustellen, die Religion als einen gesellschaftlich irrelevanten oder, wie es in der Corona-Zeit zu

30. Vgl. K. Koch, Kirche und Staat in kritisch-loyaler Partnerschaft. Systematisch-theologische Überlegungen zu einem institutionalisierten Dauerkonflikt, in: Ders., Konfrontation oder Dialog? Brennpunkte heutiger Glaubensverkündigung (Freiburg/Schweiz – Graz 1996) 148-172.

31. E.-W. Böckenförde, Die Entstehung des Staates als Vorgang der Säkularisierung, in: Ders., Recht, Staat, Freiheit. Studien zur Rechtsphilosophie, Staatstheorie und Verfassungsgeschichte (Frankfurt a. M. 1991) 92-114, zit. 113. Vgl. dazu K. Lehmann, Säkularer Staat: Woher kommen das Ethos und die Grundwerte? Zur Interpretation einer bekannten These von Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, in: S. Schmidt und M. Wedell (Hrsg.), „Um der Freiheit willen...“ Kirche und Staat im 21. Jahrhundert (Freiburg i. Br. 2002) 24-30.

sagen üblich geworden ist, nicht systemrelevanten Faktor zu betrachten und sie in noch vermehrter Masse an den Rand des gesellschaftlichen Lebens abzurängen.

Solche Tendenzen erweisen sich freilich gerade in multireligiös gewordenen Gesellschaften als anachronistisch und gefährlich. Denn nicht wenige Menschen mit anderen Religionsbekenntnissen, die bei uns leben, nehmen die eigentliche Bedrohung ihrer religiösen Identität gerade nicht im christlichen Glauben wahr, sondern in der weitgehenden Verdrängung Gottes aus dem gesellschaftlichen Bewusstsein in unseren westlichen Gesellschaften. Die forcierte Säkularität und Profanität, die sich in den Gesellschaften Europas herausgebildet hat, ist den religiösen Kulturen ausserhalb Europas von Grund auf fremd; sie sind vielmehr zutiefst überzeugt, dass eine Welt ohne Gott keine Zukunft haben wird. Aus dieser Wahrnehmung muss man den Schluss ziehen, dass eine Gesellschaft, die sich dem Phänomen des Religiösen gegenüber verschliesst und seine Öffentlichkeit verbietet, im Grunde einen heute besonders notwendigen Dialog verweigert, wie Papst Benedikt XVI. in seiner berühmt gewordenen Vorlesung an der Universität Regensburg klar ausgesprochen hat: „Eine Vernunft, die dem Göttlichen gegenüber taub ist und Religion in den Bereich der Subkulturen abdrängt, ist unfähig zum Dialog der Kulturen.“³² Auch um des friedlichen Zusammenlebens der Menschen in unseren Gesellschaften willen muss die Religion ein öffentliches Thema sein oder wieder werden.

Gegen die Tendenzen einer weitgehenden Privatisierung der Religion sich zur Wehr zu setzen, hat das Christentum aber auch um seiner selbst willen das Recht. Die christlichen Kirchen verlangen vom Staat gewiss keine Privilegien - sie sollten es jedenfalls nicht tun -, wohl aber die Gewährung des Rechts, in Freiheit ihre Sendung in der gesellschaftlichen Öffentlichkeit erfüllen zu können. Da es im Christentum aufgrund seines eigenen Glaubensverständnisses für eine rein private Religion prinzipiell keinen Platz gibt, gehört sein Öffentlichkeitsauftrag zu seinem Wesen.

Damit die christlichen Kirchen ihren ureigenen Öffentlichkeitsauftrag in glaubwürdiger Weise reklamieren können, sind sie berufen und herausgefordert, ihn in ökumenischer Gemeinschaft wahrzunehmen.³³ In dieser ökumenischen Verantwortung hat auch und gerade das Christentum selbst einen wesentlichen und unabdingbaren Beitrag zu leisten, damit die christlichen Wurzeln Europas auch die Zukunft dieses Kontinent prägen werden und Europa seine geistige Identität wieder entdeckt und um sie weiss.

32. Benedikt XVI., Glaube, Vernunft und Universität. Erinnerungen und Reflexionen. Vorlesung beim Treffen mit Vertretern der Wissenschaften im Auditorium Maximum der Universität Regensburg am 12. September 2006.

33. Vgl. K. Koch, Brauchen wir ein öffentliches Christentum? in: M. Delgado / A. Jödicke / G. Vergauwen (Hrsg.), Religion und Öffentlichkeit. Probleme und Perspektiven (Stuttgart 2009) 99-118.

Vortrag bei Radio Maria Schweiz
(9. Oktober 2020)

THEOLOGIE ALS VERSTEHENDES DENKEN DES GLAUBENS

1. Wechselseitiges Verhältnis von Glauben und Denken

Der Mensch ist ein Lebewesen, das stirbt und das weiss, dass es stirbt, und das sagen kann, dass es weiss, dass es stirbt. So definiert ein heutiger Schriftsteller den Menschen. Gewiss gibt es schönere und erfreulichere Umschreibungen dessen, was der Mensch ist, als diese. Sie hat aber den Vorteil, dass sie die wohl grundsätzlichsie ist. Denn der Mensch zeichnet sich in der ganzen Schöpfung Gottes dadurch aus, dass er nicht nur etwas tut oder erleidet, sondern dass er auch weiss und darüber nachdenkt, was er tut und was er erleidet. Aus eigener Erfahrung wissen wir zudem, dass wir etwas noch nicht ganz wissen, wenn wir es mit unserer Sprache noch nicht ausdrücken können. Dass wir Menschen nicht nur sterben müssen, sondern auch sagen können, dass wir wissen, dass wir sterben müssen, macht unsere menschliche Einzigartigkeit und deshalb Würde aus.

Dies wird uns vor allem dann bewusst, wenn wir die gegenteilige Behauptung zur Kenntnis nehmen, wie sie im neunzehnten Jahrhundert der deutsche nihilistische Philosoph Friedrich Nietzsche vertreten hat. Er hat den Menschen, der beginnt, über die faktischen Begebenheiten seines Lebens nachzudenken und nach dem Sinn und der Bedeutung seines Lebens und der Welt zu fragen, „das kranke Tier“ genannt¹. Da das Tier nicht denkt, sondern einfach seinem Triebe folgt, wäre in den Augen Nietzsches auch der Mensch ein gesundes Tier, wenn er sich wie jedes andere Tier verhalten und einfach glücklich oder unglücklich sein würde, ohne nach dem Sinn von Glück und Unglück zu fragen. Spätestens angesichts dieser Auskunft werden wir es gewiss bevorzugen, nicht gesunde, sondern „kranke Tiere“ genannt zu werden. Denn dass wir denken und uns darüber austauschen können, was wir denken, und dass wir uns zu dem verhalten, was wir tun und erleben, macht unsere Grösse und Würde als Menschen aus. Denn von Gott sind wir als denkende Lebewesen gedacht und geschaffen.

Was von unserem menschlichen Leben im Allgemeinen gilt, trifft auch und erst recht auf den Glauben zu. Weil wir Menschen sind, glauben wir nicht nur, sondern denken auch über unseren Glauben nach und kommen mit anderen Menschen über unseren Glauben ins Gespräch, und zwar vor allem deshalb, weil der Glaube nicht nur ein menschlicher Vollzug im Sinne des Vertrauens auf Gott ist („fides qua“), sondern auch einen konkreten Inhalt hat („fides quae“), den wir im Glaubensbekenntnis zum Ausdruck bringen. Der glaubende Mensch ist deshalb immer schon berührt und angesprochen von jener Wirklichkeit, um die es in der Theologie geht: von der Botschaft vom Dreieinen Gott und seiner Selbstoffenbarung in Jesus Christus zum Heil der Menschen und der ganzen Schöpfung. Der glaubende Mensch, der über seinen Glauben nachdenkt und über ihn spricht, ist im elementarsten Sinn ein Theologe. Denn Theologie ist das Denken des Glaubens oder der Glaube, der und insofern er denkt. Theologie ist, wie bereits diese Bezeichnung besagt, das verstehende Nachdenken über den Glau-

1. F. Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral, in: Kritische Studienausgabe. Band V, hrsg. von G. Cilli und M. Montinari (München 1988) 245-412, zit. 367.

ben an Gott. Im Wort „Theologie“ ist der Theos einem Logos, Gott einem Wort zugeordnet; und damit ist zum Ausdruck gebracht, dass Theologie Rede von Gott ist.

Dies bedeutet konkret, dass die Theologie letztlich nur ein Thema hat, weil es in ihr zuerst und zuletzt um Gott geht. Die lebendige Wirklichkeit Gottes ist gleichsam das exklusiv-eine Thema der theologischen Verantwortung des christlichen Glaubens. Im Erkennen dieses einen Themas, nämlich Gottes, hat die denkerische Verantwortung des Glaubens aber zugleich alle Wirklichkeit und damit alles, was irgendwie Inhalt der menschlichen Wirklichkeitserfahrung ist, als von Gott bestimmt mit zu erkennen und zum Verstehen zu bringen und die allgemein erfahrbare Wirklichkeit in ihrer Bezogenheit auf Gott zu thematisieren, nämlich „sub specie aeternitatis Dei“, im Licht der Ewigkeit Gottes. Das exklusiv-eine Thema der Theologie, nämlich die Wirklichkeit Gottes, kann die Theologie nur dadurch verantworten, dass sie zugleich und in einem, mithin inklusiv, alle Gegenstände der Wirklichkeitserfahrung zum Thema macht. Denn wer es mit Gott zu tun hat, hat es zugleich mit allem zu tun, wie der heilige Thomas von Aquin nicht zufälligerweise in seiner „Summa contra gentiles“ entschieden betont hat: „multa praecognoscere theologus oportet“²: Dem Theologen geziemt es, alles zu erkennen.

Im Mittelpunkt der christlichen Theologie steht von daher die Frage nach dem Verhältnis zwischen dem christlichen Glauben und dem vernünftigen Denken, und diese Frage ist charakteristisch für das Christentum. Denn im Bereich des Christlichen hat die Theologie einen sehr hohen Rang wie kaum in einer anderen Religion, worauf Joseph Ratzinger, der spätere Papst Benedikt XVI. mit den Worten hingewiesen hat: „Das Phänomen Theologie im strengen Sinn des Wortes ist ein ausschliesslich christliches Phänomen, das es anderwärts so nicht gibt.“³ Diese Besonderheit des Christentums ist genauer darin begründet, dass auf der einen Seite der Glaube die Theologie braucht und dass auf der anderen Seite die Theologie den Glauben voraussetzt. Diesem gegenseitigen Verhältnis von christlichem Glauben und theologischem Denken wollen wir auf den Grund zu gehen versuchen.⁴

2. Angewiesenheit des Glaubens auf die Theologie

An erster Stelle gilt es zu bedenken, dass der christliche Glaube die Theologie braucht. Denn der Glaube ist, wie der mittelalterliche Theologe Anselm von Canterbury klassisch formuliert hat, „fides quaerens intellectum“, ein Glaube, der seine eigene Vernunft sucht. Der Glaube will wissen, was er glaubt und warum er glaubt. Wie jeder Mensch, der einen anderen Menschen wirklich liebt, in sich die Sehnsucht verspürt, den geliebten Menschen besser kennen zu lernen, so ist auch der Glaubende bestrebt, mit dem lebendigen Gott, von dem er sich geliebt weiss und den er seinerseits liebt, vertraut zu werden und ihn mit seiner Vernunft zu erkennen. Denn der christliche Glaube

2. Thomas von Aquin, *Summa contra gentiles* I 4.

3. J. Kardinal Ratzinger, *Vom geistlichen Grund und vom kirchlichen Ort der Theologie*, in: Ders., *Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie. Versuche zu ihrer Ortsbestimmung im Disput der Gegenwart* (Einsiedeln 1993) 39-62, zit. 48.

4. Vgl. K. Koch, *Argumentative Rechenschaft über den Glauben. Vom kirchlichen Interesse an wissenschaftlicher Theologie*, in: Ders., *Kirche im Übergang zum dritten Jahrtausend. Wegweisungen für die Kirche der Zukunft* (Freiburg / Schweiz 2000) 59-78. Vgl. auch Ders., *Christliche Identität im Widerstreit heutiger Theologie. Eine Rechenschaft* (Ostfildern 1990).

ist überzeugt, dass Gott selbst Logos ist, Wort und Sinn, Vernunft und Wahrheit, und dass er auch mit den Kräften der menschlichen Vernunft erkannt werden kann. Christliche Theologie widerspricht deshalb der heute weit verbreiteten Annahme, dass alles in der Welt Zufall und damit gleichsam aus der Unvernunft entstanden ist. Da es in der Welt Vernunft und Geist gibt, ist es vielmehr logisch und adäquat, anzunehmen und vernünftig zu glauben, dass am Uranfang und Urgrund allen Seins Vernunft steht und die ganze Schöpfung aus Gottes Vernunft kommt. Da die Vernunft Gottes der tiefste Grund für die Vernünftigkeit der Schöpfung ist, ist die christliche Option für die Vernunft zutiefst im Glauben an Gott begründet.

Der christliche Glaube versteht Gott als Logos freilich nicht im Sinne einer mathematischen Vernunft auf dem Grund aller Dinge, sondern auch und vor allem als schöpferische Liebe, mit der sich Gott selbst uns Menschen zuwendet und schenkt. Der christliche Glaube stellt uns Gott als schöpferischen Urgrund und Ursprung aller Dinge und zugleich als Liebenden mit der ganzen Leidenschaft einer wirklichen Liebe vor Augen: Gott ist Logos und Caritas, Vernunft und Liebe. In diesem Glauben ist es begründet, dass es zwischen rechter Vernunft und aufrichtigem Glauben keinen Widerspruch geben kann. Denn ein Glaube ohne Vernunft wäre nicht ein menschlicher Glaube. Auf der anderen Seite wäre freilich eine Vernunft ohne Glaube orientierungs- und weglos.

Damit kommen wir auf den tiefsten Grund dafür, dass es dem christlichen Glauben um seine Vernünftigkeit und damit um die innerste Korrelation von Glaube und Vernunft geht und gehen muss und dass der Glaube auf Theologie angewiesen ist. Dieser Grund liegt darin, dass der christliche Glaube den Anspruch erhebt, wahr zu sein, und dass der christliche Glaube dem Menschen zumutet, Wahrheit erkennen zu können. Wie der heilige Augustinus in seinem theologischen Denken von der Grundfrage ausgegangen ist, was der Mensch denn stärker als die Wahrheit ersehnt – „*Quid enim fortius desiderat anima quam veritatem*“⁵ –, so betrachtet der christliche Glaube den Menschen nicht nur als ein wahrheitsfähiges, sondern geradezu als ein wahrheitsbedürftiges Lebewesen, dessen tiefste Sehnsucht sich auf die Erkenntnis der Wahrheit richtet. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit und die Frage nach dem Menschen sind deshalb identisch, wie Papst Benedikt XVI. immer wieder betont hat, besonders deutlich in seiner Botschaft zur Feier des Weltfriedenstages im Jahre 2012: „Der Mensch ist ein Wesen, das einen Durst nach Unendlichkeit in seinem Herzen trägt, einen Durst nach Wahrheit – nicht nach einer Teilwahrheit, sondern nach der Wahrheit, die den Sinn des Lebens zu erklären vermag – denn er ist als Gottes Abbild und ihm ähnlich erschaffen worden.“⁶

Wenn wir uns den Ernst der Frage nach der Wahrheit im christlichen Glauben vor Augen führen, können wir auch verstehen, dass die ersten Universitätsgründungen im christlichen Abendland auf die massgebliche Initiative der Kirche hin zustande gekommen sind, dass dabei die Mutterfakultät jeweils in der Theologischen Fakultät bestanden hat und dass die Kirche bis auf den heutigen Tag eine Interesse daran hat, dass

5. Augustinus, Kommentar zum Johannesevangelium, 26, 5.

6. Benedikt XVI., Botschaft zur Feier des Weltfriedenstages 2012: Die jungen Menschen zur Gerechtigkeit und zum Frieden erziehen, Nr.3.

der christliche Glaube an der Universität durch die Theologische Fakultät vertreten ist.⁷ Denn wenn christliche Theologie von Gott spricht, redet sie nicht nur von einer theologischen Wahrheit, sondern denkt sie auch an den gesamten Bereich, mit dem sich die verschiedenen Wissenschaften an einer Universität beschäftigen. Auf der anderen Seite kann es sich bei einer Universität nicht allein um ein Gespräch der Einzelwissenschaften untereinander handeln, sondern muss es auch und in erster Linie um die „universitas“ alles Wirklichen und seinen Sinnzusammenhang und damit um die Wahrheit gehen, wie dies der bedeutende katholische Theologe Romano Guardini in einer recht verworrenen Zeit als das Wesen des Akademischen herausgestellt hat: „Wenn die Universität einen geistigen Sinn hat, dann jenen, die Stätte zu sein, wo nach der Wahrheit gefragt wird, nach der reinen Wahrheit – nicht um eines Zweckes, sondern um ihrer selbst willen: deswegen, weil sie Wahrheit ist.“⁸ Wo an einer Universität nicht mehr nach der Wahrheit gefragt würde, wäre die Universität, wie ihr Name andeutet, keine Universität mehr, sondern würde besser „Diversität“ heissen. In einer solchen Situation kommt der Theologischen Fakultät erst recht die Aufgabe zu, „Hüter der Sensibilität für die Wahrheit zu sein, den Menschen nicht von der Suche nach der Wahrheit abbringen zu lassen“⁹.

Für dieses Zeugnis muss die Theologie freilich selbst den Tatbeweis erbringen, der darin besteht, dass sie im eigenen Haus mit ihren verschiedenen einzelnen theologischen Disziplinen gleichsam eine „Universität in der Universität“ darstellt. Nicht selten macht sie freilich den Eindruck, die Theologie sei eine bloss äusserliche Anhäufung von gesonderten Gegenstandsbereichen, die nur durch eine bloss Addition zu einem Ganzen werden. Demgegenüber muss die „innere Gliederung der Theologie“¹⁰ sichtbar werden, indem alle theologischen Disziplinen darum bemüht sein müssen, gemeinsam der glaubwürdigen Rede von jenem Gott zu dienen, der sich in der Menschwerdung seines Sohnes in Jesus von Nazareth endgültig offenbart hat. Dieser Dienst vollzieht sich dabei in einer dreifachen Ausrichtung, gemäss den drei Grundaufgaben der theologischen Wissenschaft:

Der Theologie kommt erstens die Verantwortung zu, die in der Geschichte des Glaubens wirksamen und in den Texten der Heiligen Schrift und der grossen Tradition der Kirche niedergeschriebenen Zeugnisse der Offenbarung Gottes im Licht des kirchlichen Glaubens zu verstehen und auszulegen. Darin besteht die vornehmliche Aufgabe der Biblischen Theologie, der Exegese des Alten und Neuen Testaments, auf der einen und der Historischen Theologie, der Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte, auf der anderen Seite.

Die Theologie hat zweitens die Aufgabe, die Offenbarung Gottes in ihrem universalen Wahrheitsanspruch und in ihrer erhellenden Orientierung für die gegenwärtige Lebenssituation der Menschen und der Welt zu entfalten. Darin besteht die spezifische Fragerichtung der Systematischen Theologie, die sich - in der Philosophie und Fundamentaltheologie – mit dem philosophischen Denken und den geistigen Strömun-

7. Vgl. K. Koch, *Universität und Kirche. Zu einer notwendigen Beziehung mit Spannungen* = Vorträge der Aeneas-Silvius-Stiftung an der Universität Basel XXXIII (Basel 1999).

8. R. Guardini, *Verantwortung. Gedanken zur jüdischen Frage* (München 1952) 10.

9. Benedikt XVI., *Nicht gehaltene Vorlesung für die römische Universität „La Sapienza“* am 17. Januar 2008.

10. W. Pannenberg, *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie* (Frankfurt a. M. 1973) 349-442.

gen der Gegenwart auseinandersetzt, die – in der Dogmatik – die kirchliche Glaubenslehre auslegt und vor den Fragen der Gegenwart verantwortet, und die – in Ethik und Moralthologie, Spiritualität und Kirchenrecht – die Konsequenzen des Glaubens in der Praxis der Nachfolge des einzelnen Christen und der kirchlichen Glaubensgemeinschaft expliziert.

Die Theologie ist drittens die Aufgabe zugewiesen, die Offenbarung Gottes in Wort, Verkündigung und Zeugnis weiter zu tradieren und sowohl vor der kritischen Vernunft als auch für die Kirche in Gegenwart und Zukunft zu vermitteln. Darin liegt die vornehmliche Verantwortung der Praktischen Theologie, die die kirchliche Praxis in Pfarrei und Seelsorge – in der Pastoraltheologie – und in der gottesdienstlichen Verdichtung – in der Liturgiewissenschaft – kritisch reflektiert und begleitet.

Indem diese verschiedenen theologischen Einzeldisziplinen innerlich und gegenseitig miteinander verknüpft sind, wollen sie insgesamt dazu verhelfen, dass der Blick immer wieder auf die Mitte aller Theologie konzentriert wird, nämlich auf das Reden von Gott. Zumal in der heutigen Gesellschaft, die sich durch eine starke Schwerhörigkeit oder gar Taubheit gegenüber Gott auszeichnet, besteht die besondere Verantwortung der Theologie darin, die Leidenschaft und Sensibilität für die Frage nach Gott in der Kirche und in der Gesellschaft heute wach zu halten und die Gegenwart des lebendigen Gottes zu bezeugen und damit der heutigen Welt die Antwort zu geben, die sie braucht, und zwar gemäss dem Anspruch des Glaubens, wie er im Ersten Petrusbrief in klassischer Weise formuliert ist: „Seid stets bereit, jedem Rede und Antwort zu stehen, der nach der Hoffnung fragt, die euch erfüllt; aber antwortet bescheiden und ehrfürchtig, denn ihr habt ein reines Gewissen“ (1 Petr 3, 15-16).

3. Der Glaube der Kirche als Vor-Gabe der Theologie

Die starke Betonung des Verhältnisses zwischen christlichem Glauben und menschlicher Vernunft und deshalb der Vernünftigkeit des Glaubens in den bisherigen Ausführungen kann in keiner Weise bedeuten, dass die Vernunft allein darüber befinden könnte und dürfte, was christlicher Glaube genannt zu werden verdient. Würde christlicher Glaube in diesem Sinn von der menschlichen Vernunft beherrscht, würde die besondere Versuchung des Theologen sichtbar, die darin besteht, möglichst originell sein zu wollen und eine eigene Theologie nach der Massgabe der eigenen menschlichen Vernunft zu entwickeln. Hinter einer solchen Selbstüberschätzung der Person des Theologen verbirgt sich freilich eine massive Unterschätzung dessen, was christliche Theologie ist und sein muss. Nachdem wir eingehend bedacht haben, dass der Glaube die Theologie braucht, müssen wir jetzt den anderen Grundsatz bedenken, dass der Glaube der Theologie vor-gegeben ist und in diesem Sinn die Theologie den Glauben braucht..

Dass christliche Theologie den Glauben der Kirche voraussetzt, wird dann deutlich, wenn wir die Aufmerksamkeit auf jene Eigenschaft des Theologen lenken, die ihn von den anderen Wissenschaftlern und letztlich von jedem denkenden Menschen unterscheidet. Es zeichnet den denkenden Menschen aus, dass bei ihm das Denken dem Sprechen, der Gedanke dem Wort vorausgeht. Menschen, die sich selbst zuerst reden gehört haben müssen, damit sie überhaupt wissen, was sie denken sollen, pflegen wir mit Recht nicht als besonders intelligent und weise zu bezeichnen. Beim christlichen Theologen hingegen verhält es sich anders. Damit soll ihm keineswegs solides Denken abgesprochen werden. Doch beim christlichen Theologen, der sich selbst und seine Verantwortung recht versteht, geht das Wort seinem Denken immer voraus. Da-

bei handelt es sich freilich gerade nicht um das Wort des Theologen, sondern um das Wort Gottes, das auf den Theologen zu kommt und das er zunächst empfangen und annehmen muss. Denn der Theologe kann das Wort Gottes nicht erfinden; er kann es nur finden oder noch besser: sich von ihm finden lassen. Der Theologe kann das Wort Gottes nicht erzeugen; er kann es vielmehr nur bezeugen, und zwar mit dem notwendigen Interesse einer systematischen Kohärenz. Der Theologe kann schliesslich das Wort Gottes nicht herstellen; er kann es vielmehr nur darstellen, und zwar in einer möglichst glaubwürdigen Art und Weise. Nur so dient Theologie der Wahrheit, die der christliche Glaube für sich in Anspruch nimmt.

Den Primat des Wortes Gottes bei der theologischen Verantwortung der Wahrheit des Glaubens kann man am schönsten in der biblischen Gestalt des Johannes des Täufers vorgebildet sehen. Er wird im Neuen Testament als „Stimme“ bezeichnet, während Christus das „Wort“ genannt wird. Mit dem Verhältnis von Wort und Stimme lässt sich der theologische Dienst am Wort Gottes verdeutlichen: Wie der sinnliche Klang, nämlich die Stimme, die das Wort von einem Menschen zu einem anderen trägt, vorüber geht, während das Wort bleibt, so hat auch bei der Arbeit des Theologen die menschliche Stimme keinen anderen Sinn als den, das Wort Gottes zu vermitteln; danach kann und muss sie wieder zurücktreten, damit das Wort im Mittelpunkt bleibt und Frucht bringen kann. Die Sendung des Theologen besteht deshalb darin, sinnlich-lebendige Stimme für das vorgängige Wort Gottes und damit wie Johannes der Täufer Vorläufer und Diener des Wortes Gottes zu sein. Nur in solcher Selbstbescheidung kann der Theologe der Wahrheit des christlichen Glaubens verpflichtet sein und ihr dienen.

Da in der Theologie das Wort Gottes dem menschlichen Denken immer vorausgeht, ist theologisches Denken im besten Sinne des Wortes nachdenkendes und nachdenkliches Denken. Damit stossen wir auf jene wahre Originalität, von der christliche Theologie ausgeht und der sie nachdenkt. Sie ist jenes Wort, das die Theologie nicht selbst erfunden hat und prinzipiell nicht selbst erfinden kann, das aber gerade dadurch Mitte aller christlichen Theologie ist, dass es ihr voraus geht und sie zugleich trägt, weil es viel grösser ist als das eigene Denken. Christliche Theologie besteht darin, dass sie jene Vor-Gabe annimmt, die mehr ist als das, was sie selbst erdacht hat. Christliche Theologie setzt vielmehr Autorität voraus, genauer jene Autorität der Wahrheit, die im christlichen Glauben den Namen „Offenbarung“ trägt. Die Offenbarung Gottes ist jenes Wort, das dem theologischen Denken vorausgeht und dem christliche Theologie nachdenkt. Sie ist deshalb in ihrer zentrierenden Mitte Offenbarungstheologie.

Dabei ist es von grundlegender Bedeutung, dass im christlichen Glauben der Begriff der Offenbarung in erster Linie den Akt bezeichnet, in dem sich Gott uns Menschen zeigt und sich uns als Liebe zusagt, und nicht das verobjektivierte Ergebnis dieses Aktes, oder mit den Worten von Joseph Ratzinger: „Offenbarung ist im christlichen Bereich nicht begriffen als ein System von Sätzen, sondern als das geschehene und im Glauben immer noch geschehende Ereignis einer neuen Relation zwischen Gott und dem Menschen.“¹¹ Der christliche Glaube versteht unter der Offenbarung Gottes nicht einfach die Mitteilung von Wahrheiten und identifiziert sie auch nicht einfach mit der Heiligen Schrift. Die Offenbarung Gottes liegt der Heiligen Schrift voraus und schlägt

11. J. Ratzinger, Das Problem der Dogmengeschichte in der Sicht der katholischen Theologie (Köln und Opladen 1966) 19.

sich in ihr nieder, ist aber nicht einfach mit ihr identisch. Unter der Offenbarung Gottes versteht der christliche Glaube genauer das geschichtliche Handeln Gottes, in dem sich seine Wahrheit enthüllt. Die Offenbarung Gottes ist deshalb in erster Linie eine personale Wirklichkeit: Jesus Christus selbst ist in Person das lebendige Wort Gottes. Wenn sich Gott nämlich in der Geschichte und darin zuhöchst in der Person Jesus Christus offenbart hat, dann ist Gottes Offenbarung mehr als Schrift; diese ist vielmehr das authentische Zeugnis von Gottes Offenbarung. Der christliche Glaube bekennt sich nicht zu einer Inlibration, zu einer Buchwerdung, sondern zur Inkarnation, zur Fleischwerdung des Sohnes Gottes im Menschen Jesus von Nazareth, wie der katholische Neutestamentler Thomas Söding hervorhebt: „Das Christentum hat eine Heilige Schrift, ist aber keine Buchreligion. Im Mittelpunkt des Christentums steht der Mensch: Jesus von Nazareth. Durch ihn wird das Menschliche mit dem Göttlichen verbunden und Gott mit dem Menschen.“¹²

Die wichtige Aufgabe der Theologie besteht von daher darin, die Offenbarung Gottes in Jesus Christus orientiert an den Quellen des Glaubens in der Heiligen Schrift und in der Tradition der Kirche und damit ursprungstreu zu übermitteln und zugleich vor den Fragen des heutigen Menschen und den Herausforderungen der gegenwärtigen Zeit und damit zeitgemäss zu verantworten. Dies ist nur möglich, wenn die Quellen des Glaubens nicht einfach als Zeugnisse der Vergangenheit betrachtet werden; sie müssen vielmehr als Zeugnisse gelesen werden, in denen Gott auch in unsere Gegenwart hinein spricht. Nur auf diesem Wege lässt sich die doppelte Gefahr vermeiden, die der bedeutende mittelalterliche Theologe Hugo von St. Viktor mit dem Bildwort zum Ausdruck gebracht hat, Theologen sollten sich nicht wie Gelehrte der Grammatik benehmen, die das Alphabet nicht kennen, sie sollten sich aber auch nicht nur mit dem Alphabet beschäftigen und dabei die schöne Harmonie der Grammatik aus den Augen verlieren. Die Theologie muss sich mit dem wissenschaftlichen Alphabet beschäftigen, jedoch mit dem Ziel, die schöne Grammatik des Glaubens auch heute zum Leichten zu bringen.

4. Kirchliche Glaubensgemeinschaft als Lebensraum der Theologie

Die Offenbarung Gottes ist, wie wir gesehen haben, in erster Linie das persönliche Zugehen Gottes auf uns Menschen. Dann ist auch der Glaube als Antwort auf die Offenbarung Gottes zu verstehen als persönliche Kommunikation mit dem lebendigen Gott. Zum so verstandenen Begriff der Offenbarung Gottes gehört deshalb immer auch ein menschliches Subjekt, das dieser Offenbarung inne wird und sie empfängt. Denn eine Offenbarung, die nicht angenommen wird, kann auch niemandem offenbar werden.

Der eigentliche Adressat und Empfänger der Offenbarung Gottes ist dabei nicht einfach der einzelne Christ. Denn niemand kann allein glauben; jeder Christ verdankt seinen Glauben vielmehr konkreten Mitmenschen, die vor ihm geglaubt haben und heute mit ihm glauben. Dieses grosse „Mit“, ohne das es keinen persönlichen Glauben geben kann, ist die Glaubensgemeinschaft der Kirche. Christliche Theologie als Denken des Glaubens ist deshalb immer in und aus der Kirche und in diesem

12. Thomas Söding, Gotteswort durch Menschenwort. Das Buch der Bücher und das Leben der Menschen, in: K.-H. Kronawitter und M. Langer (Hrsg.), Von Gott und der Welt. Ein theologisches Lesebuch (Regensburg 2008) 212-223, zit. 219.

grundlegenden Sinn kirchliche Theologie. Die Kirche ist in erster Linie nicht, wie es freilich heute oft scheint, Thema oder Objekt der Theologie. Die Kirche ist viel grundlegender das Subjekt der Theologie und der Lebensraum, in dem Theologie vollzogen wird. Kirche und Theologie sind deshalb bleibend aufeinander verwiesen und fordern und fördern sich wechselseitig.

Zur Kirchlichkeit der Theologie gehört es auch, dass sie ganz im Dienst der Verkündigung der Wahrheit des christlichen Glaubens, genauer des gemeinsamen Glaubens der Kirche, steht. Denn die kirchliche Verkündigung des Glaubens muss vor der kritisch-theologischen Reflexion dieses Glaubens den Primat haben. Die Theologie kann nicht das Mass der Verkündigung sein, sondern die Verkündigung muss das Mass der Theologie sein. Die Theologie kann weder in einem luftleeren Raum noch in der privaten Beliebigkeit des einzelnen Theologen vollzogen werden. Sie muss sich vielmehr öffnen für die ganze Glaubensgemeinschaft der Kirche. In diesem Sinn ist die Theologie ein eigentlich kirchlicher Dienst und kann – wie jeder kirchliche Dienst – authentisch nur in dienender Stellvertretung für die ganze kirchliche Gemeinschaft vollzogen werden. Dabei zeigt ein Blick in die Geschichte, vor allem der Blick auf den grossen Aufbruch der katholischen Theologie zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen im vergangenen Jahrhundert, dass die wirklich fruchtbaren Neuansätze in der Theologie nie aus einer Loslösung der Theologie von der Kirche, sondern stets in einer neuen Zuwendung zur Kirche erwachsen sind. Dort hingegen, wo sich die Theologie von der kirchlichen Gemeinschaft abgewandt hat, drohte sie zu verarmen und zu verflachen.

Im Licht des soeben besprochenen Grundsatzes, dass die Verkündigung der Glaubenswahrheit der gültige Masstab auch für die Theologie ist und sein muss, werden auch Wesen und Bedeutung des kirchlichen Lehramtes für die Theologie deutlich, das in katholischer Sicht als Dienst der Bezeugung und Bewahrung der Glaubenswahrheit unverzichtbar ist. Den tieferen Sinn und die besondere Verantwortung des kirchlichen Lehramtes hat Papst Benedikt XVI. in der Verpflichtung zum Gehorsam gegenüber dem Wort Gottes gesehen, wie er es in seiner Predigt bei der feierlichen Inbesitznahme der Kathedra des Bischofs von Rom mit Blick auf seine eigene petrinische Verantwortung mit den Worten ausgesprochen hat: „Sein Dienst garantiert Gehorsam gegenüber Christus und seinem Wort. Er darf nicht seine eigenen Ideen verkünden, sondern muss – entgegen allen Versuchen von Anpassung und Verwässerung – sich und die Kirche immer zum Gehorsam gegenüber dem Wort Gottes verpflichten.“¹³

Weil die Lehrvollmacht in der Kirche vor allem die Gehorsamsverpflichtung zur Wahrheit des Glaubens einschliesst, muss das Lehramt innerhalb der kirchlichen Gemeinschaft auch eine besondere Sorge für den Glauben der so genannten einfachen Gläubigen tragen. Gegenüber einer „Verächtlichmachung des einfachen Glaubens durch die Intellektuellen und ihr Auslegungskünste“¹⁴ ist Papst Benedikt XVI. nie müde geworden, dieses Kriterium in die Erinnerung zu rufen: „Das erstrangige Gut, für das

13. Benedikt XVI., Predigt in der Eucharistiefeier anlässlich der feierlichen Inbesitznahme der Kathedra des Bischofs von Rom in der Lateranbasilika vom 7. Mai 2005.

14. J. Kardinal Ratzinger, Was ist Freiheit des Glaubens? Silvesterpredigt 1979, in: Ders., Zeitfragen und christlicher Glaube (Würzburg 1982) 7-27, zit. 20.

die Kirche Verantwortung trägt, ist der Glaube der Einfachen. Die Ehrfurcht davor muss innerer Masstab aller theologischen Lehre sein.¹⁵

5. Das Gebet als Quelle und Mündung der Theologie

Wenn sich christliche Theologie an der Einfachheit der Wahrheit des Glaubens orientiert, verliert sie weder ihre Grösse noch ihre Tiefe; sie führt vielmehr nochmals zur grundlegenden Unterscheidung und zugleich Zuordnung von Glaube und Theologie zurück. Beide müssen in der Kirche ihre eigene Stimme haben, wobei die Stimme der Theologie von der Stimme des Glaubens abhängig ist und auf sie bezogen sein muss. Theologie ist Auslegung des Glaubens und muss Auslegung bleiben und kann sich nicht selbst den Text geben und schon gar nicht einen neuen Text erfinden. Glaube und Theologie sind vielmehr so verschieden wie Text und Auslegung. Wird dieser Zusammenhang ausgeblendet und vernachlässigt, dann droht in der Theologie jene Versuchung, die der Soziologe Franz-Xaver Kaufmann so diagnostiziert hat: „An die Stelle der Rede mit Gott trat die Rede von Gott, dann die Rede über Gott und bald nur noch die Rede von der Rede über Gott – die Rede über Theologie oder Reflexion.“¹⁶

Dieser Versuchung vermag die Theologie nur zu entkommen, wenn sie sich Rechenschaft darüber gibt, dass der Glaube seine erste Artikulation nicht in der Theologie, sondern in der Doxologie des Gebetes findet. Denn das Gebet ist „sprechender Glaube“¹⁷ und als solcher bereits Theologie, gleichsam der theologische Ur-Akt. Wie ein liebender Mensch nur dann wirklich sachgemäss *über* seine Geliebte zu reden vermag, wenn er zuvor und vor allem *zu* ihr zu reden imstande ist, so ist auch das theologische Reden *von* Gott nur dann wirklich sachgemäss, wenn es vom vitalen Reden *zu* Gott herkommt und immer wieder in das Reden zu Gott hinführt. Als Quelle und zugleich Mündung allen theologischen Redens von Gott stellt das Gebet ein elementares Kriterium des theologischen Denkens dar: Nur dasjenige kann theologisch als wahr gelten, was im Gebet vor Gott ausgesprochen werden kann. Was hingegen im Gebet vor Gott nicht formuliert werden kann, kann auch nicht Gegenstand theologischer Lehre sein. Als Purgatorium des theologischen Denkens ist das Gebet der „Ernstfall“ des Glaubens wie der Theologie¹⁸.

Am Vollzug des Gebetes wird deutlich, dass der Theologe in erster Linie nicht der Akteur der Theologie ist, sondern der Angesprochene. Theologie muss und will zunächst in der eigenen glaubend-theologischen Existenz gleichsam erlitten werden, um dann allerdings leidenschaftlich werden zu können. Der deutsche Philosoph Fichte hat einmal gemeint, was einer für eine Philosophie habe, entscheide sich daran, was einer für ein Mensch sei. Analoges lässt sich für die Theologie sagen: Was einer für eine Theologie hat, entscheidet sich daran, was einer für ein Mensch und Christ ist. Der erste Praxisbezug des Theologen liegt deshalb in seiner persönlichen Spiritualität. Nur wenn die Theologie im Leben des Glaubens praktisch wird, lebt der Theologe am heiligen

15. J. Kardinal Ratzinger, Vom geistlichen Grund und vom kirchlichen Ort der Theologie, in: Ders., Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie. Versuche zu ihrer Ortsbestimmung im Disput der Gegenwart (Einsiedeln 1993) 39-62, zit. 59.

16. Zit. bei H. Windisch, Laien-Priester. Rom oder der Ernstfall. Zur „Instruktion zu einigen Fragen über die Mitarbeit der Laien am Dienst der Priester“ (Würzburg 1998) 55.

17. O. H. Pesch, Sprechender Glaube. Entwurf einer Theologie des Gebetes (Mainz 1970).

18. W. Kasper, Einführung in den Glauben (Mainz 1972) 79.

Feuer Gottes und erzählt nicht nur davon, dass es irgendwo ein solches Feuer geben soll.

Und dann wird Theologie in Freude vollzogen. Denn die Freude des Glaubens ist zutiefst Freude an der Wahrheit und hat in ihr ihre eigentliche Zwillingschwester, wie es Paul Claudel mit seinem tiefen Wort ausgesprochen hat: „Wo die meiste Wahrheit ist, ist auch die meiste Freude.“ Theologie, im Glauben verwurzelt und im Dienst an der glaubwürdigen Verkündigung des Glaubens in der Gemeinschaft der Kirche vollzogen, verdient dann eine frohe Wissenschaft genannt zu werden.

Vortrag beim Kongress „Räume des Dialogs. Die christlichen Inspirationen der Kultur der Begegnung“

(Lublin, 15. Oktober 2020)

CHRISTLICHE INSPIRATIONEN FÜR EINE KULTUR DES DIALOGS UND DER BEGEGNUNG

Ich bedanke mich herzlich für die freundliche Einladung, den Eröffnungsvortrag bei Ihrem Kongress zu halten, der dem anspruchsvollen Thema gewidmet ist: „Räume des Dialogs. Die christlichen Inspirationen der Kultur der Begegnung“. Wenn es um Begegnung und Dialog geht und wenn Sie dazu an erster Stelle einen Theologen und Bischof sprechen lassen, steht zu vermuten, dass die fundamentalste Form des Dialogs im Vordergrund der Reflexion stehen wird, nämlich der Dialog des Menschen mit Gott.

1. Innergöttlicher Dialog in der trinitarischen Gemeinschaft

Als Christen sind wir freilich überzeugt, dass unser Dialog mit Gott nur unsere Antwort auf jenen Dialog sein kann, den Gott selbst zuerst mit uns Menschen führt und den wir „Offenbarung“ nennen. Dabei ist es von grundlegender Bedeutung, dass im christlichen Glauben der Begriff der Offenbarung in erster Linie den Akt bezeichnet, in dem sich Gott uns Menschen zeigt und sich uns als Liebe zusagt, und nicht das verobjektivierte Ergebnis dieses Aktes. Unter der Offenbarung Gottes versteht der christliche Glaube nicht einfach die Mitteilung von Wahrheiten, sondern das personale Zugehen Gottes selbst auf uns Menschen, seine persönliche Kommunikation mit uns und sein geschichtliches Handeln, in dem sich seine Wahrheit enthüllt. Denn Gott ist ein Wesen des Bundes, der Beziehung und des Dialogs, wie die Dogmatische Konstitution des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils über die göttliche Offenbarung „Dei verbum“ die Offenbarung Gottes als ganzheitlichen Vorgang beschreibt: „Gott hat in seiner Güte und Weisheit beschlossen, sich selbst zu offenbaren und das Geheimnis seines Willens kundzutun (vgl. Eph 1, 9): dass die Menschen durch Christus, das fleischgewordene Wort, im Heiligen Geist Zugang zum Vater haben und teilhaftig werden der göttlichen Natur (vgl. Eph 2, 18; 2 Petr 1, 4). In dieser Offenbarung redet der unsichtbare Gott (vgl. Kol 1, 15; 1 Tim 1, 7) aus überströmender Liebe die Menschen an wie Freunde (vgl. Ex 33, 11; Joh 15, 14-15) und verkehrt mit ihnen (vgl. Bar 3, 38), um sie in seine Gemeinschaft einzuladen und aufzunehmen.“¹

Als Christen müssen wir aber noch tiefer bohren. Gott ist deshalb ein Gott der Beziehung und des Dialogs, weil es einen noch elementareren Dialog gibt, nämlich den Dialog, der sich innerhalb von Gott selbst vollzieht. Denn im christlichen Verständnis ist Gott nicht das einsame Wesen im Himmel; er ist vielmehr in sich selbst lebendiger Austausch und belebender Dialog. Gott ist in sich im höchsten Mass ein Wesen von Beziehung, Begegnung und Dialog. Wohl deshalb sind die schönsten Namen für Gott allesamt Beziehungsamen, nämlich Vater, Sohn und Heiliger Geist. Gott ist in einem so radikalen Sinn ein Beziehungswesen, dass er nicht nur Beziehungen hat, sondern in sich selbst Beziehung ist. Denn wir Christen glauben an den Drei-Einen Gott. Dies bedeutet, dass im Drei-Einen Gott Einheit und Vielheit zusammen leben,

1. Dei verbum, Nr. 2.

und Gott uns als ewig liebender Dialog zwischen gleichwertigen Personen begegnet. Dabei sind beide Momente gleichursprünglich, nämlich sowohl die Einheit der Personen als auch ihre bleibende Unterschiedenheit:

Der christliche Glaube an den Drei-Einen Gott bekennt auf der einen Seite, dass in Gott selbst Lebensraum für den Anderen besteht. Denn der Vater ist anders als der Sohn, und der Sohn ist wiederum anders als der Heilige Geist. Es lebt in der göttlichen Dreieinigkeit eine ursprüngliche und wunderschöne Vielheit und Verschiedenheit der Personen. Die christliche Kirche hat deshalb den Modalismus, demgemäss sich das eine göttliche Wesen bloss in drei verschiedenen Weisen, nämlich Modi, zeigt, als Häresie verurteilt. Denn Gott ist in sich selbst Differenz in der Unterschiedenheit der Personen.

Die Unterschiedenheit der Personen von Vater, Sohn und Geist schliesst aber auf der anderen Seite in der göttlichen Dreieinigkeit keine Über- und Unterordnung ein. Denn Vater, Sohn und Heiliger Geist leben auf der gleichen Seinsebene. Es lebt in Gott folglich eine ursprüngliche und wunderschöne Einheit im Wesen der drei Personen. Die christliche Kirche hat deshalb den Subordinatianismus, demgemäss der Sohn und der Heilige Geist dem Vater untergeordnet sind, als Häresie verurteilt. Denn Gott ist in sich selbst lebendige Gemeinschaft der Personen von Vater, Sohn und Heiligem Geist.

2. Der Mensch als ein dialogisches Lebewesen

Wenn wir beide Wesensbestimmungen des Geheimnisses der göttlichen Dreieinigkeit zusammen bedenken, dann ist der im christlichen Glauben offenbare Gott gleichursprünglich Einheit und Verschiedenheit, *Communio* und Differenz. Die Einheit in Gott erweist sich als Einheit durch liebenden Dialog. Dieses christliche Verständnis Gottes hat befreiende Konsequenzen für das Verständnis des Menschen, der zum Ebenbild Gottes berufen ist. Wenn nämlich Gott in sich liebender Dialog ist, dann können auch wir Menschen auf Erden nur Ebenbilder des Dreieinen Gottes sein, wenn wir Menschen des Dialogs werden und sind. Wenn sich die Dialogpartner im innergöttlichen Leben auf derselben Seinsebene befinden, dann sind wir Menschen nur dann Ebenbilder des Dreieinen Gottes, wenn wir in eine dialogische Kommunikation miteinander eintreten. Und wenn der Dreieine Gott gleichursprünglich Einheit und Verschiedenheit ist, dann erweisen wir Menschen uns nur als Ebenbilder Gottes, wenn wir im Gleichgewicht von *Communio* und Differenz leben.

Die elementarste Konsequenz, die sich aus dem trinitarischen Gottesgeheimnis für die christliche Anthropologie ergibt, besteht darin, dass nicht einfach der einzelne Mensch das Ebenbild Gottes ist, sondern die Gemeinschaft zwischen den Menschen, wie dies der priesterschriftliche Schöpfungsbericht sehr schön zum Ausdruck bringt: „Gott schuf den Menschen als sein Abbild; als Abbild Gottes schuf er ihn. Als Mann und Frau schuf er sie“ (Gen 1, 26). Wenn wir diese Botschaft ernst nehmen, dann gibt es in der biblischen Sicht „den“ Menschen gar nicht. Der Mensch existiert vielmehr nur ganz konkret als Mann und Frau, und die geschlechtliche Differenzierung im Menschsein gehört zur schöpfungsgemässen Bestimmung des Menschen, und zwar so sehr, dass sie in eine theologische Wesensbestimmung des Menschen aufgenommen ist.

Nur im Zueinander und Miteinander von Mann und Frau findet der Mensch seine Zielbestimmung und ist er Ebenbild Gottes. Denn gemäss dem jahwistischen Schöpfungsbericht hat Gott selbst die Feststellung getroffen: „Es ist nicht gut, dass der

Mensch allein bleibt. Ich will ihm eine Hilfe machen, die ihm entspricht“ (Gen 2, 18). In dieser sensiblen und sympathischen Feststellung ist es begründet, dass Gott im Paradies dem Adam die Eva erschuf. Als Adam die von Gott modellierte Eva erkannte, rief er voll Freude aus: „Das endlich ist Bein von meinem Bein und Fleisch von meinem Fleisch. Frau soll sie heissen; denn vom Mann ist sie genommen“ (Gen 2, 23). Frau und Mann sind deshalb jene beiden Pole in der Ellipse des Menschseins, in der sie gleichwürdig sind, gerade indem sie voneinander verschieden sind; und sie sind voneinander verschieden, damit sie sich dessen immer wieder bewusst werden, dass sie einander brauchen. Sie sind geschaffen, um einander zu ergänzen, wie dies die Heilige Schrift wiederum in Gottes Schöpfung begründet sieht: „Darum verlässt der Mann Vater und Mutter und bindet sich an seine Frau, und sie werden *ein* Fleisch“ (Gen 2, 24). Mit diesem „Ein-Fleisch-Werden“ ist dabei nicht einfach eine biologische Wirklichkeit gemeint, sondern das existenzielle Miteinander und Füreinander von Frau und Mann, in dem sich Ich und Du keineswegs auflösen, in dem aber jene neue Einheit entsteht, die nur die Liebe bewirken kann. Mann und Frau stehen dabei exemplarisch und stellvertretend für die Gemeinschaft der Menschen untereinander, die dazu berufen sind, Lebewesen des Dialogs und der Begegnung zu sein.

3. Freiheitliche Kommunikation im Dialog

Von daher stellt sich die Frage, wie sich ein wahrhafter Dialog zwischen Menschen vollzieht. Wenn ein solcher auf der Gemeinschaft und Wechselbeziehung der Dialogpartner, die gleichwürdig, aber verschieden sind, beruht, findet ein wahrhafter Dialog nur dort statt, wo er sich zwischen Überzeugungen vollzieht und wo beide Dialogpartner einander etwas zu sagen haben und willens sind, gemeinsam Wahrheit zu suchen und zu finden. Ein solcher Dialog ist deshalb nur im Lebensraum der Freiheit im Sinne der Achtung des Anderen gerade in seinem Anderssein möglich. Er setzt ein symmetrisches Verhältnis zwischen den Dialogpartnern voraus oder, mit Otto F. Bollnow gesprochen, die „Antizipation, dass die beiden Partner auf der Ebene grundsätzlicher Gleichberechtigung und Freiheit in voller Offenheit miteinander zu sprechen bereit sind“². Die im Dialog notwendige Gleichheit und Wechselseitigkeit bedeutet auf der anderen Seite jedoch keineswegs die Nivellierung der Überzeugungen der beiden Partner; sie gehören vielmehr zur Methode eines wahrhaften Dialogs und einer echten Begegnung.

Dialog und Begegnung werden ihrem Anspruch nur gerecht, wenn sie im Geist einer gehaltvollen Toleranz vollzogen werden. Denn gehaltvolle Toleranz unterscheidet sich wesentlich von einer bloss formalen, in den heutigen Auseinandersetzungen jedoch dominierenden Toleranz, die alle Unterschiede sofort als Diskriminierungen anklagt und nur Gleichheit gelten lässt, mit der Konsequenz, dass Toleranz letztlich nur dort als möglich und praktikierbar erscheint, wo die Frage nach der Wahrheit suspendiert wird, und zwar in der falschen Annahme, dass mit Wahrheitsgewissheit vertretene Überzeugungen den Frieden unter den Menschen gefährden würden.³ Ein „Dialog“ jedoch, der zwischen Partnern geführt würde, die selbst keine klaren Standpunkte ver-

2. F. Bollnow, *Das Doppelgesicht der Wahrheit* (Stuttgart 1975) 66.

3. Vgl. K. Koch, *Säkulare Toleranz und christlicher Glaube*, in: Ders., *Konfrontation oder Dialog? Brennpunkte heutiger Glaubensverkündigung* (Freiburg / Schweiz – Graz 1996) 123-147.

treten und sich gegenüber der zu suchenden Wahrheit indifferent verhalten, verdient die Ehrenbezeichnung „Dialog“ nicht. Gehaltvolle Toleranz respektiert demgegenüber die bestehenden Unterschiede und führt gerade durch deren Wahrnehmung zu Einheit und Frieden. Papst Franziskus hat deshalb als wichtigen Grundsatz in Erinnerung gerufen, dass es ohne Identität keinen Dialog geben kann, sondern nur ein „Scheindialog, ein Dialog in den Wolken“ geführt wird: „Man kann keinen Dialog führen, wenn man nicht von der eigenen Identität ausgeht.“⁴

Nimmt man den Grundsatz der Gleichheit und Wechselseitigkeit im Dialog ebenso ernst wie die Identität der Partner, die in jedem wahrhaften Dialog vorausgesetzt ist, dann kommt jeder echte Dialog einer Gratwanderung zwischen Extremen gleich: Auf der einen Seite führt ein „Dialog“, der am Finden der Wahrheit nicht interessiert und orientiert ist, sehr schnell in die tödliche Langeweile der Indifferenz. Auf der anderen Seite führt jeder „Dialog“ in die fanatische Borniertheit der Intoleranz, wenn der eine Partner für sich allein absolute Wahrheit beansprucht und den Anderen Wahrheit abspricht. Beide Extreme – Gleichgültigkeit und Fanatismus, Indifferenz und Intoleranz – stellen das Gegenteil eines wahrhaften Dialogs dar. Beiden Extremen gegenüber zeichnet sich ein wahrhafter Dialog dadurch aus, dass er sich in Freiheit zwischen Überzeugungen vollzieht und gerade so der Freiheit und dem Frieden dient. Denn wer davon überzeugt ist, „dass die Wahrheit ihre eigene Strahlkraft hat“⁵ wird im Dialog darauf verzichten, sich selbst durchsetzen zu wollen und auf die Anderen Druck auszuüben. Er ist vielmehr der entschiedenen Ansicht, dass Wahrheit allein durch Überzeugung wirkt.

Das Gelingen eines wahrhaften Dialogs setzt folglich die klare Unterscheidung zwischen der Macht des Überredens und der Kraft des Überzeugens voraus: Der Versuch und die Versuchung zum Überreden eines anderen Menschen hat sein Ziel darin, den eigenen Standpunkt dem anderen Menschen aufzuzwingen, und ist deshalb immer autoritär und totalitär. Die Kunst des Überzeugens erweist sich demgegenüber als freiheitliche Einladung an den Partner, Kommunikation aufzunehmen und in einen belebenden Dialog einzutreten. Dabei versteht es sich von selbst, dass nur die zweite Alternative, nämlich das Überzeugen, der Würde des Menschen und dem christlichen Evangelium zu entsprechen vermag.

4. Dialog als Wesensvollzug der Kirche

Auf dem Hintergrund dieser grundsätzlichen Überlegungen dürfte deutlich sein, dass Prinzip und Methode des Dialogs nicht einfach eine Modeerscheinung in der Kirche heute darstellen, sondern das innerste Wesenselement der Kirche ausmachen, wie dies Papst Paul VI. in seiner Antrittsszyklika „Ecclesiam suam“ zum Ausdruck gebracht hat: „Die Kirche muss zu einem Dialog mit der Welt kommen, in der sie nun einmal lebt. Die Kirche macht sich selbst zum Wort, zur Botschaft, zum Dialog.“⁶ Damit hat Papst Paul VI. ausgesprochen, was das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil intendiert hat und was vor allem am Beginn der Pastoralkonstitution über die Kirche in der Welt von heute „Gaudium et spes“ ins Wort gebracht wird, wenn es dort heisst, dass „nach einer

4. Franziskus, Ansprache bei der Begegnung mit den Führern anderer Religionen und anderer christlicher Konfessionen in Tirana am 21. September 2014.

5. Franziskus, a.a.O.

6. Paul VI., *Ecclesiam suam*, Nr. 65.

tieferen Klärung des Geheimnisses der Kirche“ sich das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil „ohne Zaudern nicht mehr bloss an die Kinder der Kirche und an alle, die Christi Namen anrufen“, wendet, „sondern an alle Menschen schlechthin in der Absicht, allen darzulegen, wie es Gegenwart und Wirken der Kirche in der Welt von heute versteht“⁷. Mit dieser programmatischen Anzeige führt die Pastoralkonstitution nicht nur in ihre Grundthematik der Sendung der Kirche in der Welt ein, sondern zeigt auch den grundlegenden Zusammenhang mit der Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche „*Lumen gentium*“ auf, in der in den Nummern 14 bis 16 dargelegt wird, dass sich die Sendung der Kirche gleichsam in konzentrischen Kreisen verwirklicht: Die Kirche wendet ihre Aufmerksamkeit zuerst den „katholischen Gläubigen“ zu, dann all „jenen, die durch die Taufe der Ehre des Christennamens teilhaft sind“, und schliesslich denjenigen, „die das Evangelium noch nicht empfangen haben“.

Damit ist deutlich signalisiert, dass die Kirche mit allen Menschen im Dialog sein will: im Dialog mit den verschiedenen Ständen und Sendungen in der eigenen Kirche, im Dialog mit den anderen christlichen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften, im Dialog mit den anderen Religionen, im Dialog mit den verschiedenen Weltanschauungen und Ethiken, im Dialog mit den Wissenschaften und im Dialog mit den verschiedenen Lebensbereichen in der heutigen Gesellschaft. Aus diesen verschiedenen Dialogrichtungen will ich aus gegebenem Anlass nur auf den ökumenischen Dialog kurz eingehen, den die Katholische Kirche seit dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil pflegt und in dem der heilige Papst Johannes Paul II. „eines der hauptsächlichsten Zeichen und zugleich einen der Beweise für die Erneuerung der Kirche“ wahrgenommen hat, wie er bereits in seiner „Studie zur Verwirklichung des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils“ bekannt hat⁸, die er zur Umsetzung des Konzils in der ihm damals anvertrauten Diözese Krakau geschrieben hat.

Was vorhin als Wesen eines jeden zwischenmenschlichen Dialogs kurz skizziert worden ist, trifft erst recht auf den ökumenischen Dialog zu, bei dem es um Fragen des Glaubens und des christlichen Lebens geht. Diesbezüglich hebt das Dekret des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils über den Ökumenismus „*Unitatis redintegratio*“ hervor, dass „ein jeder mit dem anderen auf der Ebene der Gleichheit“ spricht“, und es bringt die notwendige Wechselbeziehung, die in einem wahrhaften ökumenischen Dialog gegeben sein muss, auf die Formel „*par cum pari agat*“⁹. Das Konzil hat damit eine Formel aufgenommen, die sich bereits in der vom Heiligen Officium im Jahre 1949 veröffentlichten „*Instructio Ecclesia catholica*“ findet, in der es heisst, dass „jede der beiden Parteien, katholisch und nichtkatholisch, auf dem Boden der Gleichheit (*par cum pari*)“ Fragen des Glaubens und der Sittenlehre diskutieren und die Lehre seines Bekenntnisses erklären soll.

Damit ist ein Doppeltes ausgesprochen. Auf der einen Seite ist deutlich, dass sich der ökumenische Dialog auf der Grundlage des gemeinsamen christlichen Erbes vollzieht und folglich ein Dialog zwischen Brüdern und Schwestern ist. Im promulgierten Text des Ökumenismusdekrets ist deshalb nicht mehr, wie noch im Schema „*De oecumenismo*“ aus dem Jahre 1963, von einem „katholischen Ökumenismus“ die Rede,

7. *Gaudium et spes*, Nr. 2.

8. K. Wojtyła, Quellen der Erneuerung. Studie zur Verwirklichung des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils (Freiburg i. Br. 1981) 284.

9. *Unitatis redintegratio*, Nr. 9.

sondern von „katholischen Prinzipien des Ökumenismus“. Denn das Konzil wollte der Ökumenischen Bewegung, die innerhalb der nichtkatholischen Christenheit entstanden ist, nicht einen eigenen Ökumenismus, gleichsam einen katholischen Sonderweg zur Seite stellen, sondern ist überzeugt gewesen, dass es nur einen Ökumenismus geben kann, den das Konzil ausdrücklich auf die „Einwirkung der Gnade des Heiligen Geistes“ zurückführte¹⁰. Auf der anderen Seite ist es ebenso evident, dass der ökumenische Dialog die Glaubensidentität der Dialogpartner keineswegs in Frage stellt, sondern sie vielmehr voraussetzt. Denn solange die Wiederherstellung der Einheit der Christen noch nicht verwirklicht ist und es folglich noch kein wirklich tragfähiges gemeinsames Verständnis des Ziels des Ökumenismus gibt, nimmt jede Kirche und kirchliche Gemeinschaft ihre ökumenische Verantwortung auf dem Fundament ihrer eigenen Glaubensüberzeugungen wahr. In diesem Sinn erwartet die Katholische Kirche von den Bischöfen als den Erstverantwortlichen für das ökumenische Anliegen in ihren Ortskirchen, dass sie den Ökumenismus fördern, „wie er von der Kirche verstanden wird“¹¹. Von derselben Überzeugung lässt sich auch der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen leiten, insofern die Mitgliedschaft in diesem Rat nicht bedeutet, das eigene Glaubens- und Wahrheitsverständnis in Frage stellen zu müssen, und auch nicht impliziert, alle Mitgliedskirchen des Rates als Kirchen im vollen Sinn zu anerkennen.

5. Verschiedene Gestalten des ökumenischen Dialogs

Nimmt man den Grundsatz „par cum pari“ ebenso ernst wie die jeweilige Identität der Partner, erschliesst sich auch das Grundprinzip des ökumenischen Dialogs, das nicht einfach in einem Austausch von Gedanken, Ideen und Theorien, sondern viel elementarer im gegenseitigen Austausch der Gaben besteht. In solchem Austausch geht es freilich, wie Papst Franziskus hervorhebt, nicht bloss darum, „Informationen über die anderen zu erhalten, um sie besser kennen zu lernen“, sondern darum, „das, was der Geist bei ihnen gesät hat, als ein Geschenk aufzunehmen, das auch für uns bestimmt ist“. Denn keine Kirche ist so reich, dass sie nicht der Bereicherung durch andere bedürfte; und keine Kirche ist so arm, dass sie nicht einen eigenen Beitrag in die ökumenische Gemeinschaft einbringen könnte. Durch einen solchen Austausch von Gaben kann deshalb der Heilige Geist „uns immer mehr zur Wahrheit und zum Guten führen“¹². Damit solcher Austausch der Gaben gelingen und das ökumenische Anliegen von allen Getauften wahrgenommen werden kann, vollzieht sich der ökumenische Dialog in verschiedenen Gestalten.

An erster Stelle ist der *Dialog der Liebe*, der Geschwisterlichkeit und der Freundschaft zu nennen. Diese Gestalt des ökumenischen Dialogs hat unter den Christen und christlichen Gemeinschaften die „Brüderlichkeit“ wieder entdecken lassen, die Papst Johannes Paul II. in seiner Enzyklika über den Einsatz für die Ökumene „*Ut unum sint*“ zu den wichtigsten Früchten des ökumenischen Bemühens gezählt hat¹³. Denn die zahlreichen Begegnungen, die verschiedenen Gespräche und die wechselseitigen Besuche zwischen den verschiedenen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften haben ein Netz von freundschaftlichen Beziehungen entstehen lassen, die das tragfähige

10. *Unitatis redintegratio*, Nr. 1. Vgl. auch Nr. 4.

11. Canon 383 - § 3 CIC 1983.

12. Franziskus, *Evangelii gaudium*, Nr. 246.

13. Johannes Paul II., *Ut unum sint*, Nr. 41-42.

ge Fundament für alle weiteren ökumenischen Beziehungen darstellen. Zu denken ist beispielsweise an die schöne Tradition von gegenseitigen Besuchen von Repräsentanten der Kirche von Konstantinopel und der Kirche von Rom zu den jeweiligen Patronatsfesten oder bei besonders wichtigen Anlässen. Der Dialog der Liebe dient vor allem auch der Versöhnung zwischen den Kirchen, die sich in Bitten um Vergebung für die in der Vergangenheit begangenen Sünden konkretisiert und oft mit ausdrucksstarken Gesten verbunden ist, die die bessere Sprache als viele Worte sein können.

Während der Dialog der Liebe vor allem von Verantwortungsträgern in verschiedener Kirchen geführt wird, betrifft der *Dialog des Lebens* alle Gläubigen. Der Dialog des Lebens findet seinen Ausgangs- und Bezugspunkt in der Rückbesinnung auf das neue Leben, das dem Christen in der Taufe im Namen des Dreieinen Gottes geschenkt und in dem bereits jetzt eine fundamentale, wenn auch noch nicht volle Einheit gegeben ist. Im Blick auf den Dialog des Lebens hebt das „Direktorium zur Ausübung der Prinzipien und Normen über den Ökumenismus“ hervor, dass der Beitrag, den die Christen „in allen Bereichen des menschlichen Lebens“, in denen sich „das Verlangen nach Heil“ kundtut, leisten, wirksamer ist, „wenn sie ihn gemeinsam leisten und wenn man sieht, dass ihr Tun ein gemeinsames ist“. Der Dialog des Lebens besteht im Kern darin, dass die Christen „alles gemeinsam“ tun, „soweit es ihnen ihr Glaube erlaubt“¹⁴

Der Dialog des Lebens konkretisiert sich im *pastoralen Dialog*, nämlich in der gemeinsamen Sorge um den Menschen in den heutigen Lebenssituationen. Eine besondere Aufmerksamkeit verdient dabei die pastorale Sorge um die Menschen, die in noch voneinander getrennten Kirchen, aber in einer gemeinsamen Ehe leben. Die pastorale Zusammenarbeit zwischen Christen und Kirchen impliziert vor allem ein gemeinsames Zeugnis für die Wahrheit des Evangeliums und seiner Botschaft von der Gegenwart Gottes in der Welt, worauf Papst Benedikt XVI. immer wieder hingewiesen hat: „Unser erster ökumenischer Dienst in dieser Zeit muss es sein, gemeinsam die Gegenwart des lebendigen Gottes zu bezeugen und damit der Welt die Antwort zu geben, die sie braucht.“¹⁵ Mit diesem Gotteszeugnis verbindet sich von selbst das pastorale Eintreten für den Menschen als Gottes Geschöpf und Ebenbild, konkret das Eintreten für die unantastbare Würde eines jeden Menschen von der Empfängnis bis zum natürlichen Tod.

Von daher ist es nur ein kleiner Schritt zu jener Gestalt, die man als *praktischen Dialog* bezeichnen kann, der einschliesst, dass man im Blick auf die elementaren Herausforderungen in der heutigen Welt all das gemeinsam tun soll, was man gemeinsam tun kann. Gemeinsames Handeln von Christen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften drängt sich vor allem auf angesichts der grossen Fragen und Probleme in der heutigen Zeit wie der Parteinahme für die Armen und für die Bewahrung der Schöpfung, der Förderung des Friedens und der sozialen Gerechtigkeit, der Hilfe beim grossen Flüchtlingsproblem, der Verteidigung der Religionsfreiheit und des Rechts auf Leben in allen seinen Phasen und Dimensionen und des Schutzes der gesellschaftlichen Institutionen von Ehe und Familie. Auch und vor allem die stets zunehmende Globalisierung muss für die Christen und Kirchen ein weiteres Motiv sein, die ökumenische Zusammenarbeit

14. Direktorium zur Ausführung der Prinzipien und Normen über den Ökumenismus, Nr. 162.

15. Benedikt XVI., Ansprache im Ökumenischen Gottesdienst in der Kirche des Augustinerklosters Erfurt am 23. September 2011.

im Dienst am ganzheitlichen Wohl der Menschheitsfamilie zu konsolidieren und zu intensivieren.

Als sehr wichtig, um auf dem Weg zur Einheit voranzukommen, erweist sich der *kulturelle Dialog*. Denn aus der ökumenischen Forschung wissen wir, dass bei den verschiedenen Spaltungen in der Geschichte der Kirche immer auch kulturelle Faktoren eine massgebliche Rolle gespielt haben. In der westlichen und der östlichen Christenheit beispielsweise ist das Evangelium Jesu Christi eigentlich von Anfang an in einer unterschiedlichen Art und Weise aufgenommen und in verschiedenen Traditionen und kulturellen Ausformungen gelebt und weitergegeben worden. Mit diesen Unterschieden haben die kirchlichen Gemeinschaften in Ost und West im ersten Jahrtausend in der einen Kirche in Gemeinschaft gelebt. Sie haben sich aber immer mehr voneinander entfremdet und konnten sich immer weniger verstehen.¹⁶ Solche kulturellen Faktoren haben zu einem grossen Teil die spätere Spaltung in der Kirche zwischen Ost und West mit verursacht. Angesichts der grossen Bedeutung, die kulturelle Faktoren bei den Kirchenspaltungen gespielt haben, besteht die ökumenische Herausforderung darin, die Kultur der anderen Christen und Kirchen kennen zu lernen, um besser die Art und Weise zu verstehen, in der sie das Evangelium Jesu Christi denken und leben. Durch solchen kulturellen Dialog kann die Einsicht wachsen, dass Christen, die in verschiedenen kirchlichen Gemeinschaften leben, denselben Glauben teilen, ihn aber in verschiedener Weise und gemäss der jeweiligen kulturellen Begabung der Völker und ihrer Traditionen zum Ausdruck bringen.

Die bisher genannten Gestalten des ökumenischen Dialogs bilden die unabdingbare Voraussetzung und den organischen Lebensraum für den *Dialog der Wahrheit*, nämlich die theologische Auseinandersetzung mit jenen Faktoren, die Ursachen der nach wie vor bestehenden Kirchentrennungen sind. Solcher Dialog der Wahrheit ist notwendig, um dem ökumenischen Ziel der Einheit näher zu kommen. Denn Einheit kann nur in der gemeinsamen Erkenntnis und Anerkenntnis der Wahrheit des Glaubens gefunden werden. An der Wahrheit des Glaubens vorbei kann es keine Einheit geben. Theologische Dialoge dieser Art hat die Katholische Kirche seit dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil mit beinahe allen christlichen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften geführt und führt sie weiter. Aus ihnen konnten viele positive Früchte geerntet werden, wie sie beispielsweise Walter Kardinal Kasper in seinem Buch „Harvesting the Fruits“ vorgelegt hat¹⁷. Bei allen diesen positiven Ergebnissen kann aber nicht verschwiegen werden, dass das eigentliche Ziel der Ökumenischen Bewegung, nämlich die Wiederherstellung der Einheit der Kirche, beziehungsweise der vollen kirchlichen Gemeinschaft, noch nicht erreicht werden konnte, sondern viel mehr Zeit in Anspruch nimmt, als am Beginn der Ökumenischen Bewegung erhofft worden ist. Auf dieses Ziel hin muss in den Dialogen der Wahrheit mit Leidenschaft und Geduld weiter gearbeitet werden.

Schliesslich darf die elementarste Gestalt nicht vergessen werden, nämlich der *spirituelle Dialog*, den das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil die „Seele der ganzen ökumenischen Bewegung“ genannt hat¹⁸. Sie hat früh ihren sichtbaren Ausdruck darin gefun-

16. Vgl. Y. Congar, *Zerstrittene Christenheit. Wo trennten sich Ost und West* (Wien 1959).

17. Cardinal W. Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits. Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London – New York 2009).

18. *Unitatis redintegratio*, Nr. 8.

den, dass am Beginn der Ökumenischen Bewegung die Einführung der Gebetswoche für die Einheit der Christen gestanden hat und von Anfang an eine ökumenische Initiative gewesen ist. Es ist das Gebet um die Einheit der Christen gewesen, das den Weg der Ökumenischen Bewegung geöffnet hat, die in ihrem innersten Kern eine Gebetsbewegung gewesen ist. Diese Gestalt des spirituellen Dialogs geht ursprünglich bis in den Abendmahlssaal zurück, in dem Jesus um die Einheit seiner Jünger gebetet hat. Das Gebet um die Einheit der Christen erweist sich auch heute als basalste Form der Ökumene. Denn mit dem Gebet um die Einheit bringen wir Christen unsere Glaubensüberzeugung zum Ausdruck, dass wir Menschen die Einheit nicht machen und auch nicht über ihre konkrete Gestalt und ihren Zeitpunkt befinden können. Wir Menschen können Spaltungen machen; dies zeigen die Geschichte und – leider – auch die Gegenwart. Die Einheit hingegen können wir nur empfangen, und zwar vom Heiligen Geist, der die göttliche Quelle und Triebkraft der Einheit ist. Die beste Vorbereitung, um die Einheit als Geschenk des Heiligen Geistes zu empfangen, ist dabei das Gebet um die Einheit.

Damit kehren wir zum Ausgangspunkt unserer Darlegungen zurück, nämlich auf die Einsicht, dass die ursprüngliche und tiefste Form allen Dialogs der Dialog des Menschen mit Gott, ja noch zuvor der Dialog Gottes mit uns Menschen ist, mit dem er uns einlädt, mit ihm einen lebendigen Dialog zu pflegen. Denn je mehr wir uns in das dialogische Wesen Gottes, wie es in seinem trinitarischen Geheimnis aufscheint, vertiefen, desto mehr werden wir selbst dialogfähige Menschen und Christen. Darin erblicke ich die wesentlichen christlichen Inspirationen für eine Kultur des Dialogs und der Begegnung. Mit dieser Überzeugung wünsche ich Ihnen ein gutes Gelingen des für Kirche und Gesellschaft bedeutsamen Kongresses.

**Dankesansprache bei der Verleihung des Doctor honoris causa
an der Theologischen Fakultät der Katholischen Universität Lublin
„Johannes Paul II.“
(Lublin, 16. Oktober 2020)**



Kardinal Koch erhält die Ehrendoktorwürde der Katholischen Universität von Lublin, 16. Oktober 2020

**VON DER VERANTWORTUNG DER THEOLOGIE FÜR DAS
ÖKUMENISCHE ANLIEGEN**

Von Herzen danke ich Ihnen für die grosse Ehre, die Sie mir mit der Verleihung des Doctor honoris causa erweisen. Ich freue mich darüber, zumal mir dieses Ehrendoktorat von der Theologischen Fakultät der Katholischen Universität Lublin verliehen wird, die den bedeutenden Namen „Johannes Paul II.“ trägt.

Ökumenische Leidenschaft von Papst Johannes Paul II.

Ich freue mich nicht nur, weil Papst Johannes Paul II. mich am Epiphaniefest 1996 in der Petersbasilika in Rom zum Bischof geweiht hat und ich damit in einer Sukzessionsreihe mit polnischen Bischöfen stehe. Meine Freude bezieht sich auch darauf, dass sich Papst Johannes Paul II. durch ein entschiedenes Engagement für die ökumenische Suche nach der Wiedergewinnung der Einheit der Christen ausgezeichnet hat. Er ist zu tiefst überzeugt gewesen, dass nach dem ersten Jahrtausend der Christentumsgeschichte, das die Zeit der ungeteilten Christenheit gewesen ist, und nach dem zweiten Jahrtausend, das im Osten wie im Westen zu tiefen Spaltungen in der Kirche geführt hat, das dritte Jahrtausend die grosse Aufgabe zu bewältigen haben wird, die verloren gegangene Einheit der Kirche wiederzufinden. Über das ökumenische Bemühen von Papst Johannes Paul II. hat sein engster Mitarbeiter, der damalige Kardinal Joseph Ratzinger, mit Recht gesagt, der Papst habe die Teilung der Christenheit „von allem Anfang an als eine Verletzung“ empfunden, „die ihn sehr persönlich betraf, bis hin zum physischen Leiden“, und deshalb habe er es als seine Aufgabe angesehen, „alles zu tun, um zu einer

Wende auf die Einheit hin zu kommen“¹. In besonderer Weise ist Papst Johannes Paul II. überzeugt gewesen, dass das Amt, das dem Nachfolger des Petrus aufgetragen ist, auch das Amt der Einheit ist und dass es im Bereich der Ökumene „seine ganz besondere Erklärung“ findet². Diesem Anliegen hat Papst Johannes Paul II. besonderen Ausdruck gegeben mit seiner Enzyklika über den Einsatz für die Ökumene „*Ut unum sint*“, die in der Geschichte die erste Enzyklika darstellt, die ein Papst über die Ökumene geschrieben hat, und deren fünfundzwanzigsten Jahrestag des Erscheinens wir im vergangenen Mai begehen durften.

Papst Johannes Paul II., der an Ihrer Universität doziert hat, hinterlässt ein grosses ökumenisches Erbe. Ich bin der Katholisch-Theologischen Fakultät der Universität Lublin sehr dankbar, dass sie mit ihrer ökumenischen Arbeit dieses kostbare Erbe treu bewahrt und angesichts der heutigen Herausforderungen in neuer Weise bewahrt. Denn eine Katholische Fakultät ist berufen, einen wichtigen Beitrag dafür zu leisten, dass das ökumenische Anliegen als vordringliche Pflicht für die ganze Kirche wahrgenommen wird, wie das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil in seinem Dekret über den Ökumenismus „*Unitatis redintegratio*“ eindringlich betont hat: „Die Sorge um die Wiederherstellung der Einheit ist Sache der ganzen Kirche, sowohl der Gläubigen wie auch der Hirten, und geht einen jeden an, je nach seiner Fähigkeit, sowohl in seinem täglichen christlichen Leben wie auch bei historischen und theologischen Forschungen.“³

Theologie im Dienst der ökumenischen Bildung

Bei dieser umfassenden Charakterisierung der ökumenischen Verpflichtung ist bereits deutlich, dass auch von der Theologie eine wesentliche Hilfe bei der Einlösung dieser Aufgabe erwartet wird. Damit die Theologie diese Verantwortung wahrnehmen kann, wird sie ihr besonderes Interesse der ökumenischen Bildung zuwenden. Ihre Notwendigkeit wird in dem von Papst Johannes Paul II. am 25. März 1993 approbierten und vom Päpstlichen Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen veröffentlichten „Direktorium zur Ausführung der Prinzipien und Normen über den Ökumenismus“ bereits dadurch stark hervorgehoben, dass das ganze Kapitel III der „ökumenischen Bildung in der katholischen Kirche“ gewidmet ist. Dabei geht es in erster Linie um die ökumenische Bildung aller Getauften: „Die Sorge für die Einheit gehört wesentlich zum Verständnis der Kirche. Die ökumenische Bildung zielt darauf ab, dass alle Christen vom ökumenischen Geist beseelt werden, was immer ihre besondere Sendung und Aufgabe in der Welt und Gesellschaft auch sein mögen.“⁴ Damit die Kirche dieser Pflicht nachkommen kann, legt das „Ökumenische Direktorium“ einen besonderen Akzent auf die ökumenische Bildung der künftigen Mitarbeiter in der Pastoral. Um diese Pflicht nochmals zu unterstreichen, hat der Päpstliche Rat für die Einheit der Christen im Jahre 1998, und wieder mit ausdrücklicher Zustimmung von Papst Johannes Paul II., ein

1. J. Ratzinger / Benedikt XVI., Die Einheit von Mission und Person in der Gestalt von Johannes Paul II. Zwanzig Jahre einer Geschichte, in: Ders., Johannes Paul II. Mein geliebter Vorgänger (Augsburg 2008) 15-42, zit. 40.

2. Johannes Paul II., Die Schwelle der Hoffnung überschreiten (Hamburg 1994) 181.

3. *Unitatis redintegratio*, Nr. 5.

4. Päpstlicher Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen, Direktorium zur Ausführung der Prinzipien und Normen über den Ökumenismus, Nr. 58.

eigenes Dokument „Die ökumenische Dimension in der Ausbildung / Bildung derer, die in der Pastoral tätig sind“, veröffentlicht.

Eine besondere ökumenische Verantwortung kommt jenen Theologen zu, denen die Kirche das Amt des Bischofs einer Ortskirche anvertraut. Darauf weist das Kirchenrecht der Lateinischen Kirche dadurch hin, dass es von der Verantwortung des Bischofs für die Förderung der Einheit der Christen im Zusammenhang mit der Beschreibung der Aufgaben des Diözesanbischofs, insbesondere der Ausübung seines Hirtenamtes spricht: „Gegenüber den Brüdern, die nicht in der vollen Gemeinschaft mit der katholischen Kirche stehen, hat er Freundlichkeit und Liebe walten zu lassen und den Ökumenismus zu fördern, wie er von der Kirche verstanden wird.“⁵ In dieser präzisen Verortung kommt zum Ausdruck, dass es sich bei der Förderung des ökumenischen Anliegens im Dienst des Bischofs nicht um eine pastorale Zusatzaufgabe handelt, sondern diese zu den Prioritäten seines Dienstes gehört. Diese Aufgabe wird noch deutlicher sichtbar im Gesetzbuch für die Katholischen Orientalischen Kirchen. Dort ist dem ökumenischen Auftrag ein eigener Titel gewidmet, in dem die „tatkräftige Teilnahme am ökumenischen Werk“ besonders den Hirten ans Herz gelegt wird⁶. Um den Bischöfen, vor allem den neu ernannten, bei der Wahrnehmung ihrer ökumenischen Verantwortung eine Hilfe zu bieten, wird der Päpstliche Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen noch in diesem Jahr eine Handreichung mit dem Titel „Ökumenisches Vademecum“ veröffentlicht.

Wenn in diesem Sinn eine theologische Fakultät Sorge für die ökumenische Bildung trägt, leistet sie einen bedeutenden Beitrag für die Wahrnehmung der ökumenischen Verantwortung der Kirche. Die ökumenische Bildung ist auch die beste Garantie dafür, dass auch morgen die Ökumene als heilige Pflicht wahrgenommen wird und die Ökumenische Bewegung ihr Ziel erreichen kann, das in der Wiederherstellung der sichtbaren vollen Einheit aller Getauften besteht. Von daher stellt sich die weitere Frage, wie eine Theologische Fakultät diese ökumenische Verantwortung wahrnehmen kann.

Zur Beantwortung dieser konkreten Frage wird in den bereits zitierten Dokumenten unterschieden einerseits zwischen spezifischen Kursen über den Ökumenismus, in denen die Grundlagen, Methoden und Ziele der Ökumene zu behandeln sind, und andererseits der ökumenischen Dimension, die in Lehre und Forschung einer jeden theologischen Disziplin enthalten und zu entfalten ist. Dabei versteht es sich von selbst, dass sich beide Aufgaben wechselseitig bedingen. Denn spezifische Kurse über den Ökumenismus können nur fruchtbar werden, wenn sie darauf aufbauen und vertiefen können, was an ökumenischen Dimensionen und Perspektiven in den einzelnen theologischen Disziplinen grundgelegt und erarbeitet worden ist. Und auf der anderen Seite sind die einzelnen theologischen Disziplinen darauf angewiesen, dass ihre ökumenischen Dimensionen in eigenen Kursen in einen systematischen Zusammenhang gebracht und für das konkrete ökumenische Wirken gebündelt werden.

5. Canon 383 § 3 CIC 1983.

6. Canon 902-908 CCEO 1990.

Ökumenische Dimension in den theologischen Disziplinen

Im Folgenden erlaube ich mir, meine Aufmerksamkeit nicht der Entfaltung des Inhalts und der Methode von spezifischen ökumenischen Kursen an theologischen Fakultäten zu widmen, sondern den ökumenischen Dimensionen, die in den einzelnen theologischen Disziplinen enthalten sind. Dieses Anliegen dürfte sich für die exegetischen Disziplinen von selbst verstehen, gelten sie doch seit längerer Zeit als für die ökumenische Zusammenarbeit exemplarische Disziplinen.⁷ Ein solches Zusammenwirken hat sich ja auch im Blick auf die Verarbeitung der Reformation und der anschließenden Spaltung in der Westkirche im 16. Jahrhundert aufgedrängt. Denn diese Ereignisse sind mit einer kontroversen Lektüre und Interpretation der Bibel, vor allem hinsichtlich des Verhältnisses zwischen der Heiligen Schrift und der kirchlichen Überlieferung, verbunden gewesen und haben insofern in einem gewissen Sinn bis in die Bibel hinein gereicht. In umgekehrter Sinnrichtung besteht die berechnete Erwartung, dass auch die Überwindung dieser Spaltung und die Wiederherstellung der Einheit der Christen auf dem Weg einer gemeinsamen Lektüre und Interpretation der Heiligen Schrift möglich werden. Das gemeinsame Hören auf das in der Heiligen Schrift bezeugte Wort Gottes erweist sich als unabdingbar, um die Einheit im Glauben wiederzufinden; ihm kommt folglich eine besondere ökumenische Bedeutung zu.

Dass auch die historischen Disziplinen elementare ökumenische Dimensionen aufweisen, dürfte sofort evident sein, da man ohne geschichtliche Kenntnisse der verschiedenen Kirchenspaltungen und ihrer kulturellen, politischen und theologischen Hintergründe einerseits und der Ökumenischen Bewegung andererseits das ökumenische Anliegen nicht verstehen kann. In den historischen Disziplinen müssen in besonderer Weise auch die nicht-theologischen Faktoren untersucht werden, die zu Spaltungen in der Kirche geführt haben. In diesem Sinn hat bereits früh Yves Congar gezeigt, dass kulturelle Entfremdungsprozesse die Spaltung in der Kirche zwischen Ost und West massgeblich verursacht haben, weshalb sich die Christenheit in erster Linie nicht über unterschiedliche Lehrformeln zerstritten, sondern auseinandergelebt hat⁸. Auf diesem Hintergrund betont das Dekret über den Ökumenismus: „Die Unterweisung in der heiligen Theologie und in anderen, besonders den historischen Fächern muss auch unter ökumenischem Gesichtspunkt geschehen, damit sie umso genauer der Wahrheit und Wirklichkeit entspricht.“⁹

Auch und besonders in den systematisch-theologischen Disziplinen sind elementare ökumenische Dimensionen enthalten, die aufgezeigt werden könnten anhand der verschiedenen ökumenischen Dialoge, in denen im vergangenen halben Jahrhundert viele Konvergenz- und Konsens-Dokumente zu Fragen des christlichen Glaubens und der Kirchenverfassung erarbeitet und veröffentlicht worden sind. Sie sind wirklich „Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung“ geworden¹⁰ und dokumentieren, welchen

7. Vgl. K. Kardinal Koch, Exegese im Dienst an der Einheit. Erwartungen an den „Evangelisch-Katholischen Kommentar“ für Kirche und Ökumene, in: U. Luz / Th. Söding / S. Vollenweider (Hrsg.), Exegese – ökumenisch engagiert. Der „Evangelisch-Katholische Kommentar“ in der Diskussion über 500 Jahre Reformation (Ostfildern – Göttingen 2016) 31–41.

8. Y. Congar, Zerstrittene Christenheit. Wo trennten sich Ost und West (Wien 1959).

9. Unitatis redintegratio, Nr. 10.

10. Vgl. H. Meyer u. a. (Hrsg.), Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung. Sämtliche Berichte und Konsentexte interkonfessioneller Gespräche auf Weltebene. Band 1: 1931–1982 (Paderborn

grossen Beitrag die systematisch-theologischen Disziplinen für die Wiederherstellung der Einheit der Christen geleistet haben. Was von der Systematischen Theologie im Allgemeinen gilt, ist im Blick auf das ökumenische Anliegen in besonderer Weise von der Ekklesiologie zu sagen.¹¹

Noch deutlicher als die ökumenischen Dimensionen der systematisch-theologischen Disziplinen sind diejenigen der Liturgiewissenschaft, weshalb bereits das Dekret über den Ökumenismus „Unitatis redintegratio“ hervorhebt, die Katholiken sollten sich „eine bessere Kenntnis der Lehre und der Geschichte, des geistlichen und liturgischen Lebens, der religiösen Psychologie und Kultur, die den Brüdern eigen ist“, erwerben¹². Da das innerste Wesen des ökumenischen Dialogs nicht einfach in einem Austausch von Ideen, Gedanken und Theorien besteht, sondern in einem bereichernden Austausch von Gaben, und da die verschiedenen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften ihre kostbaren Gaben in ihrem liturgischen Leben bewahren und ihren grossen vor allem spirituellen Reichtum in ihren Liturgien vorfinden, gehört der ökumenische Austausch der liturgischen Gaben zwischen den verschiedenen christlichen Glaubensgemeinschaften zu den Aufgaben der Liturgiewissenschaft, in der sich der ökumenische Dialog in der Doxologie als zumindest ebenso fruchtbar erweist wie derjenige in der Theologie.¹³

Die ökumenische Dimension der Kanonistik lässt sich am deutlichsten im Blick auf das Kirchenrecht der Katholischen Ostkirchen, dem Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium aufzeigen. Bei seiner Promulgation hat Papst Johannes Paul II. in der Apostolischen Konstitution „Sacri Canones“ hervorgehoben, dass die Canones des CCEO Geltung haben, „bis sie ausser Kraft gesetzt werden oder von der höchsten Autorität der Kirche aus gerechten Gründen abgeändert werden“. Unter solchen gerechten Gründen ist dabei der wichtigste derjenige „der vollen Gemeinschaft aller Kirchen des Ostens mit der katholischen Kirche“¹⁴. Die klare zeitliche Begrenzung der Gültigkeit des CCEO ist damit aus der ökumenischen Perspektive vorgenommen, die konkret bedeutet, dass dann, wenn die volle Gemeinschaft zwischen der Katholischen Kirche und den Orthodoxen und Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen verwirklicht sein wird, die Aufgabe des CCEO erfüllt sein wird und eine neue Gesetzgebung in Angriff genommen werden muss. Damit ist eine verheissungsvolle Vision angesprochen, nämlich die Entwicklung eines ökumenischen Kirchenrechts. Ein solches ist freilich in der heutigen Situation noch nicht möglich, da es die erreichte Einheit der Kirche voraus-

– Frankfurt a. M. 1983), Band 2: 1982-1990 (Paderborn – Frankfurt a. M. 1992); Band 3: 1990-2003 (Paderborn – Frankfurt a. M. 2003); J. Oeldemann u. a. (Hrsg.), Band 4: 2001-2010 (Paderborn – Leipzig 2012).

11. Vgl. H. Destivelle, *L'Écumenisme n'est pas une spécialité. Enseignement de l'écumenisme et œcumenisme de l'enseignement: le cas de l'ecclésiologie*, dans: Idem, *Conduis-la vers l'unité parfaite. Écumenisme et synodalité* (Paris 2018) 199-209.

12. *Unitatis redintegratio*, Nr. 9.

13. Vgl. K. Kardinal Koch, *Liturgiereform und Einheit der christlichen Kirchen*, in: G. W. Lathrop / M. Stuflesser (Hrsg.), *Liturgiereformen in den Kirchen. 50 Jahre nach Sacrosanctum concilium = Theologie der Liturgie. Band 5* (Regensburg 2013) 111-124, Ders., *Liturgie im Dienst der Einheit. Die Bedeutung der Liturgiewissenschaft für Theologie und Ökumene*, in: H.-J. Feulner, D. Sper (Hrsg.), *50 Jahre Liturgiewissenschaft und Sakramententheologie an der Universität Wien. Rückblicke – Einblicke – Ausblicke* (Wien 2020) 25-44.

14. Johannes Paul II., *Constitutio Apostolica „Sacri canones“* vom 18. Oktober 1990.

setzt. In der heutigen Situation kann es sich nur um ein Ökumene-Recht der Katholischen Kirche handeln. Indem aber die Kanonistik die im Recht festgelegte Grundverpflichtung aller Getauften für die Ökumene in Erinnerung hält, stellt sie in ökumenischer Hinsicht eine grosse Hilfe dar, um eines der zentralen Anliegen des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils wach zu halten und zu fördern.

Was von der Kanonistik zu sagen ist, gilt auch für die ganze Theologie. Sie nimmt nur dann ihre kirchliche Verantwortung und Sendung wahr, wenn sie sich im Dienst an der Wiederherstellung der Einheit der Kirche versteht und ihren unverwechselbaren Beitrag einbringt. Die heutige Verleihung des Ehrendoktorats verstehe ich als Zeugnis, dass die Theologische Fakultät der Universität Lublin „Johannes Paul II.“ diese Verantwortung wahrnimmt, und als Verpflichtung, dies auch in Zukunft zu tun. Für diesen Dienst und für die heutige Ehre sage ich der Theologischen Fakultät und seiner Exzellenz, dem Hochwürdigsten Erzbischof von Lublin, Mons. Stanislaw Budzik ganz herzlichen Dank.

**Einführung beim Podium „ökumenischer Dialog“
An der Theologischen Fakultät der Katholischen Universität Lublin
„Johannes Paul II.“
(Lublin, 16. Oktober 2020)**

Im Laufe der zweitausendjährigen Geschichte der Christenheit müssen wir viele und verschiedene Spaltungen konstatieren. Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil spricht in seinem Dekret über den Ökumenismus „Unitatis redintegratio“ von „zwei besonderen Kategorien von Spaltungen, durch die der nahtlose Leibrock Christi getroffen wurde“ (Nr. 13). Demgemäss kann man zwei Grundtypen von Spaltungen unterscheiden, nämlich auf der einen Seite die ersten Spaltungen im Orient im 5. Jahrhundert und das grosse Schisma in der Kirche zwischen Ost und West im 11. Jahrhundert und auf der anderen Seite die Spaltungen in der Westkirche im 16. Jahrhundert. Die Überwindung dieser beiden grossen Spaltungen muss in verschiedenen und spezifischen ökumenischen Dialogen erfolgen. Man kann und muss sie gewiss voneinander unterscheiden; man darf sie aber nicht voneinander trennen. Denn das Ringen um die Wiedergewinnung der Einheit der Kirche ist unteilbar.

Dialog mit den Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen

Erste Spaltungen in der Geschichte der Christenheit haben im Orient bereits im vierten und fünften Jahrhundert stattgefunden, da einzelne kirchliche Gemeinschaften die christologischen Lehrentscheidungen der Konzilien von Ephesus im Jahre 431 und vor allem von Chalkedon im Jahre 451 nicht angenommen und sich von der Reichskirche getrennt haben. Da es bei diesen Spaltungen um das Christusbekenntnis und damit um die innerste Mitte des christlichen Glaubens gegangen ist, versteht es sich, dass bei den beginnenden ökumenischen Gesprächen zwischen der Katholischen Kirche und den Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen in erster Linie christologische Fragen zu behandeln gewesen sind. Die theologischen Dialoge haben dabei zum erfreulichen Ergebnis geführt, dass es sich bei den christologischen Auseinandersetzungen im Wesentlichen auch um ein Sprachproblem gehandelt hat, insofern man verschiedene philosophische

und theologische Begriff von Person und Natur verwendet hat, im Grunde aber denselben Christusglauben bezeugen wollte. Die diesbezüglichen ökumenischen Dialoge haben verschiedene christologische Erklärungen zwischen dem Bischof von Rom und Oberhäuptern von verschiedenen Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen vorbereitet und ermöglicht, so dass nach 1500 Jahren nach dem Konzil von Chalkedon die christologischen Differenzen in einer offiziellen Weise bereinigt werden konnten.

Im Jahre 2003 ist eine Gemischte Internationale Kommission für den theologischen Dialog begründet worden, die bereits zwei bedeutende Dokumente verabschiedet hat, nämlich über „Wesen, Verfassung und Sendung der Kirche“ und über „Ausübung der Gemeinschaft im Leben der frühen Kirche und die Implikationen für die Suche nach Gemeinschaft heute“. Momentan arbeitet die Kommission an der Vorbereitung der Veröffentlichung eines dritten Dokumentes über die Sakramente, um sich danach mariologischen Themen zuzuwenden.

Dialog mit den Orthodoxen Kirchen

Das Bemühen um die Überwindung des grossen Schisma in der Kirche zwischen Ost und West im 11. Jahrhundert hat seinen verheissungsvollen Beginn beim grossartigen Ereignis am 7. Dezember 1965 gefunden, als unmittelbar vor Abschluss des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils in der Patriarchalkirche St. Georg im Phanar in Konstantinopel und in der Petersbasilika in Rom die Gemeinsame Erklärung der höchsten Repräsentanten der beiden kirchlichen Gemeinschaften, des Ökumenischen Patriarchen Athenagoras und von Papst Paul VI., verlesen wurde, mit der die beiderseitigen Anathemata von 1054 „aus dem Gedächtnis und der Mitte der Kirche entfernt“ worden sind, „damit sie für die Wiederannäherung in der Liebe kein Hindernis mehr darstellen können“¹ Dieser Akt ist zum Ausgangspunkt für den ökumenischen Dialog der Liebe und der Wahrheit geworden.

Die theologische Bearbeitung der von der Vergangenheit her strittigen Fragen wird von der Gemischten Internationalen Kommission für den theologischen Dialog zwischen der Katholischen Kirche und der Orthodoxen Kirche in ihrer Gesamtheit wahrgenommen. Während der ersten Dekade des Dialogs in den Jahren zwischen 1980 und 1990 konnten auf verschiedenen Vollversammlungen weitgehende Konvergenzen zwischen der orthodoxen und katholischen Theologie hinsichtlich der Themen des Geheimnisses der Kirche und besonders der Eucharistie, der Sakramente überhaupt, des Verhältnisses von Glaube, Sakrament und Kirche und des Weihesakramentes festgestellt werden. In der zweiten Dekade in den Jahren zwischen 1990 und 2000 sind die Gespräche immer schwieriger geworden, da sie sich immer stärker auf die kruzialen Probleme des Uniatismus und Proselytismus fokussiert haben, was im Jahre 2000 zum Abbruch der Kommissionsarbeit geführt hat.

Kurz nach Beginn des Pontifikats von Papst Benedikt XVI. konnte aufgrund seiner Vermittlungsbemühungen der abgebrochene Dialog wieder aufgenommen werden, und zwar auf der Vollversammlung von Ravenna im Jahre 2007 mit der Verabschiedung des Dokuments „Ekklesiologische und kanonische Konsequenzen der sak-

1. Déclaration commune du Pape Paul VI et du Patriarche Athénagoras exprimant leur décision d'enlever de la mémoire et du milieu de l'Église les sentences d'excommunication de l'année 1054, in: Tomos Agapis. Vatican-Phanar (1958-1970) (Rome – Istanbul 1971), Nr. 127.

ramentalen Natur der Kirche. Kirchliche *Communio*, Konziliarität und Autorität“. In diesem Dokument wird dargelegt, dass Synodalität und Primat wechselseitig voneinander abhängig sind und dass diese Abhängigkeit auf allen Ebenen der Kirche gegeben sein muss. Dass Katholiken und Orthodoxe zum ersten Mal gemeinsam erklären konnten, dass die Kirche auch auf der universalen Ebene einen Protos oder eine Kephale braucht, darf als Meilenstein im katholisch-orthodoxen Dialog gewürdigt werden.

Seither beschäftigt sich die Kommission mit dieser Frage und konnte nach einer längeren Phase und nach schwierigen Vollversammlungen im Jahre 2016 das so genannte Chicti- Dokument veröffentlichen: „Synodalität und Primat im Ersten Jahrtausend. Auf dem Weg zu einem gemeinsamen Verständnis im Dienst an der Einheit der Kirche“. Als nächste Aufgabe steht die Bearbeitung der Fortsetzung mit dem Thema „Primat und Synodalität im Zweiten Jahrtausend und heute“ an. Anschliessend wird sich die Kommission dem Thema widmen: „Auf dem Weg zu Einheit im Glauben. Theologische und kanonische Fragen“. Dabei wird es darum gehen, in einem ersten Schritt zusammenzutragen, was im theologischen Dialog bereits geleistet worden ist, und in einem zweiten Schritt jene theologischen und kanonischen Fragen zu benennen, die noch gelöst werden müssen, um die Einheit im Glauben zwischen Orthodoxer und Katholischer Kirche zu finden, die den Weg öffnen wird zur eucharistischen Gemeinschaft. Dass dies das Ziel des ökumenischen Ringens um die Wiedergewinnung der einen und ungeteilten Kirche in Ost und West sein muss, hat der Ökumenische Patriarch Athenagoras bereits im Jahre 1968 mit diesen eindringlichen Worten ausgesprochen: „Die Stunde des christlichen Mutes ist gekommen. Wir lieben einander; wir bekennen den gleichen gemeinsamen Glauben; machen wir uns zusammen auf den Weg vor die Herrlichkeit des gemeinsamen heiligen Altars, um den Willen des Herrn zu erfüllen, damit die Kirche strahlt, damit die Welt glaubt und der Friede Gottes auf alle kommt.“²

Dialog mit den reformatorischen Gemeinschaften

Wenden wir uns nun den ökumenischen Dialogen im Dienst der Überwindung der Spaltungen aus der Reformationszeit in der Westkirche im 16. Jahrhundert zu. Der erste Dialog, den die Katholische Kirche unmittelbar nach dem Ende des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils begonnen hat, ist derjenige mit dem Lutherischen Weltbund, der sich in den vergangenen fünfzig Jahren als fruchtbar erwiesen hat. Ein wesentlicher Schritt auf mehr Gemeinschaft hin konnte vor allem vollzogen werden mit der Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre, die am 31. Oktober 1999 in Augsburg vom Lutherischen Weltbund und vom Päpstlichen Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen unterzeichnet worden ist. Dass bei der wohl zentralsten Frage, die im 16. Jahrhundert zur Reformation und anschliessend zur Kirchenspaltung geführt hat, ein weitgehender Konsens erzielt werden konnte, darf man als ökumenischen Meilenstein würdigen. Ohne diese Gemeinsame Erklärung wäre ein gemeinsames Gedenken des Beginns der Reformation vor fünfhundert Jahren kaum denkbar geworden, wie es am 31. Oktober 2016 mit der Anwesenheit von Papst Franziskus und des Präsidenten und

2. Télégramme du Patriarche Athénagoras au Pape Paul VI, à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de la levée des anathèmes le 7 décembre 1969, in: *Tomos Agapis*. Vatican-Phanar (1958-1970) (Rome – Istanbul 1971) Nr. 277.

Generalsekretärs des Lutherischen Weltbundes im schwedischen Lund stattgefunden hat. Zu seiner Vorbereitung hat die Evangelisch-Lutherische / Römisch-Katholische Kommission für die Einheit das Dokument „From Conflict to Communion“ erarbeitet und veröffentlicht, in dem weitgehende Konsense über die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung, über das Verhältnis von Heiliger Schrift und Tradition, über Eucharistie und das kirchliche Amt festgestellt werden konnten.

Die Bedeutung der Gemeinsamen Erklärung über die Rechtfertigungslehre wird noch dadurch hervorgehoben, dass sich dieser Gemeinsamen Erklärung in der Zwischenzeit auch die Methodisten und die Reformierten angeschlossen und auch die Anglikaner ihr zugestimmt haben, so dass aus einem ursprünglich bilateralen ein multilaterales Dokument mit fünf unterzeichnenden ökumenischen Partnern geworden ist.

In der Gemeinsamen Erklärung ist freilich auch festgehalten, dass mit ihr die ekklesiologischen Konsequenzen noch nicht geklärt sind. Dies bedeutet, dass nun die Klärung des Kirchenverständnisses und in diesem Zusammenhang auch die Besprechung der Fragen von Eucharistie und Amt zu den Haupttraktanden des ökumenischen Dialogs mit den aus der Reformation hervorgegangenen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften gehören müssen. Wir dürfen dankbar feststellen, dass sich bereits verschiedene nationale Dialoge mit dieser Thematik beschäftigen: Der lutherisch-katholische Dialog in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika hat eine diesbezügliche „Declaration on the way: Church, Eucharist and Ministry“ vorgelegt; und auch der nationale Dialog in Finnland hat zu dieser Thematik die umfangreiche Stellungnahme „Communion in Growth. Declaration on Church, Eucharist and Ministry“ publiziert. Auf diesen hilfreichen Vorarbeiten gilt es aufzubauen, und es bleibt zu hoffen, dass weitere gute Schritte auf den fünfhundertsten Jahrestag der Verabschiedung der Confessio Augustana im Jahre 2030 getan werden können. Denn das Augsburger Bekenntnis ist ursprünglich kein Dokument der Spaltung, sondern der Einheit und verpflichtet uns alle, die in einer tragischen Geschichte verlorene Einheit wieder zu finden.

Solche weitere Schritte in die Zukunft sind möglich, wenn sie in der Überzeugung vollzogen werden, dass es zur Ökumene keine Alternative gibt. Sie ist um der Glaubwürdigkeit des christlichen Glaubens und der Sendung der Kirche in der heutigen Welt willen notwendig, sie entspricht dem Willen des Herrn und ist eine Frucht des Heiligen Geistes. Es wäre deshalb Kleinglaube, würde man dem Heiligen Geist nicht zutrauen, dass er das, was er verheissungsvoll initiiert hat, auch zu Ende führen wird – freilich so und zu jener Zeit, wie er will. Auf ihn zu hören, ist das bleibende Gebot der ökumenischen Stunde auch heute.

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Conferenza presso la Cattedra Tillard
(Istituto di Studi Ecumenici, Pontificia Università San Tommaso d'Aquino
[Angelicum], Roma, 4 dicembre 2020)



Il Cardinale Kurt Koch interviene alla Conferenza presso la Cattedra Tillard, 4 dicembre 2020

“UT UNUM SINT”: VIA IMPRESCINDIBILE DELLA CHIESA

1. Uno sguardo al Concilio, con gratitudine

“Con il Concilio Vaticano II, la Chiesa cattolica si è impegnata in modo irreversibile a percorrere la via della ricerca ecumenica, ponendosi così all’ascolto dello Spirito del Signore, che insegna come leggere attentamente i ‘segni dei tempi’ ”.¹ Queste parole incisive si trovano nell’introduzione dell’Enciclica sull’impegno ecumenico che Papa Giovanni Paolo II scrisse nel 1995 trent’anni dopo il Concilio Vaticano Secondo. Il venticinquesimo anniversario della sua pubblicazione è una proficua occasione per riflettere nuovamente su questo importante testo dottrinale. Questo anniversario merita particolare attenzione non solo perché, per la prima volta nella storia della Chiesa, un Papa pubblicava un’Enciclica ampia e incoraggiante sull’ecumenismo, ma soprattutto perché egli, nella dedizione della Chiesa cattolica al movimento ecumenico, vedeva all’opera lo Spirito Santo e dichiarava la sua intenzione a rimanere fedele al cammino intrapreso dal Concilio, portandolo avanti.

Agli occhi di Papa Giovanni Paolo II, il Concilio Vaticano Secondo esprimeva la ferma volontà della Chiesa cattolica di assumere la responsabilità ecumenica volta al ripristino dell’unità dei cristiani e di continuare a promuoverla con decisione e convinzione. Per comprendere e apprezzare l’Enciclica papale in modo più adeguato, dobbiamo tornare, nei limiti del tempo concesso, all’importante orientamento fornito dal Concilio. Il suo punto culminante fu alla fine della terza sessione, e più precisamente il 21 novembre 1964, quando il Decreto conciliare sull’ecumenismo “Unitatis redintegratio” venne adottato dai Padri conciliari con una stragrande maggioranza, ovvero con 2137 voti favorevoli e 11 contrari, e promulgato da Papa Paolo VI.

1. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 3.

Con tale evento, la Chiesa cattolica fece sue le priorità fondamentali del movimento ecumenico e si unì ufficialmente e definitivamente a questo movimento mondiale. Quanto ciò sia vero è dimostrato dal fatto che il testo promulgato non parla più di “ecumenismo cattolico” come avviene nello Schema “De Oecumenismo” del 1963, ma di “principi cattolici dell’ecumenismo”. Con questa formula linguistica si intende che il Concilio non voleva affiancare né tantomeno contrapporre al movimento ecumenico, sorto all’interno del cristianesimo non cattolico, un proprio ecumenismo, come se si trattasse di una via alternativa cattolica, ma, convinto che potesse esistere un solo ecumenismo, voleva inserirsi nel processo del movimento ecumenico, nel quale il Concilio aveva espressamente riconosciuto l’azione della “grazia dello Spirito Santo”².

Guardando oggi alla promulgazione del Decreto ecumenico, la prima cosa che affiora in noi è un sentimento di gratitudine per ciò che è stato avviato dal Concilio Vaticano Secondo e per i frutti che ne sono stati ricavati da allora. L’Enciclica “Ut unum sint” di Papa Giovanni Paolo II è contrassegnata da questa gratitudine; essa è anche permeata dalla determinata volontà di proseguire e di approfondire il cammino che la Chiesa cattolica ha iniziato con il Concilio. In ciò risiede la sua sempre attuale importanza, soprattutto alla luce delle tendenze recenti di mettere in discussione o almeno di minimizzare la natura dogmatica vincolante del Decreto sull’ecumenismo. Per rendere giustizia alla forza innovativa dell’Enciclica di Papa Giovanni Paolo II, deve essere brevemente esaminata la questione fondamentale della natura teologica vincolante del Decreto sull’ecumenismo del Concilio Vaticano Secondo.³

2. L’impegno ecclesiologico a favore dell’ecumenismo

Uno dei principali argomenti di coloro che contestano il carattere teologico vincolante del Decreto sull’ecumenismo consiste nel dire che questo documento del Concilio non è una Costituzione dogmatica, ma “solo” un Decreto, avente un’importanza soprattutto pastorale e disciplinare, ma una scarsa natura vincolante dal punto di vista dottrinale. Tale distinzione non è ovviamente valida. Dal momento che “pastorale” significa “realizzare la permanente attualità del dogma”, nel senso che, proprio perché il dogma è vero, esso deve essere sempre “attuato nella sua efficacia” e quindi interpretato pastoralmente⁴, non può esistere alcuna pastorale senza un chiaro fondamento radicato nella dottrina della Chiesa, così come non può esserci alcuna dottrina senza un obiettivo pastorale. Neanche la distinzione menzionata prima tra Costituzioni e Decreti può essere sostenuta. La sua infondatezza emerge già dalla constatazione storica che il Concilio di Trento non adottò Costituzioni, ma solo Decreti, che erano comunque testi dottrinali di grande importanza teologica. Pertanto, la distinzione tra Costituzioni e Decreti del Concilio Vaticano Secondo deve essere interpretata conformemente al fatto che i Decreti rappresentano principalmente concretizzazioni, nella vita pratica della Chiesa, di questioni trattate all’interno di una Costituzione. Così, il Decreto sull’ecumenismo deve

2. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 1; cfr. anche 4.

3. Vgl. W. Kasper, Die bleibende theologische Verbindlichkeit des Ökumenismuskonkrets, in: Ders., Wege zur Einheit der Christen. Schriften zur Ökumene I = Gesammelte Schriften. Band 14 (Freiburg i. Br. 2012) 168-177.

4. K. Kardinal Lehmann, Das II. Vatikanum – ein Wegweiser. Verständnis – Rezeption – Bedeutung, in: P. Hünermann (Hrsg.), Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil und die Zeichen der Zeit heute (Freiburg i. Br. 2006) 11-26, zit. 18.

essere compreso soprattutto in rapporto alla Costituzione dogmatica sulla Chiesa “Lumen gentium”, e non interpretato senza – o addirittura contro – di essa.

Il grande Papa del Concilio, Paolo VI intese la svolta ecumenica del Concilio proprio in questo senso. Per lui, l’obiettivo ecumenico divenne un importante leit motiv anche e soprattutto del rinnovamento conciliare della Chiesa cattolica e della sua auto-comprensione, tanto che si dovrebbe parlare di un’interazione vera e propria tra l’apertura ecumenica della Chiesa cattolica e il rinnovamento della sua ecclesiologia.⁵ Già all’inizio della seconda sessione del Concilio, Papa Paolo VI, nel suo incisivo discorso di apertura, al quale l’allora consultore conciliare Joseph Ratzinger riconobbe “un vero carattere ecumenico”⁶, sottolineava che il riavvicinamento ecumenico tra cristiani e Chiese separati era uno degli obiettivi centrali, ovvero il dramma spirituale, per cui il Concilio Vaticano Secondo era stato convocato⁷. E nel promulgare il Decreto sull’ecumenismo, Papa Paolo VI notò che questo Decreto spiegava e completava la Costituzione dogmatica sulla Chiesa: “ea doctrina exlicationibus completa”⁸. Questa espressione dimostra chiaramente che il Pontefice non attribuiva minimamente al Decreto sull’ecumenismo un valore teologico inferiore; piuttosto, lo associava, per la sua importanza teologica, alla Costituzione dogmatica sulla Chiesa.

Nella sua Enciclica “Ut unum sint”, anche Papa Giovanni Paolo II usa la stessa ermeneutica del Concilio. Egli sottolinea espressamente che il Decreto sull’ecumenismo dovrebbe essere letto “nel contesto dell’intero magistero conciliare” e che esso “si ricollega prima di tutto all’insegnamento sulla Chiesa della Costituzione Lumen gentium, nel suo capitolo che tratta del popolo di Dio”.⁹ Alla luce di questa affermazione fondamentale si comprende il motivo per cui Papa Giovanni Paolo II insista sul fatto che il movimento a favore dell’unità dei cristiani non è “soltanto una qualche ‘appendice’, che s’aggiunge all’attività tradizionale della Chiesa”; al contrario, esso appartiene “organicamente alla sua vita e alla sua azione e deve, di conseguenza, pervadere questo insieme ed essere come il frutto di un albero che, sano e rigoglioso, cresce fino a raggiungere il suo pieno sviluppo”¹⁰. E di fronte ai dubbi espressi sia dai fautori che dai detrattori dell’ecumenismo, Giovanni Paolo II afferma che il cammino ecumenico è il cammino della Chiesa ed è irrevocabile, perché con il Concilio la Chiesa “si è impegnata in modo irreversibile” a percorrere tale via¹¹.

3. Mantenere viva la ricerca dell’unità della Chiesa

Secondo Papa Giovanni Paolo II, le basi e i presupposti dogmatici del Decreto sull’ecumenismo vanno rintracciati nella Costituzione dogmatica sulla Chiesa e il cammino ecumenico intrapreso dal Concilio si radica nella natura teologica della Chiesa

5. Vgl. H. J. Pottmeyer, „Die Öffnung der römisch-katholischen Kirche und die ekklesiologische Reform des 2. Vatikanums. Ein wechselseitiger Einfluss“, in: *Paolo VI e l’Ecumenismo. Colloquio Internazionale di Studio Brescia 1998* (Brescia – Roma 2001) 98-117.

6. J. Ratzinger, *Das Konzil auf dem Weg. Rückblick auf die zweite Sitzungsperiode des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils* (Köln 1964) 21.

7. *Ench. Vat. Vol I. Documenti del Concilio Vaticano II*, 104f.

8. *Ebda.*

9. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 8.

10. *Ibid.*, 20.

11. *Ibid.*, 3.

stessa. Sarà bene pertanto riflettere in maniera più approfondita sul fondamento ecclesiologicalo dell'importanza che il movimento ecumenico riveste per la Chiesa cattolica. Nel secondo capitolo della Costituzione dogmatica sulla Chiesa "Lumen gentium", la Chiesa è descritta soprattutto come il popolo di Dio, che si trova tra il "già" e il "non ancora" nel suo pellegrinaggio terreno e che è in cammino attraverso la storia; tutto ciò mette in evidenza la dimensione escatologica della Chiesa. Poiché la Chiesa stessa è intesa come un movimento escatologico, il movimento ecumenico può anche essere ripreso e integrato in questa dinamica escatologica. In essa, il movimento ecumenico è collegato anche al movimento missionario, così che ecumenismo e missione si presentano come le due forme del cammino escatologico della Chiesa¹²: come la Chiesa, nel suo movimento missionario, raccoglie, purifica e arricchisce la ricchezza di diversi popoli e culture, ma si lascia anche arricchire da loro, così il tratto distintivo dell'ecumenismo consiste nello scambio reciproco dei doni. Di fatti, per Papa Giovanni Paolo II, il dialogo ecumenico "non è soltanto uno scambio di idee. In qualche modo esso è sempre uno 'scambio di doni'"¹³.

Missione ed ecumenismo sono strettamente legati come facenti parte integrante del mandato della Chiesa, anche perché la missione cristiana si rivolge all'umanità intera e in ultima analisi mira all'unità di tutto il genere umano. Alla luce di questo obiettivo, la Chiesa concepisce se stessa, conformemente a quanto sottolineato nel primo articolo della Costituzione dogmatica sulla Chiesa, come il sacramento di salvezza, e più precisamente come "il segno e lo strumento dell'intima unione con Dio e dell'unità di tutto il genere umano"¹⁴. Ecco allora che emerge l'urgente interrogativo su come la Chiesa possa essere sacramento di unità del genere umano se offre ancora al mondo lo spettacolo imbarazzante delle sue stesse divisioni.

Da questa domanda impellente, che segnò il pensiero e l'opera ecumenici di Papa Giovanni Paolo II, era già stato mosso il Concilio, che nella prima frase del suo Decreto sull'ecumenismo "Unitatis redintegratio" definì l'obiettivo di tutto il Concilio in questi termini: "Promuovere il ristabilimento dell'unità fra tutti i cristiani è uno dei principali intenti del sacro Concilio ecumenico Vaticano II."¹⁵ Il dovere ecumenico della Chiesa cattolica si basa sulla convinzione teologica fondamentale che da Cristo "la Chiesa è stata fondata una e unica". Questa convinzione di fede viene quindi contrapposta al fatto storico e tuttora empiricamente riscontrabile che esiste un gran numero di Chiese e di Comunità ecclesiali, ciascuna delle quali si propone come "la vera eredità di Gesù Cristo". La fatale impressione che può derivarne è chiara: "come se Cristo stesso fosse diviso". Il Concilio giunge così alla conclusione che la divisione nella Chiesa "si oppone apertamente alla volontà di Cristo", è di "scandalo al mondo" e "danneggia la più santa delle cause: la predicazione del Vangelo ad ogni creatura."

Nel professare la Chiesa "una ed unica" e nel riconoscere dolorosamente le divisioni tuttora esistenti, il Concilio prende atto della situazione profondamente anormale della cristianità, che contraddice il disegno divino di unità e che consiste nel fatto che i cristiani, che sono stati incorporati con il battesimo nell'unico Corpo di Cristo, con-

12. Vgl. W. Kasper, Eine missionarische Kirche ist ökumenisch, in: Ders., Wege zur Einheit der Christen = Gesammelte Schriften. Band 14, 1 (Freiburg i. Br. 2012) 621-634.

13. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 28.

14. *Lumen gentium*, 1.

15. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 1.

tinuano a vivere in Chiese separate. Davanti a questo problema opprimente, all'inizio del terzo capitolo dell'Enciclica "Ut unum sint", Papa Giovanni Paolo II si chiede "quanta strada ci separa ancora da quel giorno benedetto in cui sarà raggiunta la piena unità nella fede e potremo concelebrare nella concordia la santa Eucaristica del Signore". Con questa domanda appassionata, il Papa richiama l'attenzione sul fatto che negli sforzi ecumenici intrapresi fino ad oggi, nonostante i frutti positivi realizzati dai dialoghi, il vero obiettivo del movimento ecumenico non sia stato ancora raggiunto. Papa Giovanni Paolo II esprime tale obiettivo in maniera inequivocabile: "Il fine ultimo del movimento ecumenico è il ristabilimento della piena unità visibile di tutti i battezzati."¹⁶

Con ciò abbiamo toccato il punto indubbiamente più sensibile della situazione ecumenica anche odierna, che consiste nel fatto che, all'interno del movimento ecumenico, non esista ancora un solido consenso sul suo obiettivo.¹⁷ Nelle fasi precedenti del movimento ecumenico, da un lato è stato possibile raggiungere consensi ampi e soddisfacenti su molte tematiche che nel passato erano state controverse in merito alla comprensione della fede e alla struttura teologica della Chiesa, consensi che sono diventati "documenti di crescente convergenza". Dall'altro lato, tuttavia, la maggior parte delle divergenze confessionali tuttora esistenti riguardano l'interpretazione differenziata dell'unità ecumenica della Chiesa. Nell'ecumenismo, si è concordi sulla necessità dell'unità, ma non sulla sua forma concreta. In questo duplice fatto, va letto il vero paradosso del movimento ecumenico di oggi, al cui superamento intende contribuire l'Enciclica di Papa Giovanni Paolo II. Essa potrà essere realmente compresa solo se la si intende come un appello spirituale volto a mantenere viva la questione dell'unità della Chiesa con ostinata passione.

4. Il fondamento cristologico dell'unità ecumenica

Il motivo più profondo dell'enfasi posta da Papa Giovanni Paolo II sulla ricerca dell'unità della Chiesa si radica nella convinzione che essa corrisponda al disegno di Dio, rivelato nella vita e nell'opera di Gesù Cristo. La preghiera sacerdotale di Gesù, in cui egli invoca l'unità dei suoi discepoli, è evidenza del fatto che nella vita di Gesù l'unità "non è un accessorio", ma sta "al centro stesso della sua opera". L'unità è parte integrante della natura della comunità fondata da Gesù; pertanto, Dio vuole la Chiesa perché vuole l'unità, come spiega Papa Giovanni Paolo II con parole eloquenti: "Credere in Cristo significa volere l'unità; volere l'unità significa volere la Chiesa; volere la Chiesa significa volere la comunione di grazia che corrisponde al disegno del Padre da tutta l'eternità. Ecco qual è il significato della preghiera di Cristo: 'Ut unum sint'".¹⁸ Poiché Papa Giovanni Paolo II ravvisa il fondamento più profondo, cioè cristologico, della ricerca ecumenica dell'unità della Chiesa nella preghiera sacerdotale di Gesù, è opportuno riflettere ulteriormente su questa preghiera, che ha dato il nome all'Enciclica.

16. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 77.

17. Vgl. K. Kardinal Koch, *Lob der Vielfalt – Gerät den christlichen Kirchen die Einheit aus dem Blick?* in: St. Kopp / W. Thönissen (Hrsg.), *Mehr als friedvoll getrennt? Ökumene nach 2017* (Freiburg i. Br. 2017) 15-40.

18. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 9.

a) *La preghiera per l'unità*

Nella preghiera “che tutti siano una sola cosa”, il primo aspetto che ci colpisce è che Gesù non comanda ai suoi discepoli l'unità e non la esige da loro; piuttosto prega per loro. Questa semplice ma elementare constatazione è di fondamentale importanza anche per la ricerca ecumenica dell'unità dei cristiani. Se l'unità dei discepoli è la priorità principale della preghiera di Gesù, l'ecumenismo cristiano non può essere altro che un sintetizzarsi da parte dei cristiani alla preghiera di Gesù, un'adesione alla sua preghiera sacerdotale. La preghiera per l'unità dei cristiani è e rimane il presupposto essenziale di tutti gli sforzi ecumenici, come sottolinea Papa Giovanni Paolo II: “Sulla via ecumenica verso l'unità, il primato spetta senz'altro alla preghiera comune, all'unione orante di coloro che si stringono insieme attorno a Cristo stesso”¹⁹.

L'Enciclica “*Ut unum sint*” conferma e approfondisce così la convinzione del Concilio Vaticano Secondo, che definisce l'ecumenismo spirituale “l'anima di tutto il movimento ecumenico”²⁰, nella chiara consapevolezza che al centro di tutti gli sforzi ecumenici deve esserci la preghiera per l'unità. Secondo Papa Giovanni Paolo II, la preghiera deve essere presente nella vita della Chiesa e in ogni attività che miri all'unità dei cristiani: “È come se noi dovessimo sempre ritornare a radunarci nel Cenacolo del Giovedì Santo, sebbene la nostra presenza insieme, in tale luogo, attenda ancora il suo perfetto compimento, fino a quando, superati gli ostacoli frapposti alla perfetta comunione ecclesiale, tutti i cristiani si riuniranno nell'unica celebrazione dell'Eucaristia.”²¹

Il riferimento al Cenacolo evidenzia che, con la preghiera per l'unità, noi cristiani esprimiamo la nostra convinzione di fede che non possiamo fare noi stessi l'unità e non possiamo deciderne né la forma né la tempistica. Noi cristiani, piuttosto, siamo capaci di produrre divisioni, come ci mostrano il passato e pure il presente. L'unità la possiamo invece ricevere soltanto in dono da Dio. E il modo migliore per prepararci a questa unità come dono è pregare per l'unità.

Ecco il motivo per cui il movimento ecumenico è stato un movimento di preghiera sin dall'inizio e, proprio ai suoi albori, l'introduzione della Settimana di Preghiera per l'unità dei cristiani è stata un'iniziativa ecumenica. Di fatti, fu la preghiera per l'unità dei cristiani ad aprire la strada al movimento ecumenico; ed è la preghiera che continua tutt'oggi a fornirgli carburante. La centralità della preghiera dimostra che gli sforzi ecumenici sono soprattutto un compito spirituale e che quindi non può esserci vero ecumenismo che non sia ancorato alla preghiera, come sottolinea enfaticamente Papa Giovanni Paolo II: se i cristiani “si incontreranno sempre più spesso e più assiduamente davanti a Cristo nella preghiera, essi potranno trarre coraggio per affrontare tutta la dolorosa ed umana realtà delle divisioni, e si ritroveranno insieme in quella comunità della Chiesa che Cristo forma incessantemente nello Spirito Santo, malgrado tutte le debolezze e gli umani limiti.”²²

19. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 22.

20. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 8.

21. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 23.

22. *Ibid.*, 22.

b) *Unità ed evangelizzazione credibile*

La centralità della dimensione spirituale della ricerca ecumenica dell'unità sarebbe fraintesa se si concludesse che l'ecumenismo è semplicemente una questione interna delle comunità cristiane. Che non si tratti di questo lo vediamo chiaramente se orientiamo il nostro sguardo sul vero significato della preghiera sacerdotale di Gesù, che prega per l'unità dei suoi discepoli con un'intenzione specifica: "perché siano perfetti nell'unità e il mondo conosca che tu mi hai mandato e che li hai amati come hai amato me" (Gv 17,23). Questa congiunzione finale — "perché" — mostra inequivocabilmente che l'unità tra i discepoli non è fine a se stessa, ma è al servizio della credibilità della missione di Gesù Cristo e della sua Chiesa nel mondo ed è il prerequisito indispensabile per una testimonianza credibile nel mondo.

Nella sua enciclica, Papa Giovanni Paolo II ricorda che il movimento ecumenico del secolo scorso era consapevole della finalità della ricerca ecumenica dell'unità ed era quindi fortemente segnato da una visione missionaria. Egli si riferisce alle parole pionieristiche di Papa Paolo VI nella sua profetica Esortazione apostolica "Evangelii nuntiandi", che ravvisa "un grave stato di fatto" nella divisione dei cristiani "che perviene ad intaccare la stessa opera di Cristo". Da ciò Papa Paolo VI trae la conclusione che la sorte dell'evangelizzazione è "certamente legata alla testimonianza di unità data dalla Chiesa": "In quanto evangelizzatori, noi dobbiamo offrire ai fedeli di Cristo l'immagine non di uomini divisi e separati da litigi che non edificano affatto, ma di persone mature nella fede, capaci di ritrovarsi insieme al di sopra delle tensioni concrete, grazie alla ricerca comune, sincera e disinteressata della verità."²³

Sulla stessa scia, Papa Giovanni Paolo II è convinto che la divisione dei cristiani contraddica quella verità che essi hanno il compito di diffondere e che tale divisione sia dunque il maggiore ostacolo all'annuncio del Vangelo. Di fatti, testimoniare onestamente Gesù Cristo nel mondo di oggi è possibile solo se le Chiese cristiane superano le loro divisioni. Missione ed ecumenismo sono quindi indissolubilmente legati: se la missione cristiana consiste essenzialmente nel testimoniare l'amore di Dio, che egli ci ha rivelato nel suo Figlio, e, attraverso tale testimonianza, trasmettere l'amore di Dio agli altri, allora, come ha osservato Papa Giovanni Paolo II, ostacolare questo amore di Dio rappresenta "una offesa a Lui e al suo disegno di radunare tutti in Cristo"²⁴.

c) *L'unità testimoniata con la vita*

Per Papa Giovanni Paolo II, i più credibili testimoni del Vangelo sono i martiri che hanno testimoniato la fede in Gesù Cristo con tutta la vita, fino all'ultima goccia di sangue. Quanto sia importante per lui questa testimonianza anche per l'ecumenismo si evince dal riferimento che compare già nell'introduzione della sua Enciclica, dove egli ricorda la "testimonianza coraggiosa di tanti martiri del nostro secolo, appartenenti anche ad altre Chiese e Comunità ecclesiali non in piena comunione con la Chiesa cattolica". Per il Papa, essi sono "la prova più significativa che ogni elemento di divisione può essere trasceso e superato nel dono totale di sé alla causa del Vangelo"²⁵.

23. Paolo VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 77.

24. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 99.

25. *Ibid.*, 1.

Con ciò, Papa Giovanni Paolo II ci ricorda il fatto doloroso che, alla fine del secondo millennio e all'inizio del terzo, il cristianesimo è tornato ad essere una Chiesa di martiri, in misura preoccupante. Di fatti, ci sono oggi più martiri che durante le persecuzioni dei cristiani nei primi secoli. Oggi tutte le Chiese e le Comunità ecclesiali cristiane hanno i loro martiri. Il martirio è diventato ecumenico, e si deve parlare di un vero e proprio ecumenismo dei martiri²⁶. Papa Giovanni Paolo II sottolinea quindi che “in una visione teocentrica” noi cristiani abbiamo già un “martirologio comune”, che ci mostra come “ad un livello profondo, Dio mantenga fra i battezzati la comunione nell’esigenza suprema della fede, manifestata col sacrificio della vita”²⁷.

Nonostante la profonda tragicità delle persecuzioni contro i cristiani, Papa Giovanni Paolo II intravede anche un messaggio positivo nell’ecumenismo dei martiri, ravvisando in esso già un’unità fondamentale tra i cristiani e nutrendo la speranza che i martiri ci aiutino dal cielo a ritrovare la piena unità. Mentre noi cristiani e noi Chiese su questa terra sperimentiamo ancora una comunione imperfetta, i martiri nella gloria celeste vivono già una comunione piena e perfetta. Il sangue che i martiri hanno versato per Cristo non separa noi cristiani, ma ci unisce. Come la Chiesa primitiva era convinta che il sangue dei martiri sarebbe stato il seme dei nuovi cristiani (“Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum”), così noi possiamo sperare che il sangue dei tanti martiri del nostro tempo diventi il seme della piena unità ecumenica dell’unico Corpo di Cristo ferito da così tante divisioni.

Aver reso la Chiesa consapevole dell’importanza della dimensione ecumenica del martirio è un particolare merito di Papa Giovanni Paolo II, e soprattutto della sua Enciclica sull’impegno ecumenico. Egli ha mostrato questa sua visione in particolar modo con la celebrazione congiunta durante il Giubileo dell’Anno 2000 nel Colosseo, luogo storicamente simbolico, dove, alla presenza di alti rappresentanti di diverse Chiese e Comunità ecclesiali, ha commemorato i martiri del XX secolo ed ascoltato varie testimonianze, tra cui quella del Metropolita ortodosso Serafim, del Pastore evangelico Paul Schneider e del Padre cattolico Maximilian Kolbe. Tale celebrazione ha permesso di sperimentare la profonda comunione nella fede che unisce i cristiani e che risulta essere molto più forte delle differenze e degli ostacoli tuttora esistenti che ancora separano le Chiese cristiane.

Con Papa Giovanni Paolo II, possiamo riconoscere nell’ecumenismo dei martiri il nucleo più intimo di tutti gli sforzi ecumenici volti al ripristino dell’unità dei cristiani. Anche questa particolare forma di ecumenismo è diventata possibile soltanto grazie al Concilio Vaticano Secondo, e più precisamente alla sua convinzione che molti elementi e beni importanti, sulla base dei quali la Chiesa nel suo insieme è edificata e si mantiene in vita, possano esistere anche in altre comunità cristiane; tra questi elementi il Concilio annovera in modo speciale “una vera unione nello Spirito Santo”, che anche nelle altre comunità “opera con la sua virtù santificante per mezzo di doni e grazie e ha dato ad alcuni la forza di giungere fino allo spargimento del sangue”²⁸. Contrariamente a quanto avveniva nel passato, quando solo i martiri della propria Chiesa erano conside-

26. Vgl. W. Kasper, *Ökumene der Märtyrer. Theologie und Spiritualität des Martyriums* (Norderstedt 2014); K. Cardinal Koch, *Christenverfolgung und Ökumene der Märtyrer. Eine biblische Besinnung* (Norderstedt 2016).

27. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 84.

28. *Lumen gentium*, 15.

rati tali e non era possibile accettare il martirio verificatosi in altre comunità cristiane, il Concilio, con le sue eloquenti dichiarazioni, ha permesso di riconoscere la realtà del martirio anche in altre comunità cristiane.²⁹ Questo dimostra ancora una volta quanto l'Enciclica di Papa Giovanni Paolo II si basi sul Magistero del Concilio Vaticano Secondo e, soprattutto, quanto intenda continuare e approfondire le sue linee guida in campo ecumenico.

5. L'obbligo giuridico di partecipare all'ecumenismo

In rapporto a questa fedeltà vincolante al Concilio Vaticano Secondo, va ricordato che Papa Giovanni Paolo II ha ritenuto importante anche consolidare l'eccelesologia del Concilio dal punto di vista del diritto canonico. Nella Costituzione apostolica "Sacrae disciplinae leges", da lui scritta per la promulgazione del nuovo Codex Iuris Canonici (CIC) del 1983, egli sottolinea che il rinnovamento postconciliare del diritto canonico deve perseguire l'obiettivo di "tradurre in linguaggio canonistico" la dottrina conciliare sulla Chiesa³⁰. Ed evidenzia persino che il nuovo Codice appartiene al Concilio stesso ed è, per così dire, "l'ultimo documento conciliare"³¹. Degno di nota particolare è il fatto che egli volesse sottolineare la relazione tra l'eccelesologia conciliare e la codificazione del diritto canonico della Chiesa universale anche e soprattutto in vista dell'impegno ecumenico. Per lui, l'obiettivo di ripristinare l'unità dei cristiani era uno dei motivi decisivi per la codificazione del diritto canonico della Chiesa universale.³² Pertanto il CIC prevede un esplicito obbligo giuridico per la Chiesa cattolica di partecipare al movimento ecumenico. Se il CIC sottolinea esplicitamente che la Chiesa è tenuta a promuovere "per volontà di Cristo"³³ il ristabilimento dell'unità dei cristiani, il fondamento dell'impegno della Chiesa cattolica a favore dell'ecumenismo si ancora nel testamento di Gesù stesso, tanto che è giusto parlare di un impegno ecumenico de iure divino.

In maniera ancora più chiara rispetto al Codex Iuris Canonici del 1983 per la Chiesa latina, l'obbligo giuridico di promuovere l'ecumenismo da parte della Chiesa cattolica è formulato nel Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (CCEO) promulgato nel 1990 da Papa Giovanni Paolo II per le Chiese orientali cattoliche, e questo da una duplice prospettiva.³⁴ Innanzitutto, a differenza del CIC, che non contempla una parte sistematica sulla responsabilità ecumenica della Chiesa, ma fa riferimento a questioni ecumeniche con norme diverse, il CCEO, oltre a contenere singoli canoni di im-

29. Vgl. E. Schockenhoff, *Entschiedenheit und Widerstand. Das Lebenszeugnis der Märtyrer* (Freiburg i. Br. 2015), bes. 129-173: *Das neue Bild der Märtyrer im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*.

30. Giovanni Paolo II, *Sacrae disciplinae leges*.

31. Giovanni Paolo II, *Discorso ai Partecipanti al Corso sul nuovo Codice di Diritto Canonico*, il 21 novembre 1983.

32. Vgl. K. Koch, "L'attività legislativa di Giovanni Paolo II e la promozione dell'unità dei Cristiani", in: L. Gerosa (ed.), *Giovanni Paolo II: Legislatore della Chiesa. Fondamenti, innovazioni e aperture. Atti del Convegno di Studio* (Città del Vaticano 2013) 160-177.

33. Canone 755 § 1 CIC 1983.

34. Cfr. K. Koch, "L'incidenza del CCEO sul dialogo ecumenico", in: *Pontificio Consiglio per i testi legislativi* (ed.), *Il Codice delle Chiese orientali. La storia, le legislazioni particolari, le prospettive ecumeniche. Atti del convegno di studio tenutosi nel XX anniversario della promulgazione del Codice dei Canonici delle Chiese orientali* (Città del Vaticano 2011) 43-50.

portanza ecumenica, dedica al compito ecumenico della Chiesa un capitolo intero, il XVIII, con il titolo: “L’ecumenismo cioè la promozione dell’unità dei cristiani”³⁵. In secondo luogo, il limite temporale della validità del CCEO e quindi il suo carattere transitorio sono particolarmente significativi dal punto di vista ecumenico. Nella sua Costituzione apostolica “Sacri Canones”, Papa Giovanni Paolo II sottolinea esplicitamente che i canoni del CCEO si applicheranno “fino a quando non verranno sospesi o modificati dalla massima autorità della Chiesa per giusti motivi”, tra i quali il più importante è la “piena comunione di tutte le Chiese orientali con la Chiesa cattolica”³⁶. Questo canone mostra chiaramente che il limite temporale della validità del CCEO s’inscrive nella prospettiva ecumenica e che le Chiese orientali cattoliche hanno una responsabilità ecumenica del tutto speciale.

Con i suoi due Codici canonici, Papa Giovanni Paolo II ha fatto presente a tutta la Chiesa che la responsabilità ecumenica della Chiesa deriva direttamente dall’ecclesiologia conciliare ed è un obbligo rigoroso. Questo viene ribadito anche da quanto il CIC afferma a proposito del Vescovo diocesano, iscrivendo tale obbligo giuridico nel contesto dei compiti del Vescovo, e più precisamente dell’esercizio del suo ministero pastorale, del quale si dice che è essenzialmente un servizio all’unità, unità che deve essere intesa in senso più ampio dell’unità della propria chiesa, perché comprende tutti i battezzati; al Vescovo diocesano si consiglia infatti: “Abbia un atteggiamento di umanità e di carità nei confronti dei fratelli che non sono nella piena comunione con la Chiesa cattolica, favorendo anche l’ecumenismo, come viene inteso dalla Chiesa.”³⁷ Collocando la responsabilità ecumenica nel contesto specifico del servizio pastorale del Vescovo, il CIC suggerisce che la promozione dell’ecumenismo non rappresenta per il Vescovo un compito pastorale opzionale, rinviabile davanti a priorità apparentemente più importanti. Nel ministero episcopale, la responsabilità ecumenica non è una scelta arbitraria, ma un dovere.³⁸

6. Il servizio petrino all’unità della Chiesa

Papa Giovanni Paolo II ha inteso in questo senso anche il suo ministero quale Vescovo di Roma. Il primo giorno del suo pontificato ha espresso l’intenzione di promuovere il riavvicinamento ecumenico tra i cristiani, ha compreso fin dall’inizio il suo servizio di unità come un servizio che si estende oltre la Chiesa cattolica e che riguarda la più ampia unità ecumenica di tutti i cristiani, ed ha definito il compito ecumenico una delle sue priorità pastorali. Egli era infatti convinto che il ministero assegnato al successore di Pietro fosse il servizio reso all’unità e che trovasse la “sua particolare spiegazione” nell’“ambito dell’ecumenismo”³⁹.

Al servizio dell’unità affidato in modo speciale al Vescovo di Roma, Papa Giovanni Paolo II ha dedicato riflessioni cruciali nella parte finale della sua Enciclica, in una sezione più lunga, in cui affiora una duplice realtà: da un lato, la Chiesa cattolica è

35. Canones 902-908 CCEO 1990.

36. Giovanni Paolo II, *Constitutio Apostolica “Sacri canones”* del 18 ottobre 1990.

37. Can 383 § 3 CIC 1983.

38. Cfr. K. Koch, “Il Vescovo e l’ecumenismo”, in: *Congregazione per i Vescovi, Duc in Altum. Pellegrinaggio alla Tomba di San Pietro. Incontro di riflessione per i nuovi Vescovi* (Città del Vaticano 2012) 283-300.

39. Giovanni Paolo II, *Varcare la soglia della speranza* (Milano 1994) 164.

convinta di “aver conservato, in fedeltà alla tradizione apostolica e alla fede dei Padri”, il ministero del Vescovo di Roma come “il segno visibile e il garante dell’unità”⁴⁰. La Chiesa cattolica resta fedele dunque, sia nei testi dottrinali che nella sua praxis, alla convinzione, che la comunione delle Chiese particolari con la Chiesa di Roma, e dei loro Vescovi con il Vescovo di Roma, “è un requisito essenziale — nel disegno di Dio — della comunione piena e visibile” e che la piena comunione debba avere “la sua espressione visibile in un ministero nel quale tutti i Vescovi si riconoscano uniti in Cristo e tutti i fedeli trovino la conferma della propria fede”⁴¹. Dall’altro lato, Papa Giovanni Paolo II è ugualmente consapevole del fatto che il ministero del Vescovo di Roma costituisce “una difficoltà per la maggior parte degli altri cristiani, la cui memoria è segnata da certi ricordi dolorosi”⁴², venendo percepito, proprio a causa di questi ricordi, come uno dei maggiori ostacoli al ripristino dell’unità dei cristiani.

Consapevole di questa duplice realtà, Papa Giovanni Paolo II ha invitato l’intera comunità ecumenica a impegnarsi in un “dialogo fraterno, paziente” sul primato del Vescovo di Roma, con l’obiettivo di trovare una forma di esercizio del primato che, “pur non rinunciando in nessun modo all’essenziale della sua missione, si apra ad una situazione nuova”, e soprattutto “possa realizzare un servizio di amore riconosciuto dagli uni e dagli altri”⁴³. Attraverso questa distinzione tra la natura del primato e la forma concreta del suo esercizio, Papa Giovanni Paolo II è convinto che si possa pervenire a un consenso ecumenico in merito al servizio di unità del Vescovo di Roma. Sulla via del dialogo, egli spera così che il primato del Vescovo di Roma cessi di essere il principale ostacolo al ripristino dell’unità della Chiesa, e si riveli la più proficua opportunità per questa causa. Di fatti, per la Chiesa cattolica l’unità ecumenica è impensabile senza unità con il Vescovo di Roma, qualunque sia la forma concreta che questa assumerà. La Chiesa cattolica considera il ministero petrino del Vescovo di Roma come un grande dono che ha ricevuto da Cristo, un dono che non dovrebbe tenere per sé e che desidera condividere nella comunione ecumenica. Pertanto, sulla scia di Papa Giovanni Paolo II, per la Chiesa cattolica è particolarmente importante che il Vescovo di Roma venga compreso e accettato come promotore dell’intesa ecumenica e come garante dell’unità della Chiesa anche dalle altre Chiese e Comunità ecclesiali.

7. Lo sforzo appassionato per ripristinare l’unità dei cristiani

L’iniziativa di intavolare un dialogo ecumenico sul ministero del Vescovo di Roma al servizio del ripristino dell’unità dei cristiani testimonia il determinato impegno ecumenico di Papa Giovanni Paolo II. Senza dubbio egli fu fortemente influenzato dal Concilio Vaticano Secondo, ai cui lavori egli stesso, allora cardinale, apportò il suo contributo⁴⁴; visse il Concilio come una pietra miliare nel rinnovamento della Chiesa, apprezzandolo come un grande dono per la Chiesa e considerandolo una “sicura bussola per orientarci nel cammino del secolo che si apre”⁴⁵. L’influenza del Concilio sul Cardinale Karol Wojtyła può essere ravvisata anche nel suo sforzo di attuarne gli orientamenti

40. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 88.

41. *Ibid.*, 97.

42. *Ibid.*, 88.

43. *Ibid.*, 95-96.

44. Cfr. R. Skrzypczak, *Karol Wojtyła al Concilio Vaticano II. La Storia e i Documenti* (Verona 2011).

45. Giovanni Paolo II, *Novo millennio in eunte*, 57.

nella diocesi di Cracovia, che gli era stata affidata in quel momento, e nel fatto che si accinse a redigere uno “Studio sull’attuazione del Concilio Vaticano Secondo” con il significativo titolo “Alle fonti del rinnovamento”, in cui sottolineò, in merito all’ecumenismo: “La posizione ecumenica che vediamo sorgere e la sua continuazione ordinata secondo l’insegnamento del Concilio Vaticano II sono fra i segni più importanti e nel contempo una delle prove per il rinnovamento della chiesa.”⁴⁶

La ragione ancora più profonda dell’impegno ecumenico di Papa Giovanni Paolo II deve essere certamente ricercata nella convinzione secondo la quale, dopo il primo millennio del cristianesimo, che fu il tempo della Chiesa indivisa, e dopo il secondo millennio, che ha condotto a profonde divisioni nella Chiesa sia in Oriente che in Occidente, il terzo millennio dovrà assumersi il grande compito di ripristinare l’unità perduta. Papa Giovanni Paolo esprime questa speranza già nel 1994, in vista del Giubileo dell’Anno 2000, con parole commoventi, contenute nel libro da lui scritto personalmente, “Varcare la soglia della speranza”: “Dobbiamo affrontare l’anno 2000 quanto meno con più unità e più disponibilità; dobbiamo essere maggiormente pronti a seguire il cammino di quella unità per la quale pregò Cristo la sera prima della sua passione. Il valore di quest’unità è enorme. In un certo senso c’è in gioco il futuro del mondo, c’è in gioco il Regno di Dio nel mondo.”⁴⁷

L’Enciclica “Ut unum sint” s’inscrive nel contesto della variegata preparazione al Grande Giubileo dell’Anno 2000. Riferendosi all’Enciclica, il Cardinale Joseph Ratzinger, come stretto collaboratore di Papa Giovanni Paolo II, notò che il Pontefice aveva risvegliato nella coscienza della Chiesa la “ricerca dell’unità dei battezzati secondo il comando del Signore, secondo la logica intrinseca della fede, che è stata inviata nel mondo da Dio come forza di unità”, con “tutta la forza della sua passione ecumenica”⁴⁸. Ed evidenziò il motivo alla base di tale impegno: “Il Papa ha sentito fin dall’inizio e continua a sentire la divisione della cristianità come una ferita che lo riguarda molto personalmente, fino al dolore fisico”; il Papa considerava dunque suo dovere “fare tutto il possibile per arrivare a una svolta verso l’unità. Per questo ha messo nel testo tutta la sua passione ecumenica.”⁴⁹

Senza questo coinvolgimento personale nella causa ecumenica, non si possono comprendere i grandi sforzi ecumenici compiuti da Papa Giovanni Paolo II in generale, e la sua Enciclica “Ut unum sint” in particolare. In ciò consiste la costante attualità del documento e la sfida stimolante che esso ci pone. L’Enciclica rappresenta anche una fonte di conforto per me, nella mia funzione di Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell’Unità dei Cristiani. Oggi, il dolore maggiore che provo è dovuto al fatto che molti cristiani non soffrono quasi più a causa della divisione tuttora esistente. Eppure, così come non può esserci vero amore tra le persone senza sofferenza e dolore, così non possiamo raggiungere l’unità dei cristiani senza la consapevolezza dolorosa

46. K. Wojtyła, *Alle fonti del rinnovamento. Studio sull’attuazione del Concilio Vaticano II* (Città del Vaticano 1981) 205.

47. Giovanni Paolo II, *Varcare la soglia della speranza* (Milano 1994) 164.

48. “J. Ratzinger – Benedetto XVI, La fede rifugio dell’umanità, Le 14 encicliche di Giovanni Paolo II”, in: Idem, *Giovanni Paolo II. Il mio amato predecessore* (Cinisello Balsamo 2007) 33-49, cit. 43.

49. “J. Ratzinger – Benedetto XVI, L’unità di missione e persona nella figura di Giovanni Paolo II”, in: Idem, *Giovanni Paolo II. Il mio amato predecessore* (Cinisello Balsamo 2007) 9-32, cit. 30.

del trauma delle divisioni nella Chiesa. Senza dolore per la mancata unità, l'ecumenismo non potrà continuare a essere una "via imprescindibile della Chiesa". L'Enciclica di Papa Giovanni Paolo II rimane anche oggi un campanello d'allarme ecumenico che invita tutti noi a fare un approfondito esame di coscienza. In questo io vedo la sua particolare importanza e per questo saremo sempre grati a Papa Giovanni Paolo II.

GREETINGS AND MESSAGES

Message for the 90th birthday of His Grace Most Reverend Mar Archbishop Joseph Powathil (11 January 2020)

I am pleased to contribute with these modest words to this commemorative volume honoring His Grace Mar Joseph Powathil, emeritus Archbishop of Changanacherry, on the auspicious occasion of his 90th birthday.

"Truth and Charity" is the motto of Archbishop Joseph Powathil. The Second Vatican Council describes the bishop as a man of dialogue, seeking out those of goodwill in a common pursuit of truth through a conversation marked by clarity and humility, and in a context of charity and friendship (*Christus Dominus* §13). The Code of Canon Law applies the same idea, describing the ecumenical responsibilities of the bishop as "to act with humanity and charity toward the brothers and sisters who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church" and "to foster ecumenism as it is understood by the Church (Can. 383 §3). The ecumenical task of the bishop therefore is to promote both the "Dialogue of Love" and the "Dialogue of Truth".

The commitment to the dialogue with other Christians in "truth and charity" is one of the characteristics of the fruitful ministry of Mar Powathil, animated by the deep and sincere aspiration to respond to the Lord's prayer for the unity of all his disciples. The whole life of His Grace is indeed an illustration of what the Second Vatican Council calls the "special duty of promoting the unity of all Christians" of the Oriental Catholic Churches, a vocation to be implemented particularly through "religious fidelity to the ancient Eastern traditions, by a greater knowledge of each other, by collaboration and a brotherly regard for objects and feelings" (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum* §24).

As an authentic disciple of the Second Vatican Council, Archbishop Joseph has always been motivated by the conviction that the first condition for the ecumenical commitment of the Syro-Malabar Church is her fidelity to the rich heritage of the Syriac Orient, common to all the Churches of the Saint Thomas Christian tradition in India. His strenuous effort in promoting and teaching the Oriental patrimony, especially the East Syriac liturgical tradition and the Eastern spirituality, must be considered as his

decisive contribution to the way towards unity of all Christians of the Syriac tradition in India.

Archbishop Powathil is not only a man of conviction but also a man of action. Many ecumenical projects in Kerala were initiated or inspired by him. One of these is the Nilackal Ecumenical Trust, a project started in 1982 by different Churches of the Saint Thomas Christian tradition in Kerala, serving as a place of worship and a platform promoting their common witness. Mar Powathil was also the founder and chairman of the Inter Church Council for Education, a joint endeavor of the Churches in Kerala to protect, promote and coordinate their educational institutions. The Christian Bishops' Fellowship, a forum for ecumenical cooperation on the level of Bishops' pastoral concerns, commenced in 1993 thanks to the vision and commitment of Archbishop Powathil.

Mention must especially be made of the substantial contribution of Mar Powathil to the theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Churches. Parallel theological dialogues have been established with each of these Churches, in 1989 with the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and in 1990 with the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church. Without the wisdom of Archbishop Powathil and the respect he enjoys among Catholics and Orthodox, they would not have seen the light of day. These dialogues are innovative not only because they have been maintained at a bilateral level despite the establishment in 2004 of the wider joint multilateral Catholic-Oriental Orthodox theological dialogue, of which these Churches are members, but also because they are both local and international, since a delegation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity attends annually their meetings. Mar Powathil's presence in these meetings has always been the assurance of intelligent debate, wise counsel and brotherly agreement.

On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, I wish to express our deep appreciation and admiration for the commitment of Archbishop Joseph Powathil to Christian unity in India.

On the happy occasion of his 90th birthday, I extend to him my heartfelt greetings and prayerful wishes. May our Lord grant him strength and abundant divine graces.

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**Saluto rivolto al Santo Padre durante i Vespri
a conclusione della Settimana di Preghiera per l'unità dei cristiani 2020**
(Basilica di San Paolo fuori le Mura, Roma, 25 gennaio 2020)

Santo Padre,

A conclusione della celebrazione dei Vespri nella Solennità della Conversione di San Paolo Apostolo ed alla fine della Settimana di Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani, Le rivolgo un caloroso saluto e La ringrazio di cuore per aver voluto presiedere anche quest'anno la celebrazione vespertina, testimoniando così nuovamente quanto Le stia a cuore il ripristino dell'unità dei cristiani. Ancora una volta, in questa Basilica di San Paolo fuori le Mura, si sono riuniti fedeli appartenenti a diverse Chiese e Comunità ecclesia-

li cristiane, per pregare insieme a Vostra Santità per l'unità dei cristiani. A nome di tutti loro le esprimo un sincero e profondo ringraziamento.

Quest'anno il materiale liturgico per la Settimana di Preghiera è stato preparato dalle Chiese cristiane di Malta e Gozo. Il gruppo di redazione ha colto l'occasione per rammentare il naufragio della nave in cui si trovava anche San Paolo, come pure l'accoglienza ospitale riservata ai naufraghi a Malta. Alla base dell'evento narrato negli Atti degli Apostoli, i cristiani di Malta e Gozo ravvisano la divina Provvidenza, che ha condotto i naufraghi sull'isola di Malta e li ha così salvati.

Questo evento ci ricorda che, nel corso della storia, anche la nave della Chiesa cristiana è stata esposta a grandi pericoli in alto mare e, nelle varie divisioni, ha fatto naufragio. Ma anche noi, cristiani di oggi, possiamo affidarci alla Provvidenza divina e sperare che ci prepari un paese come Malta, dove radunarci in un clima di ospitalità e ritrovare l'unità. Anche adesso ci guida la Provvidenza, che ci indica l'unità e ci mostra la via, con l'introduzione della Settimana di Preghiera. Il movimento ecumenico, di fatti, è stato un movimento di preghiera sin dall'inizio. Senza questa corrente di preghiera, la nave ecumenica difficilmente avrebbe lasciato il porto. E senza questa corrente di preghiera non potrebbe continuare la navigazione.

Anche questa sera ci immergiamo in questa corrente di preghiera quando, insieme a lei, Santo Padre, ci uniamo alla preghiera sacerdotale del nostro Signore, "che tutti siano una cosa sola". La preghiera del Signore è la dimora interiore dell'unità, come ci ha mostrato la Provvidenza; potremo davvero divenire una cosa sola se ci lasciamo trascinare nella preghiera del Signore. Le siamo profondamente grati, Santo Padre, per la Sua guida della nave ecumenica nella nostra Chiesa, e per il Suo incoraggiamento a lasciarci prendere dalla corrente della preghiera. Le promettiamo di accompagnare con la nostra preghiera il Suo ministero petrino. E Le chiediamo di cuore la Sua benedizione apostolica.



Il Cardinale Kurt Koch saluta il Santo Padre, San Paolo fuori le Mura, 25 gennaio 2020

Video messaggio per CHARIS (Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service) nella Settimana di Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani
(25 gennaio 2020)

Cari fratelli e sorelle,

All'origine del movimento ecumenico vi fu l'introduzione della Settimana di Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani, che, sin da allora, si delineò come un'iniziativa ecumenica. È la Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani ad aver preparato il terreno al movimento ecumenico. E il movimento ecumenico è dunque, fin dall'inizio e nella sua essenza, un movimento di preghiera. Non si tratta allora di un inizio che possiamo lasciarci alle spalle, ma di un inizio che continua a camminare con noi e che deve accompagnare ogni sforzo ecumenico. Con la Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani esprimiamo la nostra convinzione di fede secondo la quale noi esseri umani non possiamo fare l'unità, né determinarne la forma o il tempo in cui si realizzerà. Noi possiamo piuttosto produrre divisioni; questo ce lo mostra la storia, e purtroppo anche il presente. L'unità possiamo solo riceverla in dono. Poiché l'unità è un dono di Dio, noi dobbiamo pregare incessantemente per essa. La centralità della preghiera ci rende consapevoli del fatto che il lavoro ecumenico è soprattutto un compito spirituale, e che l'ecumenismo spirituale, conformemente a quanto afferma il Concilio Vaticano Secondo, è "l'anima di tutto il movimento ecumenico". Nella Settimana di Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani, siamo uniti nella preghiera per la santa causa dell'unità dei cristiani, e ci raduniamo spiritualmente come se fossimo nel cenacolo dove Gesù stesso ha pregato per l'unità dei suoi discepoli. Rivolgo un ringraziamento particolare al Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service, CHARIS, per la sua Campagna di preghiera e volentieri l'appoggio anche con la mia preghiera.

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Messaggio in occasione dell'incontro "Fede ed Opere"
presso il Monastero mechitarista dell'Isola di San Lazzaro
(Isola di San Lazzaro, Venezia, 7-8 febbraio 2020)

È con particolare gioia che rivolgo il mio più cordiale saluto a tutti i partecipanti all'incontro "Fede ed Opere" organizzato presso il Monastero Mechitarista dell'Isola veneziana di San Lazzaro. Il mio pensiero va in particolare ai promotori di questa lodevole iniziativa, Sua Eccellenza Monsignor Boghos Levons Zekiyian, Arcivescovo di Istanbul e della Turchia per gli Armeni cattolici, Delegato Pontificio per la Congregazione Armena Mechitarista, e Sua Eminenza Khajag Barsamian, Legato Pontificio della Chiesa Apostolica Armena in Europa Occidentale, come pure ai Reverendi Padri Mechitaristi, ai responsabili della Fondazione "Casa della Madre di Dio" di Erevan, agli illustri relatori e a tutti gli altri distinti partecipanti al convegno.

Mi rallegro di cuore di questo progetto ecumenico, promosso congiuntamente dalla Congregazione Mechitarista e dalla Legazione della Chiesa Apostolica Armena per l'Europa occidentale, organizzato nella culla dell'opera eccezionale del Venerabile Mechitar. La figura profetica dell'Abate fondatore di questo monastero è stata infatti sco-

perla ulteriormente alla luce dell'insegnamento del Concilio Vaticano Secondo. Non a caso papa san Paolo VI chiamò Mechitar "strumento di autentico e genuino 'apostolato ecumenico'", o ancora "precursore nei disegni di Dio, perché senti imperiosa la sollecitudine di un'invocazione ancora inascoltata 'Ut omnes unum sint' (Gv 17, 21), come si desume dalla preghiera da lui composta per l'unità della Chiesa" (*Messaggio ai Mechitaristi*, 8 settembre 1977).

Convinto che la rinascita spirituale fosse indissociabile dalla rinascita culturale, Mechitar fece sì che l'isola di San Lazzaro diventasse una fucina di cultura – una cultura pervasa di spiritualità e punto di riferimento per gli armeni di tutto il mondo, offrendo alla cultura armena un impulso fondamentale per il rinnovamento, la riscoperta e la ridefinizione della propria identità.

L'opera di Mechitar illustra il legame tra fede e cultura evidenziato particolarmente da papa san Giovanni Paolo II: "La sintesi fra cultura e fede – diceva nel 1982 – non è solo una esigenza della cultura, ma anche della fede [...]. Se, infatti, è vero che la fede non si identifica con nessuna cultura ed è indipendente rispetto a tutte le culture, non è meno vero che, proprio per questo, la fede è chiamata ad ispirare, ad impregnare ogni cultura [...] Una fede che non diventa cultura è una fede non pienamente accolta, non interamente pensata, non fedelmente vissuta" (Giovanni Paolo II, *Discorso ai partecipanti al Congresso nazionale del Movimento ecclesiale di impegno culturale*, 16 gennaio 1982).

Fede e cultura sono inscindibili. In questo senso, l'ecumenismo del Venerabile Mechitar è un esempio di quello che può essere definito "ecumenismo culturale". Egli ha realizzato nella sua opera una sintesi, o meglio, ciò che oggi chiameremmo uno "scambio di doni", un "respiro a due polmoni", tra la teologia sapienziale monastica della tradizione armena e la teologia sistematica occidentale, tra l'ideale umanistico armeno e quello classico occidentale.

Anche il convegno che vi riunisce in questi giorni illustra questo "ecumenismo culturale" così promettente per le relazioni tra le nostre Chiese. Infatti, conoscere la cultura degli altri cristiani ci permette di percepire meglio il modo in cui essi recepiscono il messaggio evangelico e di capire che, al di là delle legittime differenze culturali, condividiamo la stessa fede cristiana espressa diversamente a seconda del genio specifico di ogni popolo e di ogni tradizione.

Possa questo convegno essere una pietra miliare sul cammino di unità iniziato trecento anni fa dal Venerabile Mechitar, cammino sul quale la Congregazione Armena Mechitarista è più che mai chiamata a mostrare la strada. Possa lo Spirito Santo aiutarci a realizzare quell'unità per la quale pregò nostro Signore, affinché i suoi discepoli siano una cosa sola e il mondo creda: *Ut omnes unum sint*.

**Saluto in occasione del IV anniversario dell'incontro tra Papa Francesco
e il Patriarca Kirill a L'Avana**
(Roma, 12 febbraio 2020)

L'ECUMENISMO DEI SANTI

Eminenze, Eccellenze,
Stimati rappresentanti del corpo diplomatico e accademico,
Cari fratelli e sorelle,
Cari amici,

Ho l'onore di estendere a tutti voi il mio cordiale saluto in occasione della quarta celebrazione dell'anniversario dello storico incontro tra Papa Francesco e il Patriarca ortodosso russo Kirill, avvenuto a L'Avana, Cuba, il 12 febbraio 2016. Vi ringrazio per l'interesse espresso con la vostra presenza. Innanzitutto, vorrei salutare Sua Eminenza il Metropolita Hilarion, che, in qualità di Presidente del Dipartimento delle relazioni esterne ecclesiali del Patriarcato di Mosca, è responsabile anche delle relazioni ecumeniche con la Chiesa cattolica. Saluto e ringrazio calorosamente i rappresentanti del corpo diplomatico e del mondo accademico e universitario, i delegati di varie Chiese e Comunità ecclesiali e tutti i fratelli e le sorelle nella fede qui presenti.

Oggi celebriamo già il quarto anniversario dell'incontro tra Papa Francesco e il Patriarca Kirill. Il primo anniversario lo abbiamo festeggiato presso l'Università di Friburgo in Svizzera, dove, ricordando l'incontro de L'Avana, siamo tornati col pensiero al contenuto della dichiarazione comune e alle prospettive che questo storico evento ha aperto nelle relazioni tra le nostre Chiese. Il secondo anniversario è stato dedicato al tema "I cristiani in Medio Oriente e l'unità ecumenica" e si è svolto dietro invito del Cardinale Christoph Schönborn a Vienna, che è uno dei più importanti luoghi di dialogo tra cristiani d'Oriente e d'Occidente. Il terzo anniversario è stato celebrato a Mosca con un colloquio di studiosi sul problema etico-teologico dell'eutanasia, diventata oggi una sfida cruciale in molte società.

Il quarto anniversario si svolge ora a Roma ed è dedicato all'ecumenismo dei santi, a cui Papa Francesco e il Patriarca Kirill hanno fatto riferimento nella loro dichiarazione comune firmata a L'Avana. Nel quarto paragrafo della dichiarazione, i due capi di Chiesa rendono grazie a Dio per i doni che condividono e che hanno ricevuto "dalla venuta nel mondo del suo unico Figlio", vale a dire la "Tradizione spirituale del primo millennio del cristianesimo", i cui testimoni sono la "Santissima Madre di Dio, la Vergine Maria, e i Santi che veneriamo", tra i quali "innumerevoli martiri che hanno testimoniato la loro fedeltà a Cristo e sono diventati 'seme di cristiani'".¹ È molto significativo il fatto che i due capi di Chiesa abbiano espressamente affermato questo, dopo secoli di conflitti e di reciproca diffidenza. Ciò mostra che i santi ci uniscono, ortodossi e cattolici. E questo è particolarmente evidente nella città di Roma, dove vengono venerati così tanti santi, soprattutto i santi della Chiesa indivisa.

La venerazione dei santi è una dimensione importante del cammino verso l'unità dei cristiani. È un bene che i capi di diverse Chiese si incontrino, ed è utile anche che i teologi discutano nelle commissioni miste per superare le controversie storiche. Ma è altrettanto importante che tutti i credenti siano sulla via dell'unità. La venerazione dei santi è una forma particolarmente proficua di invito e di accoglienza dei fedeli nel movimento ecumenico. È un modo utile per offrire al riavvicinamento tra le nostre

Chiese un più ampio radicamento nel popolo di Dio. Di ciò siamo rimasti molto colpiti durante la traslazione della reliquia di San Nicola da Bari a Mosca e a San Pietroburgo. È stato molto bello vedere quanti fratelli e sorelle ortodossi e cattolici siano venuti a venerare questa reliquia.

Quello che possiamo dire dei santi in generale si applica in particolare ai martiri, che hanno dato la propria vita per Cristo e le cui testimonianze di fede sono rintracciabili in abbondanza qui a Roma. Il sangue che i martiri hanno versato per Cristo, infatti, non ci separa gli uni dagli altri come cristiani, ma ci unisce, così tanto che possiamo giustamente parlare di un “ecumenismo dei martiri” o di un “ecumenismo del sangue”. Nella Chiesa delle origini c’era la convinzione che il sangue dei martiri fosse il seme di nuovi cristiani: “Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum”. Allo stesso modo, oggi possiamo vivere nella speranza che il sangue di così tanti martiri del nostro tempo un giorno si rivelerà seme della piena unità ecumenica dell’unico Corpo di Cristo, lacerato da così tante divisioni. Possiamo essere certi che la sofferenza di così tanti cristiani crea un’unità più forte delle differenze che ancora separano le Chiese, e che, nel sangue dei martiri, siamo già diventati una cosa sola.

I santi, che in cielo vivono già nell’unità, sono i nostri migliori compagni sulla via dell’unità e i nostri sostenitori negli sforzi che intraprendiamo per ripristinare l’unità tra noi cristiani. La venerazione dei santi ci mostra anche in cosa consista il cammino più importante verso l’unità, come ha evidenziato il decreto del Concilio Vaticano Secondo sull’ecumenismo “Unitatis redintegratio”: “Si ricordino tutti i fedeli, che tanto meglio promuoveranno, anzi vivranno in pratica l’unione dei cristiani, quanto più si studieranno di condurre una vita più conforme al Vangelo. Quanto infatti più stretta sarà la loro comunione col Padre, col Verbo e con lo Spirito Santo, tanto più intima e facile potranno rendere la fraternità reciproca.”² Partendo da questa importante prospettiva, Papa Francesco ha sottolineato che la chiamata alla santità della vita è “l’unico vero cammino verso l’unità”. Perché non c’è unità senza santità di vita.³

Con questi spunti, il quarto anniversario dell’incontro storico tra Papa Francesco e il Patriarca Kirill ci introduce nel cuore di tutti gli sforzi ecumenici. Vorrei ringraziare tutti coloro che hanno contribuito alla preparazione e all’organizzazione dell’evento odierno. E auguro a tutti i partecipanti un fruttuoso incontro commemorativo e una gioia rinnovata sulla via dell’unità dei cristiani attraverso la vita della chiamata alla santità.

1. *Dichiarazione congiunta di Papa Francesco e del Patriarca Kyrill di Mosca e di tutta la Russia*, 12 febbraio 2016, L’Avana.

2. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 7.

3. Francesco, Discorso ai partecipanti del Colloquio ecumenico di religiosi e religiose promosso dalla Congregazione per gli Istituti di vita consacrata e le Società di vita apostolica, il 24 gennaio 2015.

**Laudatio bei der Verleihung des Klaus-Hemmerle-Preises
an Erzbischof Anastasios Yannoulatos, Metropolit
der Autokephalen Orthodoxen Kirche von Albanien im Aachener Dom
(14. Februar 2020)**



Kardinal Kurt Koch mit Erzbischof Anastasios und weiteren Teilnehmern, Dom zu Aachen, 14. Februar 2020

**DOXOLOGISCHER LEHRER DER HERRLICHKEIT DES DREIEINEN
GOTTES, PASTORALER ZEUGE DER AUFERSTEHUNG DES HERRN
UND ÖKUMENISCHER MISSIONAR DER CHRISTLICHEN LIEBE**

Es ist für mich eine hohe Ehre und eine grosse Freude, anlässlich der Verleihung des Klaus-Hemmerle Preises die Laudatio halten zu dürfen für einen doxologischen Lehrer der Herrlichkeit des Dreieinen Gottes, einen pastoralen Zeugen der Auferstehung des Herrn und einen ökumenischen Missionar der christlichen Liebe. Diese dreifache Charakterisierung ist notwendig, um die wissenschaftliche, theologische, pastorale, missionarische und geistliche Physiognomie des Metropoliten der Autokephalen Orthodoxen Kirche von Albanien, von Erzbischof Anastasios in einer Laudatio zu würdigen. Eine Laudatio verpflichtet zugleich dazu, sich auf das Wesentliche zu konzentrieren, was sich bei einem derart langen und intensiven Leben, wie es Erzbischof Anastasios geschenkt ist, ohnehin aufdrängt.

Beginnen wir bei dieser dreifachen Charakterisierung mit dem Mittelglied, wie es nicht nur gemäss dem Sprichwort „Nomen est omen“ der Name des zu Ehrenden nahelegt, der in sich einen Bezug zur Auferstehung enthält. Es ist gewiss auch kein Zufall, sondern enthält bereits eine wichtige Botschaft, dass die Hauptkirche in Tirana eine „Auferstehungskathedrale“ ist und dass die Orthodoxe Theologische Akademie, die Erzbischof Anastasios in Albanien gegründet hat, den Namen „Auferstehung Christi“ trägt. Dass in Albanien und damit in jenem Land, das von der kommunistischen Diktatur wohl am schmerzlichsten verwundet worden ist, die Orthodoxe Autokephale Kirche, die während 23 Jahren aufgelöst und zerstört worden ist, wieder belebt und neu aufgebaut werden konnte, wird Erzbischof Anastasios und mit ihm viele Glaubende als eine Antizipation von Auferstehung erfahren haben; und dazu hat er selbst als Erzbischof von Tirana, Durrës und Ganz Albanien seit seinem Amtsantritt im Jahre 1992

sehr viel beigetragen. Von daher beginnt man zu verstehen, dass das Glaubensgeheimnis der Auferstehung des Herrn Jesus Christus und damit der endgültige Sieg des Lebens über den Tod im Mittelpunkt seines theologischen Denkens und seines pastoralen Wirkens steht.

Dies gilt in besonderer Weise von seinem missionarischen Denken und Handeln, das sich wie ein roter Faden durch seine Biographie hindurch zieht. Denn mit der Auferstehung Jesu Christi ist der Missionsauftrag der Kirche auf das Engste verbunden, wie uns das letzte Kapitel im Matthäusevangelium, auf das Erzbischof Anastasios in seinen theologischen Reflexionen immer wieder zurückkommt, deutlich vor Augen führt, wo die Jünger vom Auferstandenen gesandt werden, in alle Welt zu gehen und die Botschaft des Evangeliums zu verkünden. Die Auferstehung des Herrn ist der Ausgangspunkt für die Ausweitung der Mission von Israel auf die ganze Welt. Auf diese Universalität der Mission legt Erzbischof Anastasios dabei ganz besonderes Gewicht, und zwar in der Überzeugung, dass die Mission der Kirche eine globale Bewegung ist und der Christ stets die Evangelisierung der ganzen Welt, nämlich der Ökumene im ursprünglichen Sinn des Wortes vor Augen haben muss. Denn der Wille Gottes, wie er in Jesus Christus offenbart und erfüllt ist, muss an allen Enden der Erde, gleichsam in jedem Winkel der Welt verkündet werden, wie unser Preisträger eindringlich betont: „Die Mission der Kirche muss klar den Horizont für <alle Völker> ohne Ausnahme beibehalten.“¹

Diese Überzeugung hat Erzbischof Anastasios nicht nur gelehrt und gepredigt, sondern vor allem auch gelebt. Er darf ohne Übertreibung als Pionier des Missionsgedankens in der Orthodoxen Kirche gelten. Seine missionarische Leidenschaft ist dabei bereits in den Jahren seines Studiums grundgelegt worden. Er hat an der Universität von Athen Theologie studiert und anschliessend in Deutschland, genauer an den Universitäten von Hamburg und Marburg seine Studien in Religionswissenschaft, Ethnologie, Afrikanistik und Missionswissenschaft fortgesetzt. Dabei hat er sich eine reiche Kenntnis anderer Religionen wie des Hinduismus, Buddhismus, Taoismus, Konfuzianismus, Islam und afrikanischer Religionen erworben. Von daher erklärt sich auch sein lebenslanges Interesse an anderen Religionen, die er in einem positiven Sinn als „Lichtstrahlen“ würdigt, „die Menschen von Gottes universaler göttlicher Ausstrahlung aufgegriffen haben“². Denn Religionen öffnen den Menschen den Horizont zu etwas oder Jemandem, der jenseits der sinnlich wahrnehmbaren Welt existiert, genauer zu einer transzendenten Wirklichkeit.

Bei aller Offenheit für den interreligiösen Dialog versteht es sich für Erzbischof Anastasios jedoch von selbst, dass für uns Christen Jesus Christus, das Wort Gottes in Person, das Kriterium ist und bleibt, anhand dessen wir die verschiedenen religiösen Ideen und Prinzipien würdigen und bewerten. Denn das Spezifische des christlichen Glaubens ist die Fleischwerdung der Liebe des Dreieinen Gottes, und deshalb bietet der christliche Glaube, wie Erzbischof Anastasios überzeugt betont, „die würde-

1. Erzbischof Anastasios, Die Wiederentdeckung unserer apostolischen Identität im 21. Jahrhundert (2003), in: Ders., Mission auf dem Weg Jesu Christi. Eine orthodoxe Sicht = Epiphania. Band 13 (Münster 2020) 228-241, zit. 235.

2. Erzbischof Anastasios, Ein theologischer Zugang zum Verständnis anderer Religionen (1987), in: Ders., a.a.O. 145-169, zit. 159.

vollste Anthropologie“ und überschreitet er „jede rein humanistische Theorie“³. Hier liegt es zutiefst begründet, dass interreligiöser Dialog und missionarisches Engagement keine Gegensätze darstellen, sondern sich wechselseitig befruchten, und dass Erzbischof Anastasios sich sehr intensiv der Erweckung und Vertiefung des Missionsgedankens gewidmet hat. Er ist nicht nur Generalsekretär des Exekutivausschusses für Äussere Mission von Syndesmos und Gründer und Präsident des Orthodoxen Missionszentrums Porefthentes gewesen. Er hat in den Jahren 1983 bis 1991 vielmehr auch als der erste Orthodoxe Vorsitzende der Kommission für Weltmission und Evangelisation des Ökumenischen Weltrates der Kirchen gewirkt. Als Professor für Religionsgeschichte an der Universität von Athen bereits ab dem Jahre 1972 hat er sein missionarisches Engagement in Lehre und Forschung reflektiert. Er hat das Zentrum für missionarische Studien an der Universität Athen und das Gesamtorthodoxe Zentrum der Kirche von Griechenland in Athen geleitet. In Anerkennung seiner theologischen Arbeit, vor allem auf dem Gebiet der Missiologie, ist er im Jahre 1972 zum Bischof geweiht worden.

Bei seinem missionarischen Denken und Handeln hat er seine Aufmerksamkeit vor allem auf Afrika konzentriert. Bereits als Generalsekretär der Apostoliki Diakonia hat er den Bereich der äusseren Mission zur Unterstützung für die Missionsgebiete in Afrika, aber auch Korea und Indien entwickelt. Von daher wird die Feststellung nicht überraschen, dass Erzbischof Anastasios gleich am Tag nach seiner Priesterweihe im Jahre 1964 nach Ostafrika verreist ist. Da er jedoch in lebensgefährlicher Weise an Malaria erkrankt war, musste er seine missionarische Sendung aufgeben und wieder nach Europa zurückkehren. Als freilich seine Gesundheit wieder hergestellt war, hat er Afrika erneut und verschiedentlich besucht. Und ab dem Jahre 1981 hat er als Locum tenens der Metropole Irinoupolis in Ostafrika die Verantwortung für die Organisation und Entwicklung der Orthodoxen Missionen übernommen. Seine umfangreiche Tätigkeit, die vor allem in der Errichtung von verschiedenen Missionen, in der Gründung von Schulen und medizinischen Einrichtungen, im Bau von neuen Kirchen und in der Förderung der Übersetzung der Göttlichen Liturgie in verschiedene afrikanische Sprachen zum Ausdruck gekommen ist, ist auch dadurch gewürdigt worden, dass er den schönen Ehrentitel „Grosser Wohltäter des Patriarchats von Alexandrien und Ganz Afrika“ erhalten hat.

Doch auch Afrika sollte nicht die letzte Station auf dem reichen Lebensweg von Erzbischof Anastasios sein. Nachdem er nach zehn Jahren wieder an die Universität Athen zurückgekehrt war, hat der Ökumenische Patriarch Bartholomaios I. ihn nach Albanien mit dem Auftrag gesandt, zu überprüfen, wie es um die Orthodoxe Kirche in diesem vom Kommunismus arg zerrütteten Land steht, und um einen geeigneten Kandidaten für das Bischofsamt zu finden. Schliesslich ist die Wahl auf seine Person gefallen, so dass er am 4. Juli 1992 als Oberhaupt der Orthodoxen Autokephalen Kirche von Albanien eingesetzt worden ist. In dieser Verantwortung hat er sich um den Wiederaufbau und die Wiederbelebung der Orthodoxen Kirche in Albanien sehr verdient gemacht, indem er über 400 Pfarreien reorganisiert und sich gekümmert hat um die Gewinnung und Bildung von neuen Klerikern, um die Errichtung von kirchlichen Lehranstalten mit Internat, um die Gründung von Einrichtungen für die Berufsausbil-

3. Erzbischof Anastasios, *Dialog und Mission* (1991), in: Ders., a.a.O. 202-208, zit. 207.

dung und der Logos-Universität, aber auch um die Einrichtung von Grundschulen und Kindergärten und um Jugendzentren in verschiedenen Städten, um die Übersetzung von liturgischen, katechetischen und geistlichen Publikationen, um den Neubau von über 150 Kirchen und die Restaurierung von ebenso vielen alten und beschädigten Kirchen. Zusammen mit diesem grossen Werk der Wiederbelebung der Orthodoxen Kirche in Albanien hat er sich auch in kulturellen und pädagogischen, landwirtschaftlichen und ökologischen Bereichen engagiert. In diesem weiten Gebiet hat sich Erzbischof Anastasios für den Wiederaufbau des Landes Albanien eingesetzt, was mit der offiziellen Verleihung der Albanischen Staatsbürgerschaft am 24. Dezember 2017 gewürdigt worden ist. Darüber hinaus hat er sich um den Abbau der vielen und starken Spannungen auf dem Balkan verdient gemacht, so dass er von vielen Persönlichkeiten in Albanien im Jahre 2000 für den Friedensnobelpreis nominiert worden ist. Sein Friedensengagement setzt er auch als Ehrenpräsident der Weltkonferenz der Religionen für den Frieden fort.

Wenn wir im Leben von Erzbischof Anastasios auf seine reiche Tätigkeit, von der nur einige Stichwörter genannt werden konnten, zurückblicken, steht vor uns ein orthodoxer Glaubenszeuge, der sich für die Versöhnung unter den Christen, im interreligiösen Dialog und für die friedliche Koexistenz der Völker engagiert und der in seiner Person solides theologisches Wissen, kundige Forschung in der Religionsgeschichte, missionarisches und pastorales Engagement und hohe soziale Sensibilität vereint. Verstehen kann man seine breite Wirksamkeit aber nur, wenn man feststellt, dass sein Herz für die missionarische Verantwortung der Kirche schlägt, auf die ich deshalb nochmals etwas eingehender zurückkommen möchte.

Für Erzbischof Anastasios steht fest, dass die Mission zu den Kernaufgaben der christlichen Kirche gehört und dass es deshalb notwendig ist, die Mission als Verpflichtung der Kirche zu erkennen und bei ihr im Blick auf die gesamte Menschheit mitzuwirken, wie er eingehend betont: „Mission ist die Weitergabe des Wortes und der Gnade Gottes und die Kundgabe von Gottes Herrlichkeit, die <in Christus> offenbart und erwartet wird <bis an das Ende der Erde> und das Ende der Zeit – und deshalb ist sie für die Kirche eine tiefe innere Notwendigkeit.“⁴ Wenn die Mission so elementar nicht nur zur Sendung, sondern auch zum Wesen der Kirche gehört, dann ist eine Kirche ohne Mission ein Widerspruch in sich, mit der Konsequenz, dass eine Kirche, die nicht missioniert, bereits demissioniert hat. Die Mission ist deshalb auch ein glaubwürdiger Ausdruck der Vitalität der Kirche und eine lebendige Quelle ihrer Erneuerung. Dort hingegen, wo das missionarische Bewusstsein nicht mehr lebt, kommt es zu einer geistlichen Verwelkung der Kirche, wie Erzbischof Anastasios bildhaft zum Ausdruck bringt: „Wenn eine Diözese oder Gemeinde ausschliesslich um ihre Eigeninteressen kreist, beginnt sie geistlich zu verwelken.“⁵ Der Erzbischof erblickt denn auch die grössten Hindernisse für die Mission in der spirituellen Trägheit und in der „Schläfrigkeit, die in Trägheit und Passivität endet“⁶ Und deshalb erwartet er vom Missionar

4. Erzbischof Anastasios, Ziel und Beweggrund der Mission – aus theologischer Sicht (1967), in: Ders., a.a.O. 38-57, zit. 56-57.

5. Erzbischof Anastasios, Das theologische Verständnis der Mission. Variationen über ein Thema (1991), in: Ders., a.a.O. 195-201, zit. 201.

6. Erzbischof Anastasios, Theologie, Mission und Seelsorge (1976), in: Ders., a.a.O. 58-80, zit. 71.

Umkehr und Erneuerung in seinem eigenen Leben: „Die wahre Eigenschaft des Missionars ist das verwandelte Leben der ganzen Existenz in Christus.“⁷

Die Kirche ist berufen, das was sie empfangen hat, weiterzugeben und um der ganzen Welt willen auszustrahlen und darzubieten. Das innerste Motiv der Mission ist deshalb die Liebe. Die Liebe Gottes ist das Spezifische des christlichen Glaubens, und zwar so sehr, dass Liebe Gott nicht einfach zukommt als eine der vielen Eigenschaften wie Barmherzigkeit und Güte, sondern dass Gott selbst Liebe ist, wie er sich in seinem Sohn Jesus Christus offenbart hat. Die Mission ist von Erzbischof Anastasios ganz trinitarisch gesehen, denn sie kommt von der Dreieinigkeit Gottes her und strömt zu ihrer Herrlichkeit hin. Das Ziel der Mission besteht in der Verwirklichung der Gegenwart Gottes, der die Liebe ist, in der ganzen Welt, wie Erzbischof Anastasios betont: „Mission hat das grundlegende Ziel, eine Bewegung auszulösen, (a) in der die ganze Menschheit sich die Herrlichkeit Gottes zu eigen macht und sie ausstrahlt, und (b) für einen gemeinsamen Weg in den Bereich, der von Gottes Herrlichkeit erleuchtet wird, um zur Rückkehr der ganzen Schöpfung zum doxologischen Rhythmus beizutragen.“⁸

Es ist beeindruckend zu sehen, wie sehr Erzbischof Anastasios sein Denken auf die Herrlichkeit Gottes als Ziel der Mission und deshalb auf die Doxologie fokussiert. Denn Mission ist „eine globale Bewegung für die alles umfassende Doxologie des Universums“⁹, so dass ihr Ziel in der Anakephalaiosis, in der Zusammenführung aller Wirklichkeiten in der Herrlichkeit Gottes liegt. Hier wird in besonderer Weise die orthodoxe Prägung des theologischen Denkens von Erzbischof Anastasios sichtbar, der den Kern des christlichen Glaubens mit den Worten zusammenfasst: „Der Inhalt des Glaubens und das Zentrum unseres Lebens ist Gott – als Heilige Dreieinigkeit, als Liebe.“¹⁰

Wenn Ursprung, Motiv und Ziel aller Mission in der Liebe Gottes gesehen werden, versteht es sich von selbst, dass man niemandem den Glauben aufzwingen darf und dass jeder Proselytismus dem Christlichen von Grund auf zuwider ist. Das Christliche wird aber auch verraten, wenn man den christlichen Glauben in der Begegnung mit anderen Menschen verschweigt und auf Mission verzichtet. Diesen beiden Extremformen gegenüber beschreitet Erzbischof Anastasios einen gesunden Mittelweg: „Einerseits ist es unannehmbar und von jeher antichristlich, anderen den Glauben aufzuzwingen; doch wenn wir andererseits unseren Glauben bewusst verschweigen oder mindern, machen wir uns eines doppelten Verrats schuldig: an unserem Glauben wie auch an dem Recht anderer, die ganze Wahrheit zu kennen.“¹¹

Ich hoffe, dass mit diesen wenigen Streiflichtern auf das theologische Denken und Wirken von Erzbischof Anastasios deutlich werden kann, wie umfassend sein Engagement und wie reich seine Reflexionskraft sind. Sie haben ihren Niederschlag gefunden in einer umfassenden Bibliographie, aus der zusammen mit über zweihundert

7. Erzbischof Anastasios, *Orthodoxie und Mission* (1964), in: Ders., a.a.O. 28-37, zit. 36.

8. Erzbischof Anastasios, *Das doxologische Verständnis von Leben und Mission* (1984), in: Ders., a.a.O. 122-137, zit. 125.

9. Ebda. 128.

10. Erzbischof Anastasios, *Das theologische Verständnis der Mission . Variationen über ein Thema* (1991), in: Ders., a.a.O. 195-201., zit. 195.

11. Erzbischof Anastasios, „Dein Wille geschehe“. *Mission auf dem Weg Christi* (1989), in: Ders., a.a.O. 11-27, zit. 26.

Studien und Artikeln vor allem über zwanzig Buchpublikationen zu sehr verschiedenen Themenbereichen zu erwähnen sind. Darunter finden sich Publikationen zu religionswissenschaftlichen Fragestellungen wie zur Frage nach der Transzendenz oder zur Beziehung zwischen dem Menschen und der Natur in den Weltreligionen, Publikationen zum interreligiösen Dialog wie vor allem mit dem Islam oder zur Beziehung des christlichen Glaubens zu anderen Religionen, Publikationen zum religiösen Leben in Afrika, Publikationen zur Geschichte der Mission in der Orthodoxie und zur Theologie der Mission, Publikationen zu Herausforderungen, vor denen die Orthodoxie heute und in Zukunft steht, und zur orthodoxen Spiritualität und Publikationen zur Situation der Christen in Europa und Publikationen zur Orthodoxen Kirche in Albanien.

Angesichts dieses weiten Spektrums kann es nicht erstaunen, dass das Lebenswerk von Erzbischof Anastasios mit vielen Ehrendoktoraten und anderen Ehrungen gewürdigt worden ist. In dieser Reihe ist auch die heutige Ehrung mit der Verleihung des Klaus-Hemmerle-Preises zu sehen. Diese Preisverleihung findet ihren tiefen Sinn auch darin, dass Erzbischof Anastasios mit dem verstorbenen Religionsphilosophen und Theologen und späteren Bischof von Aachen, Klaus Hemmerle, eine tiefe Geistesverwandtschaft verbindet. Denn auch in seinem Denken steht der Gedanke der Mission im Vordergrund. Für Klaus Hemmerle ist die Kirche in ihrem innersten Kern *Communio*, freilich in keiner Weise als Selbstzweck, sondern als *Missio*, als Sendung, damit die Welt glaubt. In dieser Sinnrichtung hat Klaus Hemmerle sein Denken mit den Worten zusammenfassen können: „Diese *Missio* besteht gerade darin, dass das entscheidende Zeugnis der Kirche die Liebe ist. Immer und überall wird deutlich, dass ohne die Liebe alles Stroh wäre... Die einzige Realität, der es verheissen ist, dass an ihr die Welt Jesus Christus erkennen kann, ist unser gegenseitiges Einssein. Das Wort sagen, aber so, dass sich darin die Liebe sagt. Die Liebe, die der Inhalt dieses Wortes ist, aber auch die Kraft dieses Wortes, die sich darin bewährt, dass sie uns in sich verwandelt: das ist das Entscheidende.“¹²

Dieses längere Zitat stammt aus dem Buch von Klaus Hemmerle mit dem Titel: „Leben aus der Einheit“. Einheit, Liebe, Mission sind die entscheidenden Stichworte in seinem theologischen Denken. Sie sind auch jene Pole, um die das Denken und Wirken von Erzbischof Anastasios kreist. Damit wird auch die ökumenische Dimension seines Lebenswerkes sichtbar, die ich besonders dankbar hervorheben möchte. Sie zeigt sich nicht nur darin, dass Erzbischof Anastasios Vize-Präsident der Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen und einer der Präsidenten des Weltrates der Kirchen gewesen ist, sondern auch darin, dass sein missionstheologisches Denken mit demjenigen des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils kongenial ist, das einen entschiedenen Übergang von einer konservierenden zu einer missionarischen Grundhaltung markiert und mit seinem Dekret „*Ad gentes*“ in Erinnerung ruft, dass die Kirche „ihrem Wesen nach <missionarisch>“ ist, und die Mission der Kirche trinitätstheologisch fundiert, indem es sie jener „quellhaften Liebe“ entspringen sieht, in der uns das „Liebeswollen Gottes des Vaters“ am authentischsten begegnet¹³. In dieser ökumenischen Sinnrichtung stellt auch Erzbischof Anastasios sein Leben in den Dienst an der Einheit: an der Einheit der eigenen Kirche, an der Einheit unter den Christen und an der Einheit der ganzen

12. K. Hemmerle, *Leben aus der Einheit. Eine theologische Herausforderung* (Freiburg i. Br. 1995) 199-200.

13. *Ad gentes*, 2.

Menschheit. Dies zeigt sich auch daran, dass in seinem Lebenswerk jene vier elementaren Dimensionen durchscheinen, die die Ökumenische Bewegung seit ihrem Beginn geprägt haben:

Die Ökumenische Bewegung ist erstens eine Gebetsbewegung gewesen. Denn ohne eine intensive Gebetsströmung hätte das ökumenische Schiff den Hafen nie verlassen. Mit dem Gebet in der Ökumene bekennen wir, dass wir Menschen die Einheit nicht schaffen und auch nicht über den Zeitpunkt und die Weise der Einheit verfügen, sondern sie nur empfangen können. Wir Menschen können Spaltungen produzieren, wie die Geschichte und auch die Gegenwart zeigen. Die Einheit ist immer ein Geschenk des Heiligen Geistes; und die beste Vorbereitung, dieses Geschenk empfangen zu können, ist das Gebet. Die Suche nach der Einheit der Christen und der Einheit der Menschheit braucht eine tiefe Spiritualität, die wir im Lebenswerk von Erzbischof Anastasios vorfinden und die orthodox imprägniert und vor allem tief biblisch fundiert ist.

Die Ökumenische Bewegung ist zweitens eine Umkehrbewegung gewesen. Dabei geht es in erster Linie nicht um die Umkehr der Anderen, sondern um die eigene Umkehr, die auch die Bereitschaft einschliesst, eigene Schwächen und Fehler einzugehen. Die Suche nach der Einheit der Christen braucht vor allem die gemeinsame Umkehr zu Jesus Christus. Solche Umkehr erweist sich als ein dynamischer Beweggrund im Lebenswerk von Erzbischof Anastasios, der seiner eigenen Kirche, aber auch der ganzen Christenheit die Umkehr zu Jesus Christus und deshalb zur Mission zumutet, da die Mission der Kirche in der Sendung des Sohnes im innergöttlichen Leben begründet ist und dem Willen des Herrn entspricht.

Damit kommen wir wiederum auf das entscheidende Leitmotiv im Lebenswerk von Erzbischof Anastasios zurück, das sich auch am Beginn der Ökumenischen Bewegung findet, die eine Missionsbewegung gewesen ist, und zwar in der Überzeugung, dass das grösste Hindernis für die Weltmission die Gespaltenheit der Christenheit ist und dass eine glaubwürdige Verkündigung des Evangeliums Jesu Christi die Überwindung der Spaltungen und das Leben in der wiedergefundenen Einheit voraussetzt.

Dort, wo die Kirche ihre Mission im Bewusstsein, dass sich der Wille Gottes auf die ganze Welt, ja auf das ganze Universum richtet, engagiert vollzieht, dort lebt jener Friede, den nur Gott geben kann, den wir uns im Gottesdienst, zuhächst in der Göttlichen Liturgie der Eucharistie schenken lassen dürfen und dem wir in der alltäglichen Sendung, die Erzbischof Anastasios sehr schön als „Liturgie nach der Liturgie“ bezeichnet, zu dienen haben. Diese Überzeugung findet sich auch in der Ökumenischen Bewegung, die von allem Anfang an eine Friedensbewegung gewesen ist.

Die Ökumenische Bewegung ist seit ihrem Beginn eine Gebetsbewegung, eine Umkehrbewegung, eine Missionsbewegung und eine Friedensbewegung gewesen. Sie kann nur glaubwürdig den Weg in die Zukunft gehen, wenn sie von diesen vier Dimensionen geprägt bleibt. Dazu leistet das Lebenswerk von Erzbischof Anastasios einen hilfreichen, willkommenen und notwendigen Beitrag.

Seinen besonderen Dienst sehe ich darin, dass er uns mit seiner grossen Sprachenbegabung hilft. Er spricht sehr viele Sprachen wie Griechisch, Englisch, Französisch, Deutsch und Albanisch, er hat reiche Kenntnisse im Altgriechischen, Lateinischen, Italienischen und Spanischen, und er ist auch mit afrikanischen Sprachen wie Galla und Suaheli vertraut. Während seines vielfältigen Lebens hat er gelernt, dass wenn jemand vorhat, in ein Land zu reisen oder dort zu leben, er dessen Sprache gut lernen

und die dort gültige Währung kennen muss. Dies gilt in den Augen von Erzbischof Anastasios aber auch und vor allem von den entscheidenden Sprachen, in denen sich der christliche Glaube ausdrückt, nämlich den Sprachen des Gebetes und der Liebe. Über sie hat unser Preisträger vermerkt, dass das doxologische Gebet die „Sprache des künftigen Zeitalters“ und die Liebe „die einzige Währung in der Königsherrschaft des Himmels“ sind und dass diese beiden Sprachen auch in der Ewigkeit nie zu Ende kommen werden¹⁴, so dass es sich nahelegt und aufdrängt, sie bereits jetzt intensiv zu studieren und zu pflegen.

Dass Sie, Seligkeit, mit Ihrem bedeutenden Lebenswerk ein ausgezeichnete(r) Lehrer der christlichen Sprachen des Gebetes und der Liebe sind, darin erblicke ich den tiefsten Grund, dass Ihnen heute der von der Fokolar-Bewegung zum Andenken an Bischof Klaus Hemmerle gestiftete Preis verliehen wird. Wir gratulieren Ihnen zu diesem Preis und danken Ihnen für Ihr Lebenszeugnis, das im weitesten und Ihnen so wichtigen universalen Sinn ein ökumenisches Zeugnis ist, das wir in der heute schwierigen Situation des Christentums in Europa im Allgemeinen und in Deutschland im Besonderen dringend nötig haben. Wir brauchen geistliche Vitaminspritzen, die wir bei Ihnen in überzeugender Weise finden und die uns die Schönheit des christlichen Glaubens neu vor Augen führen und uns Mut zum missionarischen Zeugnis machen. Denn als Christen haben wir keinen grösseren und auch keinen schöneren Auftrag als den, in den säkularisierten und stets säkularisierter werdenden Gesellschaften Europas die Gegenwart des lebendigen Gottes zu bezeugen, die Gegenwart des himmlischen Vaters, der seinen Sohn in die Welt gesandt hat und der uns in der Kraft des Heiligen Geistes in die Mission ruft und uns dabei mit seiner Liebe begleitet, auch mit der Hilfe von glaubwürdigen Glaubenszeugen, als den wir Sie, Seligkeit, lieber Herr Erzbischof Anastasios, heute mit der Verleihung des Klaus-Hemmerle-Preises würdigen dürfen: in herzlicher Dankbarkeit und christlicher Freude.

**Discorso in occasione dell'udienza del Santo Padre ai giovani sacerdoti e
monaci delle Chiese ortodosse orientali**

(21 febbraio 2020)

Santo Padre,

È una gioia per me presentare a Vostra Santità questa delegazione di giovani sacerdoti e monaci provenienti dalle diverse Chiese ortodosse orientali: dalla Chiesa ortodossa copta, Chiesa apostolica armena, Chiesa siro-ortodossa di Antiochia, Chiesa ortodossa etiopica e Chiesa ortodossa sira malankarese.

Sono venuti specialmente qui a Roma dai loro rispettivi Paesi: Egitto, Armenia, Libano, Siria, India, Etiopia. Ad accompagnarli sono anche i Vescovi ortodossi orientali presenti a Roma, Sua Eminenza l'Arcivescovo Khajag Barsamian, rappresentante della Chiesa apostolica armena, e Sua Eccellenza il Vescovo Barnaba El-Soryani della Chiesa ortodossa copta.

14. Erzbischof Anastasios, Das doxologische Verständnis von Leben und Mission (1984), in: Ders., a.a.O. 122-137, zit. 133.

Su invito del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani, questi giovani sacerdoti e monaci sono stati designati dai loro rispettivi Patriarchi per partecipare a una visita di studio volta ad approfondire la loro conoscenza della Chiesa cattolica. Durante una settimana hanno avuto l'opportunità di visitare luoghi santi di Roma, dicasteri della Curia, università e collegi pontifici, comunità e monasteri, e soprattutto di incontrare i cristiani che vivono in questa città, studenti, seminaristi, sacerdoti e monaci.

Con questa iniziativa, promossa dalla Commissione mista internazionale di dialogo teologico tra la Chiesa cattolica e le Chiese ortodosse orientali, si è voluto sviluppare non solo il dialogo della verità, ma anche il dialogo della carità a tutti i livelli delle nostre Chiese, in particolare tra i giovani sacerdoti, tramite visite reciproche. Ci auguriamo in questo modo di far cadere i pregiudizi, di far crescere l'amicizia e la fraternità tra le nostre Chiese e di continuare il nostro cammino comune verso la piena comunione.

Oggi, Santità, è l'ultimo giorno del soggiorno a Roma di questi giovani sacerdoti. Questo giorno, che dà loro la possibilità di incontrare il Vescovo di Roma, sarà anche il culmine della visita. Siamo grati, Santo Padre, per questo momento di incontro fraterno.



Il Cardinale Kurt Koch presenta il suo discorso al Santo Padre, 21 febbraio 2020

Letter to His Holiness Aram I on the 25th anniversary of his election and consecration as Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia

(31 March 2020)

On the auspicious occasion of the 25th anniversary of the election and consecration of His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia, I am pleased to contribute with these modest words to this commemorative volume. I would like especially to pay tribute to the outstanding commitment of His Holiness to the cause of Christian unity, and in particular to his accomplishments in strengthening relations between the Catholicosate of Cilicia and the Catholic Church.

On the occasion of his enthronement in 1995, His Holiness Aram responded to Saint Pope John Paul II's expression of good wishes by affirming: "The Catholicate of Cilicia will deepen and extend its ecumenical commitment. I can assure you that the long-standing relations between the Catholicate of Cilicia and the Catholic Church will continue, with a growing ecumenical spirit and a vision of Christian unity". It is a source of joy that this promise has not only been kept but, by the grace of the Lord, has gone beyond all expectations since the enthronement of His Holiness.

It is well known that the Catholicosate of Cilicia, situated at the crossroads of different peoples and cultures, has always had a special vocation in relations between Christians of different traditions. From the Middle Ages, fruitful exchanges were established with Byzantine, Syrian and Latin Christianity, and many holy pastors of Cilicia, like Saint Nerses IV the Gracious and Saint Nerses of Lambron, worked and prayed for reconciliation between Christians.

With the Church of Rome, a profound spiritual relationship traces its origin to the fact that Cilicia is the homeland of Paul of Tarsus, the Apostle par excellence of communion between the Churches. This relationship, particularly intense from the 11th to the 14th centuries, experienced new developments after the installation of the See in Antelias in 1930, and especially following the Second Vatican Council. Catholicos Khoren I paved the way, visiting Rome in May 1967: he was the first leader of an Oriental Orthodox Church to visit Saint Pope Paul VI and to exchange the kiss of peace with him. His successor Catholicos Karekin I, who was already familiar with the Church of Rome after having participated in the Second Vatican Council as an observer, visited Pope John Paul II in April 1983.

His Holiness Aram I has followed and deepened the ecumenical involvement of his predecessors. Sensitive since his youth to the ecumenical cause, especially due to his studies at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, he was in 1974 one of the founding members of the Council of Churches of the Middle East. Ordained bishop 1980, he continued to be a tireless promoter of the pursuit of Christian unity, not only in the Middle East but also at the worldwide level within the World Council of Churches, of whose Central Committee he has been a member since 1985.

Two years after his election as Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia, His Holiness Aram visited Rome during the Week of Prayer for Christian unity in 1997. On 25 January, together with Pope John Paul II, he signed an important Joint Declaration calling for collaboration in all areas between our Churches. The same day he attended Vespers celebrated at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, during which John Paul II, addressing him, declared: "Even in the diversity of the tasks entrusted to each, we are co-responsible together for what binds us: to transmit faithfully the faith received from the Apostles, to witness to the love of Christ for every human being in the frequently tragic situations of the contemporary world, to strengthen our progress towards the full unity of all Christ's disciples. To do this, we need periodically to consult one another, so that we can proclaim the Gospel in unison and serve it with an undivided heart".

The 1700th anniversary of the Baptism of the Armenian Nation constituted another important moment for relations between our Churches. On that occasion, on 20 May 2001, Pope John Paul II sent a letter to Catholicos Aram in which he paid tribute to the ecumenical commitment of His Holiness with these words: "Consistent with the best tradition of the Armenian Church, always open to other ecclesial traditions as

complementary rather than contradictory, Christian reconciliation and fellowship have been among your primary concerns, I pray that the Holy Spirit will sustain your ecumenical commitment and make it increasingly fruitful, as we set out on a new Christian millennium”.

In 2003 a Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the whole family of the Oriental Orthodox Churches had been instituted. In 2008, on the occasion of a visit of His Holiness to Rome to pray at the tomb of the Apostle of the Nations during the Pauline Year, Pope Benedict XVI, in his greeting to the Catholicos, praised the substantial contribution of the See of Cilicia to this dialogue: “The See of Cilicia has long been involved in encouraging positive ecumenical contacts between the Churches. Indeed, the dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church has benefited significantly from the presence of its Armenian delegates”. Two years later, in January 2010, in Antelias the Catholicosate of Cilicia hosted the Joint International Commission for its plenary meeting.

In 2014 His Holiness Aram came to Rome for an official visit to Pope Francis elected a year earlier. Pope Francis likewise praised the ecumenical commitment of Catholicos Aram: “Your Holiness's commitment to the issue of Christian unity is known to all”, he said, stressing in particular the personal contribution to the theological dialogue, and continuing: “I am convinced that on our journey towards full communion we share the same hopes and a similar sense of responsibility as we strive to be faithful to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ”.

Meetings increased during the pontificate of Pope Francis. His Holiness returned to Rome in April 2015 to participate in the commemoration of the centenary of the tragic “Metz Yeghern” in Armenian history, which was also attended by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and His Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX, Patriarch of Cilicia of the Catholic Armenians. In November 2016, a colloquium within the framework of the centenary of the Pontifical Oriental Institute was the occasion for a further visit and meeting with Pope Francis. On April 2018, the blessing of the statue of Saint Gregory of Narek in the Vatican gardens was again an opportunity for a visit and another personal encounter with Pope Francis. The same year in July, His Holiness returned to Italy to participate, on the invitation of Pope Francis, in the day of prayer and reflection on peace in the Middle East held in Bari.

Personally, I was deeply impressed by His Holiness' sense of responsibility for the ecumenical movement when recently, in January 2020, I had the honour to meet him on the eve of the conference he organized on the theme “Towards a More Responsive and Inclusive Ecumenical Vision”, bringing together 30 leading figures of the ecumenical world. The motto of the meeting was a quote of His Holiness: “The ecumenical movement is no more an option, it is an essential dimension of being Church”. These words are an encouragement to all of us on our way to full communion.

On the happy occasion of the 25th anniversary of His Holiness' election as Catholicos, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity expresses deep admiration and appreciation to Catholicos Aram for his unique contribution to the ecumenical movement and to rapprochement between of the Great House of Cilicia and the Catholic Church. May God continue to bless him with wellbeing and an abundance of spiritual gifts in his lofty service to the Church of Christ.

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**Letter to Reverend Dr Olav Fykse Tveit upon conclusion of term of office as
General Secretary of the World Council of Churches**
(4 April 2020)

Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, addressed a letter of appreciation to Reverend Dr Olav Fykse Tveit upon the conclusion of his term of office as Secretary General of the World Council of Churches (WCC). In his letter Cardinal Koch recalled the “outstanding commitment and dedication” of the WCC Secretary General to the cause of Christian unity and expressed “heartfelt gratitude” for the fruitful collaboration between the WCC and the Catholic Church during his over decade long ministry in Geneva. Cardinal Koch underlined that during these years Reverend Dr Fykse Tveit not only enriched the worldwide ecumenical community by his active ministry and many skills, but also was instrumental in the “constructive development” in relations between the WCC and the Catholic Church. The most tangible sign of this developing relationship was the memorable ecumenical pilgrimage of the Holy Father to the headquarters of the WCC in Geneva and the Bossey Ecumenical Institute on 21 June 2018 under the slogan “Walking, Praying and Working Together”, marking the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the WCC. In his letter Cardinal Koch also recalled numerous visits of Reverend Dr Fykse Tveit to the PCPCU either alone or with different delegations. Cardinal Koch concluded his letter asking God’s blessings for his new ministry as Presiding Bishop of the Church of Norway.

Text of letter

Dear Reverend Dr Fykse Tveit,

I write upon the conclusion of your term of office as Secretary General of the World Council of Churches and commence your new responsibilities as Presiding Bishop of the Church of Norway.

In expressing heartfelt gratitude in my own name and on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, I call to mind your outstanding commitment and dedication as WCC Secretary General for over more than ten years, during which time your service not only enriched the worldwide ecumenical community, but in particular marked a constructive development in relations between the WCC and the Catholic Church. Your visits to Rome either personally or with delegations of the WCC, and your meetings with Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, were a tangible sign of the goodwill and cooperation that you strived to carry forward in our relations. The memorable visit of the Holy Father to the WCC and Bossey on 21 June 2018 was undoubtedly a pivotal achievement in your ministry in Geneva.

For my own part, I also recall with gratitude your several visits to our Pontifical Council, during which we met personally as well as with other staff members. I regret that your last visit to Rome and audience with Pope Francis scheduled in March were cancelled due to the coronavirus crisis, and trust that a future visit may be possible as Presiding Bishop of the Church of Norway.

As you now commence this new ministry, I ask God’s blessings upon you and your family, and encourage you to draw upon your considerable experience and wisdom in the ecumenical field in continuing to serve the pursuit of Christian unity.

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Videomessaggio in occasione della Settimana Mondo Unito 2020

(1 maggio 2020)

Nei tempi difficili che stiamo attraversando, segnati dalla crisi del coronavirus, molti sono confinati nei loro appartamenti, dovendo vivere in quarantena; già nel nome, quest'ultima ricorda più i quaranta giorni della Quaresima che la Pasqua. Anche i nostri servizi liturgici, in particolare le più importanti liturgie della Settimana Santa e della Pasqua, a causa dei divieti statali, sono stati celebrati in chiese in assenza di fedeli, a porte chiuse, e trasmessi in streaming. Questa esperienza fuori dall'ordinario mi ha riportato alla mente, in maniera più vivida di quanto mai fosse avvenuto nel passato, un dettaglio del racconto biblico della Pasqua. L'evangelista Giovanni inizia il suo resoconto dell'apparizione di Cristo risorto ai suoi discepoli con le parole: "La sera di quel giorno, il primo della settimana, mentre erano chiuse le porte del luogo dove si trovavano i discepoli per timore dei Giudei..." (Gv 20,19). Sebbene il Signore fosse già risorto e si stesse recando dai suoi discepoli, questi stavano ancora vivendo il Sabato Santo, come mostrano chiaramente la paura e le porte chiuse.

In questo luogo assediato dalla paura, tuttavia, Gesù viene e cambia radicalmente la situazione, come sottolinea il Vangelo: "E i discepoli gioirono al vedere il Signore" (Gv 20,20). La gioia è l'espressione visibile del fatto che il Sabato Santo si è trasformato in Pasqua. Anche oggi, in questo momento gravato dalla crisi del coronavirus, possiamo rallegrarci perché sappiamo che il Signore non ci lascia da soli nelle nostre paure e nelle nostre preoccupazioni, ma viene anche in mezzo a noi e ci dona la sua presenza e la sua preziosa compagnia. Cristo è sempre in mezzo a noi, soprattutto quando aspettiamo la sua venuta. Chiara Lubich ci ha ripetuto questo messaggio più volte, senza mai stancarsi.

Quando Gesù viene in mezzo a noi, ci porta anche un dono. È lo stesso dono che ha portato ai discepoli la sera di Pasqua. Il Vangelo narra che Gesù stette in mezzo a loro e disse: "Pace a voi!" La pace è il primo dono che Gesù ha fatto ai suoi discepoli dopo la sua risurrezione. La pace è il vero dono pasquale. La pace è anche il dono che Gesù ci offre oggi. È quella pace che noi umani non siamo in grado di creare da soli, ma che possiamo soltanto ricevere in dono. Eppure è la pace più importante, e tutte le altre forme di pace a cui aspiriamo sono solo riflessi di quella pace. Infatti, solo la pace che viene da Cristo ci dà quell'unità che tanto desideriamo: l'unità nelle nostre comunità, nella nostra Chiesa, tra tutti i cristiani e in tutta l'umanità.

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Messaggio a Sua Eccellenza Mons. Barnaba El Soryany, Vescovo della Chiesa copta ortodossa in Italia, e alla Comunità copta di Roma in occasione della Giornata dell'amicizia copto-cattolica

(10 maggio 2020)

Eccellenza Reverendissima,

Purtroppo le tragiche circostanze che stiamo vivendo non mi permetteranno quest'anno di condividere fisicamente con Lei e la Sua comunità la gioia del giorno giustamente chiamato "Giornata dell'amicizia copto-cattolica", festeggiato ogni anno il 10 maggio.

Come ogni anno Papa Francesco coglierà quest'occasione per esprimere a Sua Santità Papa Tawadros vivi auguri per la sua salute e per la sua serenità, come pure la sua gioia e la sua gratitudine per i legami spirituali che uniscono la Sede di Pietro e la Sede di Marco.

Vorrei da parte mia assicurare Vostra Eccellenza della mia amicizia in Cristo e della mia preghiera per Lei, per la comunità copta di Roma e in Italia, per tutta la Chiesa ortodossa copta, specialmente per i fratelli e le sorelle che ogni giorno affrontano difficili prove.

Mentre siamo in cammino verso il giorno benedetto nel quale finalmente parteciperemo alla stessa mensa Eucaristica, noi possiamo rendere visibile in modo concreto la comunione che già ci unisce. Di fronte alle tante sfide che il mondo di oggi ci pone, copti e cattolici possono testimoniare insieme l'amore del Cristo Risorto e far riecheggiare la parola del Vangelo.

In questo tempo pasquale, chiedo allo Spirito Santo, che è il mistero della forza e della tenerezza, di colmare i nostri cuori di grazia divina e di accendere in essi il fuoco del suo amore. Con questi sentimenti, scambio con Vostra Eccellenza un abbraccio fraterno di pace in Cristo nostro Signore.

Al Messih qam ! Haqqan qam !

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Enseignement pour la Neuvaine aux Saint Martyrs, Maurice et ses Compagnons

(12 septembre 2020)

TÉMOIGNER « POUR LE CHRIST PAR ATTACHEMENT »

Chers frères et sœurs,

En prévision de la fête des Saints Martyrs, Maurice et ses Compagnons, vous entamez aujourd'hui une Neuvaine ayant pour thème : « Le témoignage chrétien, aujourd'hui ». En cette circonstance, je vous adresse mes cordiales salutations de Rome, la ville des Saint Martyrs Pierre et Paul, et vous souhaite une Neuvaine féconde. En ce premier jour, notre attention portera sur le récit de la Passion des Martyrs d'Agaune, selon lequel les Thébains, venus en aide à Maximien, étaient « réputés pour leur courage mais plus dignes encore pour leur foi », parce qu'« ils combattaient pour l'empereur avec bravoure, pour le Christ par attachement ». La Passion nous interpelle et nous invite à nous demander ce que signifie aujourd'hui : Témoigner « pour le Christ par attachement ».

Témoigner de Jésus Christ, témoin fidèle de Dieu

Le langage populaire nous offre un premier indice, à travers ce beau dicton : « C'est de l'abondance du cœur que la bouche parle ». Par expérience personnelle, nous connaissons tous la vérité que recèle cette expression. Lorsque des personnes ont vécu quelque chose de très beau, par exemple lorsqu'elles rentrent chez elles après des vacances enrichissantes, il n'est pas nécessaire de leur demander ou même de leur imposer de raconter ce qu'elles ont vécu. Elles le feront de leur propre gré car leur cœur déborde. Il ar-

rive que les mots jaillissent de la bouche d'une personne et nous donnent de partager ce qui a été vécu.

Cette sagesse du langage populaire indique que l'on ne peut témoigner que de ce que l'on a intensément vécu. Cela est également et encore plus vrai lorsque qu'il s'agit de témoigner de Jésus Christ. Nous ne pouvons rendre témoignage au Christ de manière crédible que si nous lui sommes étroitement liés et vivons dans l'amitié avec lui. De même que les amitiés humaines ne peuvent prospérer et rester vivantes que si on les cultive, témoigner de Jésus Christ nécessite aussi qu'on s'attache à lui.

La première et importante question qui se pose à nous est donc de savoir ce que représente Jésus Christ pour nous. À notre époque, cela constitue un véritable défi. Beaucoup de gens, et même des chrétiens, se laissent aujourd'hui toucher avant tout par l'ensemble des dimensions humaine et historique de Jésus de Nazareth, mais ils peinent à accepter ce que confesse l'Église, à savoir que Jésus est le Fils unique de Dieu, qui est ressuscité, vit et est présent parmi nous. Même dans l'Église actuelle, il n'est pas rare que pour certains il soit difficile de discerner le visage du Fils de Dieu dans la personne de Jésus et que l'on voie simplement en lui un être humain – certes, un être remarquable et particulièrement bon. Mais si Jésus n'avait été qu'un homme, il aurait été irrévocablement englouti par le passé, et seul notre lointain souvenir pourrait alors le ramener plus ou moins clairement au présent. Ce n'est que si notre foi est vraie, à savoir qu'en Jésus de Nazareth Dieu s'est fait homme, que Jésus Christ est vrai homme et vrai Dieu et a donc part à la présence de Dieu qui embrasse tous les temps, ce n'est qu'à cette condition que Jésus Christ peut être, non seulement hier mais également aujourd'hui, notre véritable contemporain et la lumière de notre vie.

Les Saintes Écritures, en particulier l'Évangile de Jean, expriment cette conviction de foi que Jésus est l'envoyé de Dieu. Jésus ne porte pas seulement le titre d'« envoyé », mais il est « envoyé » dans son essence même. Il est envoyé dans le monde pour lui apporter Dieu et pour témoigner de sa vérité, ainsi que Jésus le confesse devant le préteur Pilate. « Je suis né et je suis venu dans le monde pour rendre témoignage à la vérité. Quiconque est de la vérité écoute ma voix » (Jn 18:37). Jésus Christ nous a apporté Dieu et en est donc le témoin fidèle par excellence ; et le mot « mission » caractérise la personne et l'œuvre de Jésus Christ à tel point que toute sa vie consiste à être envoyé et réside dans la mission confiée au Fils par le Père pour le salut du monde.

Cette mission se poursuit dans la nôtre en tant que chrétiens et Église, comme le Christ ressuscité l'a promis à ses disciples : « Vous allez recevoir une puissance, celle du Saint Esprit qui viendra sur vous ; vous serez alors mes témoins à Jérusalem, dans toute la Judée et la Samarie, et jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre » (Ac 1, 8). Nous découvrons ici le plus profond motif de notre envoi en mission parmi les hommes : il nous est donné de vivre en détenteurs de l'extraordinaire message que Dieu nous aime tant, nous les êtres humains, qu'il nous a donné son Fils pour nous faire accéder à la vie éternelle. Celui qui laisse ce message remplir son cœur et en vit, laisse alors déborder son cœur et désir partager cette nouvelle avec d'autres personnes et répandre partout le parfum de l'amour de Dieu, où qu'il vive et où qu'il aille. Rendre le Dieu « qui est pour nous » présent dans le monde d'aujourd'hui et parler de lui aux hommes est au cœur du témoignage chrétien.

Témoigner est avant tout une question d'amour ; celui qui le reçoit n'entend pas garder pour lui seul ce précieux cadeau qui lui est confié, mais y voit un don à transmettre et invite l'autre à le recevoir sans le lui imposer. En effet, le témoignage

chrétien est un processus entièrement libéral, qui s'adresse à la liberté des autres sans aucune contrainte. Le témoignage chrétien est l'invitation libérale à la liberté d'autrui de communiquer et de prendre part à un dialogue stimulant. Elle s'oppose donc à toute forme de prosélytisme, comme l'a souligné avec force le Pape Benoît XVI lors de l'ouverture de la Cinquième Assemblée générale des évêques d'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes à Aparecida, en mai 2007 : « L'Église ne fait pas de prosélytisme. Elle se développe plutôt par "attraction": comme le Christ "attire chacun à lui" par la force de son amour, qui a culminé dans le sacrifice de la Croix, de même, l'Église accomplit sa mission dans la mesure où, associée au Christ, elle accomplit chacune de ses œuvres en conformité spirituelle et concrète avec la charité de son Seigneur. »¹

La vie apostolique, fondement de la mission apostolique

Toutefois, offrir un témoignage attirant de l'amour sans verser dans le prosélytisme suppose que nous fassions nous-mêmes l'expérience de l'amour de Jésus et qu'elle soit à la base de notre vie. Cela n'est possible que si nous cultivons notre attachement à Jésus et notre « être avec » lui, encore et encore. Il en fut ainsi avec les premiers disciples de Jésus, comme en témoigne leur vocation : Jésus « en établit douze pour être avec lui et pour les envoyer prêcher avec pouvoir de chasser les démons » (Mc 3,13-14). La vocation des Douze à suivre Jésus comporte donc deux dimensions : premièrement, les Douze doivent être « avec lui », et deuxièmement, il les envoie prêcher et chasser les démons. La première vocation pourrait être définie comme la vie apostolique des Douze avec Jésus, la seconde, comme la mission apostolique des Douze dans le monde.

Non seulement les deux vocations sont indissolublement liées, mais elles apparaissent dans un ordre très clair : la vocation à la mission apostolique découle de la vocation à la vie apostolique avec Jésus et lui fait suite. Car Jésus est convaincu que les disciples ne peuvent témoigner de l'Évangile que s'ils apprennent ce que signifie « être avec lui » et le vivent, encore et encore. Cela se perçoit dans la structure du 6^e chapitre de l'Évangile de Marc. En effet, Jésus envoie les disciples, comme il est écrit au début de ce chapitre : « Il fait venir les Douze. Et il commença à les envoyer deux par deux » (Mc 6:7). Mais très vite, les disciples retournent vers Jésus : « Les apôtres se réunissent auprès de Jésus et ils lui rapportèrent tout ce qu'ils avaient fait et tout ce qu'ils avaient enseigné. Il leur dit : "Vous autres, venez à l'écart dans un lieu désert et reposez-vous un peu" » (Mc 6:30-31). Cela montre distinctement que, dans la structure de l'Évangile de Marc, l'envoi des Douze comme témoins n'est en aucun cas plus important que l'effort incessant des Douze pour être avec Jésus, et que la mission suppose la vie apostolique avec lui.

De la même manière, nous, les chrétiens d'aujourd'hui, sommes appelés à cultiver notre vie apostolique avec Jésus Christ et à prendre le temps de demeurer en sa présence. Cela advient dans le cadre privilégié de la prière à laquelle Jésus lui-même nous invite lorsque, dans la parabole du serviteur fidèle et du mauvais serviteur, il nous encourage : « Heureux ces serviteurs que le maître à son arrivée trouvera en train de veiller » (Lc 12, 37). Le Seigneur attend de nous que nous lui consacrons du temps, que

1. Benoît XVI, Homélie lors de la messe d'inauguration de la Ve Assemblée générale des Évêques d'Amérique Latine et des Caraïbes sur l'Esplanade du Sanctuaire d'Aparecida, le 13 mai 2007.

dans la prière nous lui parlions de notre vie et de notre foi et que nous l'écoutions pour chercher et vivre toujours plus intensément sa volonté. Car indubitablement Jésus n'entend que dans la prière ancrée dans sa volonté et qui lui demande quelle est sa volonté : « Demandez, on vous donnera ; cherchez, vous trouverez ; frappez, on vous ouvrira » (Mt 7,7). Le Notre Père, que le théologien Tertullien du début de l'ère chrétienne, y voyant la forme courte et la somme de tout l'Évangile, appela « *breviarium totius evanglii* », nous enseigne de façon particulière que notre prière doit demander à connaître vraiment la volonté de Dieu et ne pas se contenter de mettre en avant nos propres désirs égoïstes. C'est la prière par excellence que les chrétiens récitent depuis les origines et sa méditation nous aide à apprendre à prier de manière toujours nouvelle – et pour cela, nous aurons probablement besoin d'une vie tout entière.

Ce qui est vrai pour la prière l'est tout particulièrement pour l'adoration, surtout l'Adoration eucharistique. On y retrouve la véracité des paroles d'hommes et de femmes qui s'aiment et qui, en plein tourbillon du temps qui passe, cherchent des oasis d'éternité et désirent que le temps s'arrête lorsqu'ils disent à l'instant : « Arrête-toi, tu es si beau ! ». Tandis qu'ils se regardent dans les yeux, ils voudraient retenir l'instant. L'adoration eucharistique permet aux chrétiens de faire l'expérience du regard par excellence, c'est-à-dire du regard de Jésus Christ qui nous contemple et nous donne de devenir siens pour que la joie habite notre cœur. L'adoration eucharistique est une bénédiction pour les chrétiens : Sainte Edith Stein, qui naquit dans la religion juive, se convertit à la foi chrétienne, devint carmélite et fut exécutée par les nazis, nous l'a rappelé en des termes saisissants : « Le Seigneur est présent dans le tabernacle à la fois dans sa divinité et son humanité. Il est là, non pour lui mais pour nous : parce que son plaisir est d'être avec les enfants des hommes. Et parce qu'il sait que, tels que nous sommes, nous avons besoin de sa présence personnelle. La conséquence, pour celui qui y pense, c'est de se sentir attiré vers le tabernacle et d'y demeurer tout le temps qu'il peut ».²

André Frossard, célèbre journaliste français, offre un témoignage éloquent de ce que l'adoration eucharistique peut faire dans la vie d'une personne.³ Issu d'une famille athée et ayant grandi comme tel, il étudiait à la célèbre École normale supérieure de Paris. Un jour, alors qu'il cherchait un ami, il apprit que celui-ci était allé à la chapelle d'un couvent situé en face de l'école. Il alla chercher cet ami et entra dans la chapelle où les sœurs pratiquaient l'adoration perpétuelle. En repensant à cet événement, Frossard confie : « Je suis entré et après dix minutes, je suis sorti et j'étais devenu chrétien ». Que s'est-il passé ? Avec le recul, il interprète le mystère de sa conversion comme signifiant qu'il avait compris que celui qui était entré si soudainement dans sa vie était présent dans l'adoration eucharistique et l'appelait.

Le témoignage comme conséquence logique de la foi

L'adoration eucharistique a donné lieu à l'une des plus célèbres histoires de conversion du XX^e siècle. Dans cette histoire, ce qui est le plus frappant est la banale simplicité d'une conversion reposant sur l'expérience de la présence de Jésus Christ dans l'Eucharistie, tel que le permet l'adoration eucharistique. Elle donne de vivre l'attachement à

2. *Source Cachée. Œuvres Spirituelles*, Ad Solem, p 274.

3. Zit. bei Ch. Schönborn, *Wovon wir leben können. Das Geheimnis der Eucharistie* (Freiburg i. Br. 2005) 115-116.

Jésus dans sa forme la plus profonde. Si nous le rencontrons directement en cette circonstance et que nous laissons son regard se poser sur nous, alors nous pouvons témoigner de ce que nous avons vécu. Car le témoignage n'est pas quelque chose qui vient s'ajouter extérieurement à la foi. En soi, il s'agit plutôt d'une dynamique de la foi : Témoigner « pour le Christ par attachement » dans sa forme la plus pure.

Cette dynamique de la foi est très nette dans le récit de Pâques, en particulier dans le récit des deux disciples sur le chemin d'Emmaüs. À la fin de cette histoire, on raconte qu'après la rencontre avec Jésus ressuscité et après qu'il a rompu le pain avec eux, ils reprennent la route « à l'instant même », pour retourner à Jérusalem et raconter aux autres disciples « ce qui s'est passé sur la route et comment ils l'ont reconnu à la fraction du pain » (Lc 24, 33-35).

Cette même dynamique de la foi s'applique à nous, chrétiens d'aujourd'hui : la rencontre avec Jésus Christ dans la prière et l'adoration suscite chez tout chrétien « l'urgence du témoignage et de l'évangélisation »⁴. Car quiconque a rencontré Jésus et l'a vu ira trouver ses amis et leur dira : « Nous avons trouvé celui qui pour nous est la vérité, l'amour et la vie ». Si nous en sommes vraiment convaincus, nous ne pouvons nous contenter de garder pour nous ce que nous avons vécu. En effet, dans la foi l'autosuffisance ne fait pas simplement passer à côté de quelque chose, mais fait passer à côté de la foi elle-même. Celui qui a vu Jésus et a trouvé en lui le Dieu vivant en parlera aux autres de son plein gré et partagera ce qu'il a vécu.

Au sens élémentaire, tout chrétien est un martyr. Car le mot « martyr » est dérivé du grec « martyrs » et signifie « témoin ». Dans son sens original, il désigne tout chrétien témoignant par sa vie et sa parole de la foi dans le Dieu trinitaire et de sa révélation en Jésus Christ. Ce mot ne sera utilisé que plus tardivement dans un sens spécifique pour décrire les chrétiens qui furent persécutés au nom de leur foi et qui ont donné leur vie pour elle. Les martyrs ne sont pas seulement des témoins en paroles, mais aussi des témoins dans leurs actes et dans leur vie, et figurent par conséquent parmi les témoins de la foi les plus crédibles.

L'urgence martyrologique du témoignage

Les martyrs rendent visible l'urgence de l'attachement à Jésus. En transformant en amour la violence exercée sur lui et en donnant sur la croix sa vie pour nous les hommes, Jésus devient à nos yeux le martyr originel. La Passion de Jésus est l'archétype du martyre et par conséquent le modèle du martyre pour ceux qui le suivent et prennent ainsi part au mystère pascal de Jésus Christ, comme c'est le cas des Saints Martyrs d'Againe. Ceux-ci nous rappellent qu'il ne peut y avoir fondamentalement de chrétien sans martyre. Il est donc réaliste d'en déduire que suivre Jésus Christ implique également et toujours le martyre, qui est le plus haut témoignage d'amour. À cet égard, le martyre constitue une caractéristique essentielle du christianisme, et les martyrs ne sont pas un phénomène marginal mais occupent une place centrale dans l'Église chrétienne. Ce postulat réaliste a été prouvé mille fois au cours de l'histoire de l'Église et est également confirmé dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, où l'on compte encore plus de martyrs que lors des persécutions envers les chrétiens au cours des premiers siècles. En effet, 80 % des personnes qui sont persécutées aujourd'hui en raison de leur foi sont des chrétiens

4. Jean-Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, 24.

et appartiennent à différentes Églises. La foi chrétienne est de nos jours la religion la plus persécutée au monde. En effet, dès le XX^e siècle le christianisme est redevenu, sans comparaison possible, une Église de martyrs. Le Pape Jean-Paul II l'a commémorée de façon particulière, le 7 mai du Jubilé de l'an 2000 sur le site riche en symboles historiques faisant face au Colisée, lorsqu'ont été lus les témoignages du Métropolite orthodoxe Serafim, du Pasteur protestant Paul Schneider et du Prêtre catholique Maximilian Kolbe.

Sous nos latitudes, de nos jours nous ne sommes pas appelés à témoigner par le sang. Mais la mémoire des Saints Martyrs d'Agaune nous invite à nous souvenir dans la prière des martyrs d'aujourd'hui et à les remercier pour leur témoignage de la foi chrétienne. Nous attendons d'eux qu'ils soient pour nous un encouragement à témoigner également dans notre vie « pour le Christ par attachement ». Car nous sommes appelés à témoigner aussi dans le monde d'aujourd'hui. À notre époque, le témoignage de la foi advient rarement par le biais de publicités conviviales, par la diffusion de nombreux documents ou à travers les médias. Le moyen par excellence à travers lequel Dieu peut rayonner, c'est nous, les chrétiens et les chrétiennes, qui vivons notre foi de manière crédible et donnons ainsi à l'Évangile un visage personnel. Si nous sommes vraiment convaincus que le Christ est la vérité de la vie et la lumière du monde, nous rayonnerons de nous-mêmes, nous serons des chrétiens rayonnant comme des torches finlandaises qui, comme vous le savez, brûlent de l'intérieur vers l'extérieur ; de nous jaillira la lumière et le témoignage de notre foi : « C'est de l'abondance du cœur que la bouche parle ».

Le Pape Paul VI a souligné à maintes reprises, et à juste titre, que l'homme d'aujourd'hui n'a pas besoin de maîtres, mais de témoins ; à la limite, de maîtres uniquement dans la mesure où ils peuvent également être perçus comme des témoins. Le monde sécularisé d'aujourd'hui a besoin de baptisés dont Dieu ouvre le cœur et dont la raison est éclairée par la lumière divine, afin que leur cœur puisse toucher le cœur des autres et que leur raison puisse parler à la raison des autres. Ce n'est qu'à travers des êtres qui sont eux-mêmes touchés par Dieu que Dieu peut aujourd'hui atteindre les hommes. Demandons le soutien des Saints Martyrs d'Agaune pour qu'un nouveau courage naisse en nous, celui de témoigner « pour le Christ par attachement ».

**Message de salutation à la Conférence internationale de Genève
« *Laudato si'* et les nouvelles formes de pouvoir et de violences à l'ère
des techno-sciences et de l'hypothèse de l'Anthropocène »**

(22 septembre 2020)

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Ne pouvant hélas prendre part cette année à votre conférence, je saisis cette occasion pour vous saluer et accompagner mon message d'une brève réflexion. Dans le sous-titre de votre conférence, par le mot « Anthropocène » est évoquée l'hypothèse d'une nouvelle ère géochronologique. Cette désignation m'autorise à une relecture du récit biblique de la création qui nous est rapporté dans le texte vétérotestamentaire de la Genèse.

Par le passé, ce récit a très souvent été interprété comme signifiant que le point culminant de l'entière création divine est la création de l'homme. Cette vision a conduit à une perte considérable de la dimension cosmique de la foi et à un fort anthropocentrisme dont, avec ses divisions modernes entre nature et homme, objet et sujet, corps et âme, nous pouvons encore ressentir les effets. Aujourd'hui encore, nous parlons par exemple très souvent de mondialisation, tout en oubliant le globe terrestre, car nous ne pensons qu'aux activités humaines qui sont principalement d'ordre économique.

Dans son message pour la Journée mondiale de prière pour la sauvegarde de la création de cette année, le Pape François nous rappelle « que le destin ultime de la création est d'entrer dans le "sabbat éternel" de Dieu ». En effet, selon le récit biblique de la création, le but de la création ne réside pas simplement dans l'homme, qui est créé le sixième jour, mais dans le sabbat dont il est question le septième jour. Dieu ne conçoit pas l'entière création pour l'homme, mais pour Dieu lui-même, pour qu'il puisse enfin y demeurer et s'y reposer : « Dieu acheva au septième jour l'œuvre qu'il avait faite, il arrêta au septième jour toute l'œuvre qu'il faisait. Dieu bénit le septième jour et le consacra » (Gn 2, 2-3).

Cette vision cosmique ne nie en aucun cas que l'homme occupe une position spéciale dans la création de Dieu. Elle montre cependant que l'homme lui aussi, avec toutes les autres créatures, sera couronné par le sabbat de Dieu. Cela signifie que la position particulière de l'homme réside précisément dans le fait que lui est confiée une responsabilité tout à fait spéciale envers la création. Ce n'est pas un hasard si le récit sacerdotal de la création décrit la « domination » de l'homme sur tous les animaux comme le serait celle d'un berger. En ce qui concerne la croyance chrétienne en la création, les humains ne peuvent se concevoir, comme l'avait proclamé René Descartes au début de l'ère moderne, comme « maîtres et possesseurs de la nature » exploitant la nature de manière abusive. En tant que disciples de Jésus, le bon berger de la création par excellence, l'homme ne peut se percevoir et se comporter que comme un bon berger qui nourrit et guide la création qui lui est confiée.

La crise écologique à laquelle nous sommes tous confrontés exige que les chrétiens reconnaissent et surmontent les conséquences d'un anthropocentrisme irrecevable, et qu'ils redécouvrent la dimension cosmique de la foi. Et ne pourrions-nous pas envisager que le lockdown imposé ces derniers temps par la pandémie du Covid nous ait également donné une leçon et, pour ainsi dire, nous ait fait rattraper ces sabbats que nous avons jusqu'à présent négligés de manière impardonnable pour les affaires et la politique, que ce lockdown ait voulu nous faire redécouvrir les bien-faits du sabbat que Dieu institua pour toute la création et l'humanité ?

En ce sens, j'estime que la foi chrétienne peut apporter une contribution à la réflexion théologique sur les problèmes et défis soulevés par le mot « Anthropocène », que vous vous proposez d'affronter au cours de cette conférence internationale. En vous adressant mes meilleurs vœux pour de fructueux débats et le plein succès de cette initiative, je vous salue chaleureusement de Rome.

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**Letter of condolence to His All Holiness Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch,
on death of Metropolitan Gennadios,
Orthodox Archbishop of Italy and Malta and Exarch of Southern Europe
(16 October 2020)**

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity expressed its closeness in prayer with the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the death on 16 October of His Eminence Metropolitan Gennadios, Orthodox Archbishop of Italy and Malta and Exarch of Southern Europe. A longstanding friend of the Pontifical Council, Metropolitan Gennadios was a welcome presence as the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the Vespers for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity held annually at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls. Metropolitan Gennadios had completed his doctoral studies in Naples and remained a committed supporter of the ecumenical movement in Italy throughout his residence in the country. His thesis on “The Contribution of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for Christian Unity” was the first text written in a Catholic institute by a Greek Orthodox cleric. Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council, sent a letter of condolence below to His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The funeral service for Metropolitan Gennadios took place at the Cathedral of San Giorgio dei Greci in Venice on 21 October, presided over by Metropolitan Polycarp of Spain and Portugal, Patriarchal Vicar of the Archdiocese of Italy and Malta. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity was represented by Monsignor Andrea Palmieri, Under-Secretary.

Letter to His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I

Your All Holiness,

Having learned of the sad news of the death of His Eminence Metropolitan Gennadios, Metropolitan of Italy and Malta, I write to assure you that our Pontifical Council is united in prayer with Your All Holiness and the Ecumenical Patriarchate in asking God our merciful Father to welcome Metropolitan Gennadios to the celestial banquet.

In this moment of profound sorrow we recall with heartfelt gratitude the fruitful episcopal ministry of Metropolitan Gennadios at the service of the Orthodox communities in Italy, as well as his commitment to building authentic bonds of fraternity between Orthodox and Catholics. The presence of His Eminence Gennadios at many events and shared prayer celebrations was a significant witness to his genuine yearning for progress in the journey towards the re-establishment of full communion among all Christ’s believers, an aspiration nurtured from the very beginning of his spiritual and theological formation. I am certain that this witness was and will continue to be a source of encouragement for many Christians.

In renewing to Your All Holiness the assurance of my personal prayer and that of all the staff of the Pontifical Council for Metropolitan Gennadios, for the Orthodox Archdiocese of Italy and Malta and for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, now mourning the loss of a pastor who dedicated his life to his flock, I express my most respectful greetings in Christ our Lord.

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**Letter of condolence to His Grace Right Reverend Dr Geevarghese
Mar Theodosius, Suffragan Metropolitan of the Malankara Mar Thoma
Syrian Church, on death of Metropolitan Joseph Mar Thoma,
Supreme Head of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church**
(18 October 2020)

It is with deep sadness that the Pontifical Council learned of the death on 18 October 2020 of His Grace the Most Reverend Dr Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan, the Supreme Head of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church. In full communion with the Churches of the Anglican Communion, His Grace was also a longstanding friend of the Catholic community in Kerala, not sparing any effort in promoting common bonds with the Catholic Church in India, as well as with the ecumenical movement at the worldwide level. Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council, sent the letter of condolence below to His Grace Right Reverend Dr Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Suffragan Metropolitan of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church.

Letter to His Grace Right Reverend Dr Geevarghese Mar Theodosius

Your Grace,

It is with deep sadness that I have learned of the death of His Grace the Most Reverend Dr Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan, the Supreme Head of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church.

Personally and on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, I express our deepest sympathy and closeness in prayer to the episcopate, clergy and faithful of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church for the loss of their spiritual father.

The Pontifical Council calls to mind with sentiments of gratitude and esteem the commitment of His Grace Metropolitan Joseph Mar Thoma to Christian unity, recalling in friendship his recent visit to Rome in October 2018.

In full communion with the Churches of the Anglican Communion, His Grace was also a longstanding friend of Catholic community in Kerala, not sparing any effort in promoting common bonds with the Catholic Church in India, as well as with the ecumenical movement at the worldwide level.

We set our eyes to the glory of Jesus Christ, whose victory over death is our redemption and we make ours the words of the psalmist: ‘The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul... and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long’ (Ps 23:1-2; 6).

Please accept, Your Grace, this expression of our fraternal communion and prayerful solidarity.

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**Saluto in occasione dell'Inaugurazione solenne dell'anno accademico 2020-2021
della Pontificia Università Antonianum con la consegna
del dottorato honoris causa in filosofia a Sua Santità Bartolomeo
(21 ottobre 2020)**



Sua Santità Bartolomeo I riceve il dottorato honoris causa presso la Pontificia Università Antonianum, Roma, 21 ottobre 2020

Il 21 ottobre Sua Santità il Patriarca Ecumenico Bartolomeo è stato insignito di un dottorato honoris causa in filosofia dalla Pontificia Università Antonianum a Roma durante la cerimonia solenne per l'inaugurazione dell'anno accademico 2020-2021. La laurea è stata conferita da Fra Michael Perry, Ministro Generale dell'Ordine dei Frati Minori e Gran Cancelliere dell'Università. Pronunciando la Laudatio, il Cardinale Pietro Parolin, Segretario di Stato, ha ribadito il rapporto particolare che il Patriarca Ecumenico ha con Papa Francesco e il suo costante incoraggiamento e impegno attivo a favore dell'unità dei cristiani e della piena comunione. "Per Bartolomeo I", ha aggiunto, "la cura del creato è una questione ecumenica. Essa costituisce un ulteriore elemento comune, al di là di quelli di natura dottrinale". Anche il Cardinale Kurt Koch, Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la promozione dell'unità dei cristiani, ha rivolto un saluto ricordando che Papa Francesco all'inizio dell'Enciclica Laudato si' aveva citato il Patriarca ecumenico come un pioniere della profonda coscienza dell'ecologia per le comunità religiose e per il mondo intero.

Saluto del Cardinale Koch

A nome della Santa Sede e a nome mio personale, estendo a voi il più cordiale saluto in occasione del conferimento del dottorato honoris causa in filosofia a Sua Santità, l'Arcivescovo di Costantinopoli e Patriarca Ecumenico. Santità, come sempre è il benvenuto qui a Roma, dove ha anche studiato! L'evento di oggi ci riempie tutti quanti di grande gioia e gratitudine. Di fatti, tra la Chiesa di Roma e la Chiesa di Costantinopoli esistono da molto tempo relazioni amichevoli, rese visibili dalle visite reciproche compiute da rappresentanti di entrambe le comunità di fede nelle rispettive feste patronali o in occasioni di particolare rilievo. È diventata un'usanza significativa il fatto che, poco dopo l'inizio del pontificato, i Papi si rechino al Fanar di Costantinopoli per rendere visita al Patriarca Ecumenico. Similmente, la Sua decisione, Santità, di venire a Roma per la cerimonia di inaugurazione di Papa Francesco è stata un bel segno di amicizia

matura. La partecipazione del Patriarca Ecumenico a una simile celebrazione, così importante per la Chiesa cattolica, è stata la prima nella storia delle relazioni ecumeniche tra Roma e Costantinopoli. Come Andrea e Pietro erano fratelli, così Costantinopoli e Roma sono Chiese sorelle.

In questo clima familiare, è stato benefico il fatto che Papa Francesco, proprio all'inizio della sua enciclica sulla cura della casa comune, "Laudato si", abbia menzionato con gratitudine Vostra Santità come pioniere e protagonista del ravvivamento e dell'approfondimento della coscienza ecologica nelle nostre comunità di fede e in seno all'umanità intera; il Papa ha fatto questo nella consapevolezza ecumenica che noi cattolici possiamo imparare molto dalla tradizione di fede e dalla teologia ortodossa. Nella tradizione occidentale del cristianesimo possiamo e dobbiamo imparare dall'Oriente che la fede e il pensiero sia teologico che filosofico hanno una dimensione cosmica di base. Ciò è particolarmente vero nella situazione odierna in cui abbiamo validi motivi per preoccuparci del creato, messo a repentaglio, e siamo tenuti a dare una risposta alla sfida ecologica, traendola dal cuore stesso della fede cristiana. Non è un caso che la sensibilità nei confronti della questione ecologica sia nata nel contesto del pensiero ortodosso e che Lei, Santità, abbia particolarmente sottolineato le radici spirituali e teologiche dei problemi ecologici e continui a farlo con passione. RiconoscendoLe questi grandi meriti, Papa Francesco ha affermato in "Laudato si": "Per citare solo un esempio particolarmente significativo, voglio riprendere brevemente parte del contributo del caro Patriarca Ecumenico Bartolomeo, con il quale condividiamo la speranza della piena comunione ecclesiale" (N. 7).

Sua Eminenza il Cardinale Segretario di Stato Pietro Parolin, che sono lieto di salutare, renderà omaggio a questo importante contributo che Lei, Santità, ha apportato e per il quale oggi è insignito del dottorato honoris causa in filosofia. Il fatto che il rappresentante diretto del Santo Padre pronuncerà la Laudatio è un segno eloquente del nostro apprezzamento nei confronti della Sua persona e del Suo grande lavoro qui a Roma. L'evento di oggi non sarebbe però stato possibile senza l'iniziativa della Pontificia Università Antonianum. Desidero ringraziare tutti i docenti, tutti gli studenti, e specialmente il Venerabile Rettore, il Professor Augustin Hernandez Vidales, e il Gran Cancelliere della Pontificia Università, il Ministro Generale Frater Michael Anthony Perry. È un segno importante che la Facoltà di Filosofia dell'Università dei Fratelli minori, nello spirito di San Francesco d'Assisi e in comunione ecumenica, renda onore ai meriti del Patriarca Ecumenico per la promozione di un'ecologia integrale. Alla Facoltà siamo grati per aver reso possibile questo gesto significativo. Auguro a tutti i presenti, a coloro che sono qui in sala e a coloro che sono collegati tramite live streaming, un momento celebrativo piacevole e ricco di riflessioni, e auguro a Vostra Santità l'abbondante benedizione di Dio e la sua grazia misericordiosa.

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**Letter of condolence to His Holiness Irinej, Serbian Patriarch,
on death of Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro**

(30 October 2020)

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity expressed its closeness in prayer with the Serbian Patriarchate on the death on 30 October 2020 of His Eminence Metropolitan Amfilohije, Archbishop of Cetinje and Metropolitan of Montenegro. Metropolitan Amfilohije was ordained Bishop of Banat in 1985, becoming Head of the Church in Montenegro in 1991, and in 2009 the Locum tenens of the Patriarchal Throne of the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Amfilohije had a close understanding of the Catholic Church. A student of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in 1965, he took part in the concluding phase of the Second Vatican Council. He returned to Rome in 2003 on an official visit, and was received in audience by Pope John Paul II. In 2013 he represented the Serbian Orthodox Church at the inauguration of the pontificate of Pope Francis, whom he last met in January 2016. Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council, sent the letter of condolence below to His Holiness Irinej, Serbian Patriarch.

Letter to His Holiness Irinej

Your Holiness,

It is with deep sadness that I have learned of the death of your beloved brother in Christ, His Eminence Amfilohije, Archbishop of Cetinje and Metropolitan of Montenegro. I express to Your Holiness, to the Holy Synod and to all the Serbian Orthodox Church my profound condolences together with the assurance of my closeness in prayer. I take this opportunity to recall in a prayer of thanksgiving to God his faithful service to the Lord over many years, during which time he offered us all a great example of faith.

Metropolitan Amfilohije had a close understanding of the Catholic Church and was a friend of many Catholics. He first came to Rome in 1965 to study at the Pontifical Oriental Institute and to take part in the concluding phase of the Second Vatican Council. He returned in 2003 on an official visit and was received in audience by Pope John Paul II. In 2013 he represented the Serbian Orthodox Church at the inauguration of the pontificate of Pope Francis, with whom he had a fraternal and warm meeting three days later.

From a personal point of view, I call to mind in particular the last visit to Rome of Metropolitan Amfilohije in January 2016, when he met once again with Pope Francis as well as with myself. His Eminence was a cordial and profoundly spiritual man, an authentic pastor who was able to discern the signs of God in human history notwithstanding the fact that he undertook his service in an era that was far from simple. Despite many sufferings, he remained a man of faith and dialogue, humble and joyous, a luminous example of a life totally consecrated to God.

May the Lord grant Metropolitan Amfilohije peace together with His saints in the joy of life without end in his Kingdom. Eternal memory!

In renewing the assurance of my remembrance in prayer, I extend my best wishes to Your Holiness, the Holy Synod and the Serbian Orthodox Church for an abundance of spiritual gifts, and express my fraternal greetings in the Lord.

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**Letter of condolence to His Eminence Hrizostom, Metropolitan of
Dabar-Bosna, Locum tenens of the Patriarchal Throne, on death of
His Holiness Patriarch Irinej, Patriarch of the Serbian Church**
(20 November 2020)

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity learned with great sadness of the death of His Holiness Irinej, Patriarch of the Serbian Church, on 20 November 2020. Throughout his ministry, His Holiness remained an example of faith and dialogue, humble and joyful, totally dedicating his life to God and fostering the spirit of communion within the Serbian Orthodox Church. Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council, sent the letter of condolence below to His Eminence Hrizostom, Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosna, Locum tenens of the Patriarchal Throne, in which he recalled with gratitude his meetings with the Patriarch, as well as the warm and fraternal hospitality of His Holiness.

Letter to His Eminence Hrizostom

Your Eminence,

It is with deep sadness that I have learned of the passing of the beloved Patriarch, His Holiness Irinej, an illustrious witness of the faith of the Serbian Church. I would like to express to Your Eminence, to the Holy Synod over which you preside, and to all the Serbian Orthodox Church my heartfelt condolences together with the assurance of my profound closeness in prayer. I take this opportunity to offer thanksgiving to God for the many years of faithful service to the Lord and to the Church, during which time His Holiness was a luminous exemplar of faith and of consecration to God and His people.

With joy I recall various meetings with His Holiness Irinej, and with profound gratitude I call to mind the generous, warm and fraternal hospitality with which he always welcomed us.

His Holiness Irinej undertook his service in years that were certainly not easy. Notwithstanding many sufferings, he remained a radiant example of a life completely consecrated to the Lord's Church. As the Church is the gateway to the risen life of Christ, the fulfilment of all things in Him, the Church understands death as an act of communion with life, as Christ has filled it with Himself and with His light. In Him the Easter of the world has already begun, and thus His Holiness Irinej already lives "where there will no longer be any suffering, crying or pain".

It is my prayer that Christ, whom the departed Patriarch served with such devotion, may fill your hearts with consolation and inner peace, interceding at the throne of the Lord for the future of the Serbian Church, and for all the Christian Churches and their communion.

I pray too that relations between the Catholic Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church, which had developed and strengthened under the benevolent guidance of Patriarch Irinej, may also continue and deepen in the future.

In expressing my sincerest hope that the Holy Synod may guide wisely the Serbian Orthodox Church in this time of transition, I offer the assurance of my prayer for Your Eminence and for all the episcopacy.

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**Address for the Feast of Saint Andrew,
Patron Saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate**
(Istanbul, 30 November 2020)



Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I greets Cardinal Kurt Koch, 30 November 2020

Your All Holiness,

This year, too, Pope Francis has sent a delegation from Rome to Constantinople so that we can participate in the Feast of Saint Andrew, the Patronal Festival of the Church of Constantinople, praise God at the Divine Liturgy in outward silence but praising the Triune God in our innermost hearts and, at the end of the Liturgy, bring you his fraternal greetings and heartfelt wishes for blessing. Even in these difficult times, in which the whole of humankind is affected by the coronavirus, Pope Francis desires to show his affection for the Church of Constantinople by the presence of a delegation.

There is a long tradition for the reciprocal visits of delegations to mark the respective Patronal Festivals of the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople and they are a fine symbol of mature communion and warm friendship. Our two faith communities are especially committed to doing this. Andrew and Peter were biological brothers and so Constantinople and Rome are sister churches. As such they are called to maintain mutual bonds of solidarity and love and to strengthen one another in faith and love in keeping with the profound words of Saint Paul: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor 12:26). As Christians we are members of one body and joined to one another in this body.

In the hopeful confidence that the day will come in which we will also be able to receive the Eucharistic body together, we want to grow together in an ever profounder sense in the Body of Christ that is the Church, and also to testify together to our common faith in view of the huge challenges facing us in today’s world.

In this spirit of grateful fellowship I am privileged to convey to you now the greetings and best wishes from Pope Francis, your beloved brother in the Lord, and to read his message, which he addresses in brotherly love to your All Holiness, to the Holy Synod and the whole Church of Constantinople, and to all sisters and brothers gathered here in the Cathedral of St. George for the Divine Liturgy.

Grußwort an den Verein “Unità dei Cristiani”

(30. November 2020)

Liebe Freunde der Unità dei Cristiani,

Wiederum, wie in jedem Jahr, sendet Ihnen der Präsident seinen Jahresbrief, in dem über die Aktivitäten des Vereins im bald vergangenen Jahr berichtet wird. Auch in diesem Jahr lege ich dem Jahresbrief gerne auch mein Grusswort bei, das für mich als Prokurator ein willkommenener Anlass ist, Sie alle, liebe Mitglieder und Freunde der Unità dei Cristiani, zu grüssen und Ihnen für Ihr ökumenisches Engagement herzlich zu danken. Einen besonderen Dank richte ich, gewiss auch in Ihrem Namen, an den Präsidenten, Herrn Max Semler und seine geschätzte Gattin für ihren Einsatz für den Verein und ihr ökumenisches Mitdenken und Wirken.

Gegen Ende des Jahres blicken wir auf eine sehr schwierige Zeit zurück. Die verschiedenen Terroranschläge in europäischen Ländern haben erneut gezeigt, dass wir zu jeder Zeit von solchen wahnsinnigen und verbrecherischen Handlungen betroffen sein können. Aber auch die durch den Corona-Virus ausgelöste Krise hat viele Ungewissheiten hervorgerufen, die die Gesundheit von uns Menschen, das menschliche und zwischenmenschliche Leben und die Arbeit und überhaupt die Wirtschaft betreffen. Es ist uns neu bewusst geworden, wie Vieles wir nicht in der Hand haben und wie verletzlich im Grunde unser menschliches Leben ist.

Die Corona-Krise und die von ihr provozierten Umstellungen im menschlichen Miteinander haben sich auch auf die ökumenische Arbeit ausgewirkt. Denn Ökumene lebt von Begegnungen, Beziehungen und Gesprächen. Die meisten der ökumenischen Dialoge und Konferenzen und die damit zusammenhängenden Reisen mussten jedoch auf später verschoben werden. Ökumenische Dialoge kann man zudem nur schwer im Home Office vollziehen, und auch die an sich wertvolle Einrichtung von Zoom-Konferenzen ist letztlich auch nur ein Notbehelf und kann die unmittelbare persönliche Begegnung nicht ersetzen.

Auch in ökumenischer Hinsicht haben wir dennoch Grund zur Dankbarkeit. Im vergangenen Jahr durften wir vor allem zweier Ereignisse gedenken, die für das Anliegen der Einheit der Christen von grosser Bedeutung gewesen sind. Am 5. Juni vor sechzig Jahren hat der heilige Papst Johannes XXIII. das damals so genannte Sekretariat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen begründet, das im Jahre 1988 in einen Päpstlichen Rat umbenannt worden ist. Im Namen und Auftrag des Papstes und der ganzen Katholischen Kirche führt dieser Rat die ökumenischen Dialoge mit den anderen christlichen Kirchen und kirchlichen Gemeinschaften mit dem Ziel, die Einheit des in der Geschichte durch viele Spaltungen verwundeten einen Leibes Christi wiederzufinden.

Am 25. Mai vor fünfundzwanzig Jahren hat der heilige Papst Johannes Paul II. seine Enzyklika über den Einsatz für die Ökumene „*Ut unum sint*“ veröffentlicht. Mit ihr hat er dreissig Jahre nach Abschluss des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils dessen Entscheidung bekräftigt, dass die Katholische Kirche an der Ökumenischen Bewegung teilnehmen wird, und er hat diese Entscheidung als unumkehrbaren Weg bezeichnet. Auch nach einem Vierteljahrhundert lohnt es sich, diese Enzyklika wieder zu lesen und uns zu vergewissern, wo wir uns heute auf diesem Weg befinden.

In seinem Brief, den Papst Franziskus anlässlich des 25. Jahrestags der Enzyklika „*Ut unum sint*“ mir geschrieben hat, hat er betont, dass er auf der einen Seite die

„Ungeduld derer“ teilt, „die zuweilen denken, wir könnten und sollten uns mehr dafür einsetzen“, dass es aber auf der anderen Seite „uns nicht an Glaube und Dankbarkeit fehlen“ darf, wenn wir darauf zurückblicken, was in den vergangenen bald sechzig Jahren der Ökumenischen Bewegung in unserer Kirche geschehen konnte. In diesem Geist nehme auch ich zu Beginn der Adventszeit mein Grusswort als günstige Gelegenheit wahr, um Ihnen allen, liebe Mitglieder und Freunde der Unità dei Cristiani, nochmals für Ihr ökumenisches Wirken und auch für die Unterstützung der Arbeit des Päpstlichen Rates hier in Rom aufrichtig zu danken.

Ihnen und Ihren Familien wünsche ich gute Gesundheit an Leib und Seele, eine besinnliche Adventszeit und ein gesegnetes Weihnachtsfest, das in diesem Jahr, wie bereits die erste Weihnacht in der Geschichte, unter schwierigen und dunklen äusseren Bedingungen stattfinden wird. Doch wie damals so leuchtet auch heute das Licht der Weihnacht erst recht, wenn die Umgebung dunkel ist. In dieser Zuversicht, dass dieses zarte Licht von der Krippe in Ihr Leben hinein strahlen möge, und in der Verbundenheit des Gebetes grüsse ich Sie herzlich

**Videomessaggio in occasione del 40° anniversario della proclamazione
dei Santi Cirillo e Metodio co-patroni di Europa assieme a San Benedetto**
(9 dicembre 2020)

In occasione del 40° anniversario della proclamazione dei Santi Cirillo e Metodio co-patroni di Europa assieme a San Benedetto, vorrei esprimere i miei più cordiali auguri.

La missione dei santi Cirillo e Metodio rappresenta per i popoli slavi l'approdo a una nuova consapevolezza della propria cultura, in qualche modo l'ingresso stesso nella cultura attraverso la lingua scritta appena sorta. Essi misero per iscritto quella lingua parlata, la espressero con i segni della scrittura – e in questa forma la tramandarono a coloro dai quali l'avevano prima ricevuta in affidamento. Il Vangelo cominciò ad essere espresso nella lingua slava scritta.

A Velehrad, nella Grande Moravia, nel cuore dell'Europa, i fratelli di Salonico portarono la tradizione greca e bizantina, cercando ed ottenendo il riconoscimento dei testi liturgici in lingua slava e della loro missione dalla Chiesa di Roma.

I Santi Cirillo e Metodio, venerati in Occidente ed in Oriente, sono per tutti testimoni di quell'unità indivisa alla sorgente, capace di tenere insieme le differenze. La loro vita ci sia di ispirazione per cammini di unità e la loro intercessione ce la ottenga.

OTHER

Cardinal Koch received by the President of the Republic of Lebanon (30 January 2020)



Cardinal Koch meets General Michel Aoun, President of the Republic of Lebanon, 30 January 2020

On Thursday 30 January, Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council, was received by the President of the Republic of Lebanon, General Michel Aoun. Cardinal Koch led a delegation of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, which held its plenary meeting from 27–31 January in Atchaneh, Lebanon. In his meeting with President Aoun, Cardinal Koch outlined the recent developments in theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches and assured him of the Commission's prayer in the current difficulties facing the country. In response, President Aoun stressed the importance of dialogue in Lebanon between the different churches and also between Christians and Muslims. He also mentioned the project to create in Lebanon an "Academy for Human Encounters and Dialogue", an initiative welcomed by Cardinal Koch.

Intervista ai media vaticani in occasione del 60° anniversario del Pontificio Consiglio per la promozione dell'unità dei cristiani

(5 giugno 2020)

Una grande gioia e un impegno costante per un cammino irreversibile, come ha ribadito il Papa. Così il cardinale Kurt Koch, in un'intervista ai media vaticani, ricorda la fondazione del Segretariato per la promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani, istituito il 5 giugno del 1960 da San Giovanni XXIII e divenuto Pontificio Consiglio nel 1988. Tre i pilastri che, secondo il porporato, sostengono in particolar modo l'ecumenismo: il dialogo della carità, il dialogo della verità e l'adesione profonda e concorde di tutti i fedeli alla preghiera sacerdotale di Gesù, "che tutti siano una cosa sola". Un orizzonte quello dell'ecumenismo, che ha goduto della "grande continuità e coerenza" tra tutti i papi.

Sessant'anni fa il contesto ecumenico era tutt'altro. Come definire l'attuale situazione ecumenica e le sfide di oggi?

Nel 1960 il movimento ecumenico, nella sua forma ufficiale all'interno della Chiesa cattolica, era ancora agli albori. Negli ultimi sessant'anni hanno avuto luogo numerosi incontri e dialoghi, dai quali è stato possibile trarre molti frutti positivi. Tuttavia, il vero obiettivo del movimento ecumenico, vale a dire il ripristino dell'unità della Chiesa, non è stato ancora raggiunto. Attualmente, una delle maggiori sfide consiste proprio nella mancanza di un consenso realmente solido sull'obiettivo dell'ecumenismo. Si è concordi sulla necessità dell'unità, ma non ancora su quale forma essa debba avere. Occorre una visione comune, che è essenziale per l'unità della Chiesa. I prossimi passi potranno essere compiuti infatti soltanto se abbiamo un obiettivo chiaro in mente.

Il cammino ecumenico è spesso definito come uno "scambio di doni". In sessant'anni come è stata cambiata la Chiesa cattolica da questo impegno? Quali sono i doni che la nostra Chiesa ha offerto agli altri cristiani?

Dietro questa definizione c'è la convinzione che ogni Chiesa possa apportare un contributo specifico al ripristino dell'unità. Dalle Chiese e dalle Comunità ecclesiali nate dalla Riforma la Chiesa cattolica ha imparato soprattutto la centralità della Parola di Dio nella vita della Chiesa, nelle celebrazioni liturgiche e nel pensiero teologico. Si è ravvivata in noi la consapevolezza che la fede viene dall'ascolto della Parola di Dio e che il vangelo di Gesù Cristo deve essere al centro della Chiesa. Dalle Chiese ortodosse, come ha più volte sottolineato Papa Francesco, possiamo imparare molto sulla sinodalità nella vita della Chiesa e sulla collegialità dei vescovi. Dal canto suo, la Chiesa cattolica può offrire come dono speciale alla discussione ecumenica l'enfasi posta sull'universalità della Chiesa. Poiché la Chiesa cattolica vive nell'interrelazione tra unità della Chiesa universale e molteplicità delle chiese locali, essa può dimostrare a titolo esemplificativo che unità e molteplicità non sono contrapposte neanche nell'ecumenismo, ma si sostengono reciprocamente.

L'ecumenismo guarda alla piena comunione tra tutti i cristiani. Concretamente, che cosa si è fatto?

Tutti gli sforzi e le attività ecumeniche devono servire allo scopo del ripristino dell'unità dei cristiani; è necessario assicurarsi di volta in volta che essi continuino ad essere tesi al raggiungimento di tale obiettivo. Ciò vale in particolare per il dialogo della carità, ovvero la cura nel mantenere relazioni amichevoli tra le diverse Chiese. Questo dialogo ha permesso il superamento di molti pregiudizi del passato e l'intensificarsi di una migliore intesa. Altrettanto importante è il dialogo della verità, ovvero l'analisi teologica delle questioni controverse che hanno portato a divisioni nel corso della storia. In questi dialoghi è emerso con crescente chiarezza che ciò che ci unisce è maggiore di ciò che ci separa. Infine, va ricordato come aspetto fondamentale l'ecumenismo spirituale, vale a dire l'adesione profonda e concorde di tutti i fedeli alla preghiera sacerdotale di Gesù, "che tutti siano una cosa sola". Questa preghiera mantiene sveglia in noi la consapevolezza che l'unità della Chiesa corrisponde alla volontà del Signore.

Festeggiamo in questi giorni anche il 25mo anniversario dell'enciclica di San Giovanni Paolo II *Ut unum sint*, pubblicata il 25 maggio 1995. Un'enciclica importante per il cammino ecumenico?

La sua importanza risiede principalmente nel fatto che per la prima volta nella storia un Papa ha scritto un'enciclica sull'ecumenismo. Con essa, trenta anni dopo la fine del Concilio, Giovanni Paolo II ha ricordato che la Chiesa cattolica si è "impegnata in modo irreversibile" a percorrere la via ecumenica (UUS 3) e che tutti i membri della Chiesa sono tenuti per fede a partecipare al movimento ecumenico. Particolarmente degna di nota mi pare anche un'altra sorprendente iniziativa del Papa. Essendo consapevole, da un lato, che il ministero petrino rappresenta uno dei maggiori ostacoli al ripristino dell'unità ed essendo convinto, dall'altro, che il ministero del Vescovo di Roma riveste un'importanza costitutiva per l'unità della Chiesa, Papa Giovanni Paolo II ha invitato l'intera comunità ecumenica a impegnarsi in un "dialogo fraterno, paziente" sul primato del Vescovo di Roma, con l'obiettivo di trovare una forma di esercizio del primato "che, pur non rinunciando in nessun modo all'essenziale della sua missione, si apra ad una situazione nuova", più precisamente nella misura in cui questo ministero "possa realizzare un servizio di amore riconosciuto dagli uni e dagli altri" (UUS 95-96). A mio parere, si tratta di un'iniziativa molto promettente, che è stata ripresa in occasioni diverse anche da Papa Benedetto XVI e da Papa Francesco.

Dalla fondazione del Dicastero i diversi Pontefici si sono molto impegnati nell'ecumenismo. Come definire in poche battute il contributo specifico di ognuno?

Innanzitutto, dovremmo essere grati che tutti i Papi che si sono susseguiti dal Concilio abbiano dimostrato un cuore aperto alla causa ecumenica e che vi sia stata una grande continuità e coerenza tra di loro. Papa Giovanni XXIII era ben consapevole che il ripristino dell'unità dei cristiani è fondamentale per il rinnovamento della Chiesa cattolica. Papa Paolo VI contribuì in modo significativo all'adozione del Decreto sull'ecumenismo "Unitatis redintegratio" da parte del Concilio. Egli fu un papa di grandi gesti ecumenici, in particolare verso l'Ortodossia e la Comunione Anglicana, e fu il primo papa a visitare il Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese. Papa Giovanni Paolo II era convinto che il terzo millennio avrebbe dovuto affrontare il grande compito di ripristinare l'unità andata persa, e ravvisò un aiuto essenziale nella testimonianza dei martiri che appartengono a Chiese diverse e che, con il dono della propria vita, hanno già vissuto l'unità. Per Papa Benedetto XVI, l'ecumenismo, a un livello profondo, è una questione di fede e, pertanto, un dovere primario del successore di Pietro. Per Papa Francesco è fondamentale che le varie Comunità ecclesiali percorrano insieme la via dell'unità, perché l'unità cresce cammin facendo. Anch'egli insiste inoltre sull'importanza dell'ecumenismo del sangue.

Per marcare questo doppio anniversario il Pontificio Consiglio pubblicherà quest'anno un *Vademecum* ecumenico per i Vescovi. Perché questo nuovo documento?

Il ministero affidato al vescovo è un servizio di unità nella sua diocesi e di unità tra la chiesa locale e la Chiesa universale. Ma ha un'importanza particolare anche nell'ecumenismo. Il ministero pastorale del vescovo deve essere compreso in maniera

più ampia rispetto all'unità della sua chiesa, poiché comprende anche i battezzati non cattolici. Nelle varie chiese locali, spetta dunque ai vescovi diocesani la responsabilità primaria dell'unità dei cristiani. Il Vademecum intende aiutare i vescovi a comprendere in maniera più approfondita e a tradurre nella pratica la loro responsabilità ecumenica. Il Vademecum è anche specialmente concepito per presentare ai vescovi appena nominati i loro compiti, consistenti nell'offrire un accompagnamento a tutti i membri della chiesa affinché possano assolvere il loro dovere di partecipare al movimento ecumenico.

Un'altra iniziativa del Pontificio Consiglio per questo anniversario è la pubblicazione della rivista *Acta Oecumenica* che prosegue e arricchisce il bollettino *Information Service/Service d'Information* pubblicato da più di cinquant'anni. Qual è lo scopo di questa rivista?

Non pochi fedeli oggi hanno l'impressione che l'ecumenismo sia giunto a uno stallo. Questa impressione è in gran parte dovuta al fatto che non si è sufficientemente informati sugli sviluppi e sui progressi dell'ecumenismo. È dunque importante far sì che i risultati ecumenici più importanti vengano recepiti. Questo vale soprattutto per i documenti preparati e pubblicati dalle commissioni ecumeniche. Come è noto, i documenti non letti non servono a molto. La rivista *Acta Oecumenica* mira a facilitare questa ricezione, principalmente fornendo informazioni sull'impegno ecumenico di Papa Francesco e sulle attività ecumeniche del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani, e presentando i documenti principali dei dialoghi ecumenici. La rivista vuole essere un supporto alla formazione ecumenica, aspetto, questo, di fondamentale importanza per il futuro.

L'ecumenismo si fa nell'incontro e nel dialogo. Come la crisi attuale della pandemia influisce sul lavoro che si porta avanti?

L'ecumenismo vive di dialoghi e di incontri diretti, personali. Questo ora non è facilmente realizzabile a causa delle restrizioni dovute alla pandemia del coronavirus, poiché non possiamo né ricevere ospiti in visita qui a Roma da altre Chiese cristiane né compiere viaggi per incontrare rappresentanti di altre Chiese. I dialoghi ecumenici incontrano grandi difficoltà quando si svolgono a distanza, tramite "home office". D'altra parte, la dura situazione del momento contribuisce a far avvicinare le Chiese cristiane, che si trovano tutte sulla stessa barca. Questo è risultato evidente, ad esempio, quando papa Francesco ha invitato tutte le Chiese cristiane a unirsi a lui nella recita del Padre Nostro, il 25 marzo scorso, per pregare per la fine della pandemia. Alla lettera con la quale estendevo l'invito del Santo Padre ai capi delle Chiese cristiane, la maggior parte dei destinatari ha risposto molto rapidamente, esprimendo gratitudine per questa iniziativa. Ciò mi ha mostrato quanto profonde siano diventate nel frattempo le relazioni ecumeniche, e quanto possano essere ulteriormente approfondite in situazioni molto difficili. Ma naturalmente saremo molto lieti quando potremo nuovamente avere incontri e dialoghi faccia a faccia, di persona, con i nostri interlocutori.

Anche Lei, Eminenza, fra poco festeggerà un anniversario, il 1° luglio 2010 è stato infatti nominato, da Papa Benedetto XVI, Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per l'Unità dei Cristiani. Qual è il suo bilancio di questi anni?

Sono particolarmente sorpreso dalla rapidità con cui il tempo è passato. Trovo il lavoro non sempre facile, ma molto bello e arricchente. Sono grato a Papa Benedetto XVI per avermi affidato questo compito, e a Papa Francesco per avermi confermato in questo incarico. Nel corso degli anni ho potuto partecipare e apportare il mio contributo a diversi eventi e a numerose iniziative ecumeniche dei due pontefici. Ho imparato molto e ho fatto ripetutamente questa esperienza: che nel lavoro ecumenico ciò che si riceve è maggiore di ciò che si può dare. Sono consapevole che in fondo esiste un unico ministro ecumenico, che è lo Spirito Santo; noi cosiddetti ecumenisti siamo solo suoi strumenti, più o meno deboli. Dopo dieci anni, non credo dunque che mi spetti fare un bilancio. Questo modesto anniversario è piuttosto una proficua occasione per ringraziare lo Spirito Santo e chiedergli di continuare ad accompagnare il cammino ecumenico, permettendoci di compiere, uno dopo l'altro, passi positivi che ci avvicinano sempre più all'unità della Chiesa.

HOMILIES

Omelia per la celebrazione eucaristica del Consiglio di gestione del Comitato Cattolico per la Collaborazione Culturale

(Cappella della Domus Sanctae Marthae, Città del Vaticano, 11 gennaio 2020)

IL BATTESIMO DI GESÙ COME INCORAGGIAMENTO ECUMENICO

Ci viene tramandato dall'antica liturgia di Gerusalemme che, al momento dell'ammissione degli adulti nella comunità di fede della Chiesa, il candidato al battesimo, nel retro della chiesa, voltava le spalle all'ovest, come luogo di oscurità, e rinunciava per quattro volte al diavolo, alla sua pompa e a tutti i mali. Quindi si rivolgeva verso est come luogo del sole nascente e della luce, e confessava per tre volte la fede in Dio Padre, nel suo Figlio Gesù Cristo e nello Spirito Santo. Con il gesto di voltarsi da ovest a est, veniva liturgicamente inscenato ciò che il battesimo significa nella vita di una persona che diventa cristiana, vale a dire l'allontanamento dal male e l'avvicinamento al bene. Ciò era associato al nuovo orientamento della vita, nel senso originale del voltarsi verso oriente, verso il sole nascente, che è già sorto con l'incarnazione di Dio in Gesù Cristo.

Transizione dalla morte alla vita nel battesimo

La liturgia battesimale primitiva mostra in modo chiaro che il battesimo è fondamentalmente collegato alla volontà di convertirsi. A questa profonda serietà del battesimo ci richiama la festa del battesimo del Signore da parte di Giovanni Battista sul Giordano. Il battesimo di Giovanni è infatti un battesimo di conversione, che comporta la confes-

sione dei peccati. Questo battesimo è legato alla volontà di lasciarsi alle spalle il precedente stile di vita peccaminoso e di avventurarsi in una vita rinnovata.

Anche Gesù vuole ricevere questo battesimo di conversione. Egli vuole unirsi alla grigia folla dei peccatori che aspettano sulle rive del fiume Giordano per mostrarsi solidale con tutti coloro che hanno commesso una colpa, e adempiere in questo modo alla giustizia, come lui stesso sottolinea rispondendo al Battista. Tale atteggiamento mostra le ultime conseguenze del Natale per Gesù stesso: Dio, nel suo Figlio, non vuole farsi uomo in senso generale, ma in un senso concreto e personalissimo: innanzitutto nascendo come un bambino, ovvero come il più indifeso essere umano, e poi lasciandosi toccare dal mondo peccaminoso degli uomini per mostrarsi solidale con tutti i peccatori. Iniziando il suo ministero pubblico con la decisione di prendere il posto dei peccatori, Gesù anticipa già la croce. Il suo battesimo è infatti “accettazione della morte per i peccati dell’umanità”¹.

Alla luce della serietà radicale del battesimo di conversione di Giovanni e del battesimo vicario di Gesù, anche noi prendiamo consapevolezza della profonda serietà del nostro battesimo. Questa serietà è già evidente nel rito liturgico del battesimo, che Paolo descrive in modo molto incisivo. Egli interpreta il rito di immersione dei battezzati nell’acqua del battesimo come un’immersione nelle acque abissali della morte, in solidarietà con Gesù Cristo, che si è precedentemente immerso in quest’acqua oscura: “Per mezzo del battesimo dunque siamo stati sepolti insieme a lui nella morte” (Rom 6, 4a). Ed il ristoro tramite il bagno del battesimo viene inteso da Paolo come una risurrezione a una vita nuova e imperitura, sempre in solidarietà con Gesù Cristo, che è stato risuscitato dalla morte alla vita eterna di Dio nella potenza dello Spirito Santo: “come Cristo fu risuscitato dai morti per mezzo della gloria del Padre, così anche noi possiamo camminare in una vita nuova” (Rom 6, 4b). Essere battezzati significa quindi, come l’uomo vecchio, morire insieme a Cristo per essere risvegliati con Cristo attraverso il bagno del battesimo, come uomo nuovo.

Noi cristiani dovremmo pertanto vedere la vera linea di demarcazione della nostra vita non nella morte biologica che abbiamo ancora davanti a noi, ma nel battesimo, che rappresenta una morte molto più seria. Il battesimo è una fondamentale anticipazione della nostra morte, poiché in esso Dio ha già realizzato la nostra morte e la nostra rinascita: come Gesù Cristo, che si è immerso nel bagno della morte, ma da esso nella mattina di Pasqua è riemerso come uomo del tutto nuovo, così, tramite il bagno del battesimo, l’uomo si immerge nella tomba di Cristo per risorgere con lui come un uomo nuovo. Il battesimo rende partecipi all’evento salvifico della morte e della risurrezione di Gesù Cristo, iscrive i battezzati nel movimento di Gesù Cristo dalla morte alla vita, ed opera già la transizione definitiva dei battezzati dalla terra della morte alla terra della nuova vita.

Il pentimento come mezzo per ravvivare il battesimo

Data la serietà del battesimo, che è una questione di vita o di morte, non dovrebbe sorprendere che Paolo ritenga insufficiente il nostro essere battezzati con un rito sacramentale. È molto più cruciale per lui il fatto che siamo “in Cristo” e che viviamo in una reciproca compenetrazione mistica di Cristo nel cristiano e del cristiano in Cristo. Il battesimo implica un cambiamento radicale dell’esistenza, un passaggio dalla vita “secondo la carne”, consegnata al peccato e alla morte, alla vita “secondo lo spirito”, gui-

data dallo Spirito di Dio nel senso della liberazione verso il vero sé, che deve prendere forma in un cambiamento credibile di stile di vita.

Ha quindi senso che il perdono dei peccati e il pentimento nella Chiesa primitiva fossero associati al sacramento del battesimo, come confessiamo nel credo niceno-costantinopolitano “un solo battesimo per il perdono dei peccati”. Pertanto, la conversione e il pentimento cristiani devono sempre servire a ravvivare il battesimo, come ha ricordato alla Chiesa in modo particolare il riformatore Martin Lutero. Il suo punto di partenza era l'unicità del battesimo come fondamento della nuova vita nell'esistenza cristiana, a cui collegò l'esperienza della necessità di un pentimento rinnovato anche dopo il battesimo. Ecco perché sottolineò l'importanza di far proprio continuamente ciò che, per volontà di Dio, è già accaduto a noi cristiani una volta per tutte nel battesimo: il cristiano dovrebbe vivere il proprio battesimo “come l'abito quotidiano che deve sempre portare addosso”. L'effetto determinante del battesimo risiede proprio nel pentimento: “Quindi se vivi nel pentimento, sei nel battesimo”.²

La conversione e il pentimento cristiani devono sempre assumere la forma del ricordo e del ravvivamento del battesimo. Ma quando il ricordo del battesimo trova il suo posto nella consapevolezza cristiana del pentimento, ecco che esso si accorda profondamente alla gioia della nuova vita in Cristo. Poiché il battesimo anticipa già la nostra morte e la immerge nella morte di Cristo, nella vita del cristiano può aprirsi pienamente la gioia pasquale.

Riconoscimento del battesimo e conversione a Cristo

Ciò mette anche in luce le conseguenze ecumeniche del battesimo e del pentimento. Comprendere il pentimento come una continua, permanente riappropriazione del senso del battesimo è di fondamentale importanza, soprattutto dal punto di vista ecumenico. Sin dall'inizio, il movimento ecumenico ha insistito sul battesimo comune a tutti i cristiani come punto di partenza di ogni sforzo ecumenico. Ancora oggi l'ecumenismo si regge e cade con il reciproco riconoscimento del battesimo. L'ecumenismo cristiano è sempre un ecumenismo battesimale. Esso richiede a tutti i cristiani e a tutte le Chiese di prendere molto sul serio il battesimo e, partendo da questo, di comprendere e di vivere l'impegno ecumenico come pentimento e conversione a Cristo e all'unità che ci è già stata donata in lui.

La conversione è dunque la linfa vitale del vero ecumenismo, come ha affermato il decreto ecumenico del Concilio Vaticano Secondo “Unitatis redintegratio”: “Non esiste un vero ecumenismo senza interiore conversione. Infatti il desiderio dell'unità nasce e matura dal rinnovamento dell'animo, dall'abnegazione di se stessi e dal pieno esercizio della carità.”³ Nella sua enciclica pionieristica sull'impegno ecumenico “Ut unum sint”, pubblicata un quarto di secolo fa, Papa Giovanni Paolo II sottolinea che l'intero decreto sull'ecumenismo è “pervaso dallo spirito di conversione”⁴. Non si tratta primariamente della conversione degli altri, ma della nostra stessa conversione, il che comporta la disponibilità di valutare in maniera autocritica le proprie debolezze e le proprie mancanze, di riconoscerle con umiltà e di misurarsi sempre con il vangelo di Gesù Cristo. Il movimento ecumenico è stato un movimento di conversione sin dall'inizio, nella convinzione che noi cristiani possiamo trovare l'unità che ci è già stata donata in Cristo se, insieme, a lui ci rivolgiamo.

La vita del battesimo comune, nel reciproco riconoscimento del battesimo e nell'aiuto vicendevole a vivere come battezzati, e la conversione comune a Gesù Cristo

sono le conseguenze ecumeniche della festa odierna del Battesimo del Signore. Le due figure del vangelo di oggi, Gesù, che prende il posto dei peccatori, e Giovanni Battista, che appella alla conversione, sono infatti inscindibilmente legate. Senza ascoltare l'urgente appello del Precursore al pentimento, non possiamo avvicinarci a Gesù Cristo, che a sua volta ha accolto il messaggio di Giovanni nel suo sermone: "Il tempo è compiuto e il regno di Dio è vicino; convertitevi e credete nel Vangelo" (Mc 1,15).

Nel giorno della festa del Battesimo del Signore, con l'appello lanciato da Gesù non solo concludiamo il ciclo liturgico natalizio ed entriamo nel tempo ordinario della Chiesa, ma proseguiamo il nostro lavoro ecumenico forti di questo incoraggiamento, con la gioia che, nel battesimo di Gesù, il cielo si è aperto e la voce dall'alto ha espresso a Gesù la più bella accoglienza: "Tu sei il Figlio mio, l'amato: in te ho posto il mio compiacimento." Annunciare questo compiacimento di Dio nel mondo di oggi è il compito comune di tutti i battezzati.

1. J. Ratzinger – Benedikt XVI., *Jesus von Nazareth. Erster Teil: Von der Taufe im Jordan bis zur Verkündigung* (Freiburg i. Br. 2007) 45.
2. Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirchen (Göttingen 1976) 706-707.
3. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 7.
4. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 35

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Omelia durante la celebrazione eucaristica in occasione del 60.mo anniversario dell'istituzione del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani
(Cappella del Governatorato, Città del Vaticano, 5 giugno 2020)



Il Cardinale Kurt Koch con i membri dello staff del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani, Cappella del Governatorato, Città del Vaticano, 5 giugno 2020

APPELLO SPIRITUALE ALL'UNITÀ

La lettera agli Efesini, nel quarto capitolo di cui abbiamo appena ascoltato un brano (4, 1-16), contiene le più importanti affermazioni teologiche sulla Chiesa presenti nel Nuovo

Testamento ed è un appassionato appello spirituale rivolto a tutti i battezzati a preservare l'unità nella Chiesa e della Chiesa. Con lodevole chiarezza esprime la convinzione che l'unità è una categoria fondamentale della fede cristiana ed è parte integrante della Chiesa, tanto che la fede cristiana rinuncerebbe a sé stessa se smettesse di cercare l'unità.

Un capo e un corpo

La serietà di questo appello di Paolo emerge già dal fatto che egli scrive dalla prigione, in cui si trova “a motivo del Signore” (4, 1). In una situazione di tale travaglio, infatti, non ci si occupa di quisquillie, ma si dà voce a ciò che davvero arde nella nostra anima. Quanto sia importante l'unità della Chiesa per Paolo risulta ancora di più dal fatto che egli ne individua il fondamento nella storia di Dio con la sua umanità: già prima della creazione del mondo, Dio ha scelto la Chiesa attraverso Cristo e l'ha chiamata a radunarsi come suo popolo. Nella Chiesa è nata una nuova famiglia umana, nella quale Cristo ha fondato la pace.

Da questa prospettiva basata sulla storia della salvezza, la seconda parte della lettera trae conclusioni etiche, la prima delle quali consiste nel dovere di “conservare l'unità dello spirito per mezzo del vincolo della pace. Un solo corpo e un solo spirito... un solo Signore, una sola fede, un solo battesimo. Un solo Dio e Padre di tutti” (4, 3-4). L'unità della Chiesa deriva dalla professione di fede in Gesù Cristo come unico Signore. La tradizione cristiana, basandosi sulla lettera agli Efesini, ha espresso questo stretto legame tra la professione di fede cristiana in Gesù Cristo come unico Signore della Chiesa e la professione di fede nell'unità della Chiesa designando la Chiesa come Corpo e Cristo come Capo.

La lettura dalla Sacra Scrittura ci invita a prendere molto seriamente l'immagine del Capo e del Corpo: da un lato, un corpo senza capo non è più un corpo ma un cadavere; la Chiesa diventa dunque una misera caricatura di se stessa se Cristo non è al suo centro. Dall'altro lato, Cristo, come Capo della sua Chiesa, ha un Corpo visibile e vuole essere presente nel suo Corpo, motivo per cui può esserci una sola Chiesa. Perché Cristo non ha molti corpi, ma è unito all'unico Corpo che è la Chiesa.

L'unità nel vento contrario della postmodernità

La forte enfasi sull'unità della Chiesa può sembrare oggi a molti cristiani un po' esagerata. Ma se consideriamo l'intima unione tra Gesù Cristo e la sua Chiesa, che è il suo Corpo, allora risulta evidente un'incresciosa contraddizione nell'attuale situazione del cristianesimo: da una parte, tutti i cristiani concordano nel professare la fede in una Chiesa che è “una, santa, cattolica e apostolica”. Dall'altra, noi cristiani che professiamo la fede in un'unica Chiesa viviamo ancora in Chiese diverse e separate. Sorge così una domanda urgente: cosa significa per noi l'enfasi posta sull'unità della Chiesa nella lettura di oggi?

Questa domanda è ancora più urgente quando la ricerca ecumenica dell'unità della Chiesa è esposta a un forte vento contrario nello spirito del tempo pluralista e relativista diventato ormai comune oggi. In ciò si vede una chiara differenza con la tradizione cristiana, in cui l'unità era considerata come senso e fondamento della realtà, secondo il principio: “ens et unum convertuntur”. Oggi invece il pluralismo è al centro della cosiddetta esperienza postmoderna della realtà. La convinzione di base postmoderna afferma che non si può e non si deve cercare con il pensiero ciò che sta dietro la pluralità della realtà, se non si vuole essere sospettati di nutrire un pensiero totalitario. Poiché, in linea di principio, la postmodernità comporta un assenso alla pluralità e un sospetto ver-

so tutto ciò che è al singolare, la ricerca dell'unità appare premoderna e antiquata. Questa mentalità postmoderna si è in parte diffusa anche nella situazione ecumenica odierna, laddove la pluralità e la diversità delle Chiese esistenti è considerata come una realtà positiva e ogni sforzo teso alla ricerca dell'unità della Chiesa è guardato con sospetto.

L'unità nella pluralità operata dallo Spirito

In questa situazione, la lettura di oggi ci esorta a mantenere viva la questione dell'unità della Chiesa con amorevole perseveranza. Ciò può avvenire in maniera convincente solo se prendiamo sul serio anche la preoccupazione provata oggi da non pochi cristiani che temono che non vi sia più spazio per la pluralità e la diversità a causa della forte enfasi posta sull'unità.

Questa paura, ovviamente, non ha alcun fondamento, come emerge dalla seconda parte della lettura odierna, nella quale viene descritta la varietà delle vocazioni e dei doni della grazia che, nella loro pluralità, servono a edificare l'unica Chiesa. La fede cristiana riguarda infatti una forma molto particolare di unità, vale a dire un'unità che vive nella diversità e una diversità che si raccoglie nell'unità. La fede cristiana è convinta che possiamo ricevere tale unità nella diversità solo come un dono dello Spirito Santo, come sottolinea Papa Francesco: "lo Spirito Santo è lo Spirito di unità, che non significa uniformità. Solo lo Spirito Santo può suscitare la *diversità*, la molteplicità e, nello stesso tempo, operare l'*unità*."¹

Lo Spirito Santo ci dona questa unità nella diversità, perché ci conduce nel più intimo mistero di Dio professato dalla fede cristiana, nel mistero del Dio uno e trino, in cui si riconciliano la pluralità delle Persone divine e l'unità della sua natura. Il Dio uno e trino è in sé una comunione vivente nell'unità originaria relazionale dell'amore. Alla luce di questo mistero divino, la Chiesa appare come "un popolo che deriva la sua unità dall'unità del Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo"⁴. E la Chiesa è chiamata a rappresentare la comunione del Dio uno e trino nel mondo e a vivere come icona della Trinità.

Vivere l'unità già in cammino verso il suo compimento

In questo senso, per trovare unità nella diversità, noi cristiani, anche se ancora separati, possiamo già essere una sola cosa se estraiamo il veleno dalle divisioni, accettiamo ciò che c'è di fecondo in esse e accogliamo il lato positivo della diversità, sempre alla luce del mistero dell'amore trinitario, che papa Benedetto XVI ha descritto una volta con parole molto belle: "L'amore vero non annulla le legittime differenze, ma le armonizza in una superiore unità, che non viene imposta *dall'esterno*, ma che *dall'interno* dà forma, per così dire, all'insieme."²

Tutto ciò ci pone davanti agli occhi quell'unità della Chiesa che è possibile vivere già da oggi. La convivenza ecumenica consiste essenzialmente in uno scambio di doni. Nessuna comunità cristiana è infatti tanto povera da non poter offrire il suo specifico contributo alla più ampia comunità della cristianità. E nessuna comunità cristiana è tanto ricca da non aver bisogno di essere arricchita dalle altre, dato che si tratta di "raccogliere quello che lo Spirito ha seminato" nelle altre comunità cristiane "come un dono anche per noi"⁴

Tale unità nella diversità la possiamo vivere fin da oggi. Ma lo faremo in modo credibile solo se non ci fermeremo là, accontentandoci di vivere pacificamente gli uni accanto agli altri, ma se ci metteremo insieme in cammino per ritrovare l'unità perduta della Chiesa. Il Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani è stato mosso da questa preoccupazione sin dall'inizio. Il suo 60mo anniversario è soprattutto

un'occasione di ringraziamento: un ringraziamento rivolto a tutti coloro che hanno lavorato nel Pontificio Consiglio in questi lunghi anni e che hanno dedicato il loro tempo, il loro pensiero e soprattutto la loro vita al servizio dell'unità dei cristiani. Ringraziamo tutti i consultori e i membri delle varie Commissioni che cercano di studiare in una luce nuova e di superare le cause di molte divisioni. Ringraziamo tutti i Pontefici che si sono susseguiti, durante e dopo il Concilio Vaticano Secondo, ognuno dei quali ha avuto un cuore aperto alla causa ecumenica e nel cui mandato ci è concesso lavorare.

Ringraziamo lo Spirito Santo che muove i cuori, affinché si possano aprire alla volontà di Gesù Cristo: che tutti siano una cosa sola. Ora possiamo convogliare tutta la nostra gratitudine in quella grande celebrazione di resa di grazie che è la Santa Eucaristia, in cui ci è già stata data quell'unità così vividamente ritratta nella lettura odierna: "Un solo corpo e un solo spirito, come una sola è la speranza alla quale siete stati chiamati, quella della vostra vocazione; un solo Signore, una sola fede, un solo battesimo. Un solo Dio e Padre di tutti, che è al di sopra di tutti, opera per mezzo di tutti ed è presente in tutti." Amen.

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1. Francesco, Omelia nella Cattedrale dello Spirito Santo a Istanbul, il 29 novembre 2014.
 2. *Lumen gentium*, 4.
 3. Benedetto XVI, Omelia per la celebrazione dei Vespri a conclusione della Settimana di Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani, il 25 gennaio 2006.
 4. Francesco, *Evangelii gaudium*, 246.

**Homilie im Pontifikalamt zur Inauguration des neuen Studienjahres 2020/21
in der Kirche der Zisterzienserabtei Heiligenkreuz
(1. Oktober 2020)**

ALS THEOLOGEN DER WAHRHEIT DES FRIEDENS GOTTES DIENEN

Inauguration zur Friedensmission

Für die heutige Feier der Inauguration des neuen Studienjahres hält uns die Liturgie der Kirche eine hilfreiche Perikope aus dem Evangelium des Lukas bereit, nämlich diejenige von der Aussendung der zweiundsiebzig Jünger. Nachdem Lukas am Beginn des neunten Kapitels die Aussendung der zwölf Jünger berichtet hat, erzählt er nun am Beginn des zehnten Kapitels die zweite grosse Sendung, die Jesus vorgenommen hat. Mit der Aussendung der zwölf Apostel, die die Stammväter Israels repräsentieren, zeigt Jesus seine Intention an, ein neues Israel zu bilden, das auf den zwölf neuen Stammvätern gebaut ist. Bei der zweiten Aussendung sind es demgegenüber zweiundsiebzig Jünger. Da gemäss einer alten Überlieferung Israels zweiundsiebzig die Zahl aller Völker der Erde ist, gibt Jesus zu verstehen, dass er nicht nur die zwölf Stämme Israels sammeln, sondern seine Jünger zu allen Völkern der Erde senden will. Denn seine Botschaft vom Nahkommen des Reiches Gottes gilt allen Völkern der Erde und geht alle an.

Die Aussendung der zweiundsiebzig Jünger ist gleichsam die erneute Inauguration der Mission Jesu, seine Botschaft zu allen Menschen zu tragen und die Menschen in die Wahrheit seiner Botschaft hineinzuführen. Auch mit der heutigen Feier der Heiligen Messe findet eine Inauguration statt, die Eröffnung eines neuen Studienjahres.

Auch sie ist eine Aussendung, deren Intention darin besteht, sich im theologischen Studium in die Botschaft Jesu zu vertiefen, um die Wahrheit dieser Botschaft noch besser kennen zu lernen, sie sich persönlich anzueignen und auf diese Weise auf die Mission, diese Botschaft zu den Menschen zu tragen, vorbereitet zu werden.

Von daher sind wir gut beraten, danach zu fragen, worin genauer die Mission besteht, die Jesus damals den zweiundsiebzig Jüngern anvertraut hat und mit der er auch uns heute betraut. Gemäss dem heutigen Evangelium beinhaltet diese Mission, dass die Jünger in jedes Haus, das sie betreten, einen Gruss bringen, und zwar einen spezifischen Gruss, der heisst: „Friede diesem Haus“. Auf den ersten Blick erscheint dies uns Christen heute etwas harmlos und vielleicht einfach selbstverständlich. Dieser oberflächliche Anschein dürfte aber verfliegen, sobald wir bedenken, dass es sich dabei nicht einfach um einen alltäglichen Gruss, sondern um den Gruss Gottes selbst handelt. Es ist nämlich genau jener Gruss, mit dem in der Heiligen Weihnacht die Engel die Geburt des Erlösers verkündet haben: „Verherrlicht ist Gott in der Höhe, und auf Erden ist Friede bei den Menschen seiner Gnade“ (Lk 2, 14). Und es ist derselbe Gruss, mit dem Christus nach seiner Auferstehung zum ersten Mal den verängstigten Jüngern begegnet ist, als er durch die verschlossenen Türen in ihre Mitte hinein gekommen ist und zu ihnen gesagt hat: „Friede sei mit euch!“ (Joh 20, 19b).

Der Friede ist das kostbarste Geschenk, das Gott uns Menschen macht. Gott ist in die Welt zu uns Menschen gekommen, um uns seinen Frieden zu bringen. Sein Sohn, Jesus Christus hat am Kreuz Frieden zwischen den Verfeindeten gestiftet und in seiner Auferstehung diesen Frieden erneut in die Welt gebracht. Der christliche Glaube ist deshalb überzeugt, dass diesen Frieden die Welt sich selbst nicht geben kann. Dies zeigt uns nicht nur der Anblick der heutigen Welt, die von so viel Krisen und Leiden, Konflikten und Kriegen stigmatisiert ist, sondern dessen werden wir auch ansichtig, wenn wir in die Katakomben unserer eigenen Herzen blicken und dabei feststellen müssen, wie viel Unfriede und Unversöhntheit in uns wuchern und gefährliche Metastasen bilden. Der Anblick der Welt und der Blick ins eigene Herz zeigen uns, dass der erste und der wichtigste Friede der Friede mit Gott im eigenen Herzen ist. Er ist der wirkliche Friede, und alle anderen Friedensgestalten sind Spiegelungen dieses Friedens. Nur der Mensch, der innere Befriedigung erfährt und im letzten im Frieden mit Gott lebt, kann jene Haltung haben, die auch dem Frieden unter den Menschen und Völkern dient. Der Friede der Welt beginnt im eigenen Herzen mit dem Frieden, den allein Gott uns geben kann.

Kein Friede ohne Wahrheit

In diesen Frieden Gottes hineinzuführen, ist die Sendung Jesu gewesen, mit der er auch seine Jünger betraut. In diesen Frieden uns hineinführen zu lassen, ist auch der tiefste Sinn des theologischen Studiums, das uns im kommenden Jahr wieder bevorsteht. Das Studium legt uns vor allem die Einsicht nahe, dass es keinen Frieden oder höchstens einen billigen Frieden an der Wahrheit vorbei gibt, dass die eigentliche Zwillingsschwester des Friedens vielmehr die Wahrheit ist. Da der Friede in der Einheit der Menschen besteht, kann allein die Wahrheit die Menschen in die Einheit hinein versammeln, und zwar die eine Wahrheit, die zugleich die Liebe ist.

Diese Wahrheit versteht sich heute, sogar in der Kirche, nicht mehr von selbst und muss deshalb im Theologiestudium eingeübt werden. „Was ist Wahrheit?“: Diese Frage, mit der bereits der Prätor Pilatus auf das Selbstbekenntnis Jesu, dass er für die

Wahrheit Zeugnis ablege, geantwortet hat, geht gleichsam als ein skeptisches Gegen-dogma zur Wahrheit Jesu durch die Jahrhunderte der christlichen Geschichte hindurch bis auf den heutigen Tag. In der Gegenwart stellt sich diese Frage sogar noch viel radikaler: Sind wir Menschen überhaupt fähig und in der Lage, Wahrheit zu erkennen? Gibt es überhaupt Wahrheit, oder gibt es nur verschiedene Meinungen und Überzeugungen, die wir Menschen gegenseitig tolerieren müssen, um einigermaßen zusammenleben zu können? Was bleibt angesichts dieser gross gewordenen Angst vor der Wahrheit – wenn nicht die Zuflucht zum pluralistischen und relativistischen Geist der heutigen Zeit, demgemäss jeder Mensch seine eigene Wahrheit haben kann und hat?

In dieser Situation ist christliche Theologie erst recht berufen und verpflichtet, nach der Wahrheit zu fragen und die Frage nach der Wahrheit wachzuhalten, genauer nach der Wahrheit des Glaubens und der Glaubensgemeinschaft der Kirche. Denn wahr ist nicht einfach das, was für mich wahr ist, sondern nur dasjenige, was für alle wahr sein kann und wahr ist und was uns zur Gemeinschaft zusammenführt. Der Theologe verkündet deshalb nicht einfach sein eigenes Wort, sondern er muss das Wort eines Anderen ausrichten. Er ist Treuhänder des Wortes desjenigen, der von sich sagt: „Ich bin der Weg und die Wahrheit und das Leben“ (Joh 14, 6). Der Theologe dient dem Wort des lebendigen Gottes, das ihm zu treuen Händen anvertraut ist und das er nicht verpannen darf, wie der Apostel Paulus mit drastischen Worten einschärft: „Wir sind nicht wie die vielen anderen, die mit dem Wort Gottes ein Geschäft machen. Wir verkünden es aufrichtig und in Christus, von Gott her und vor Gott“ (2 Kor 2, 17).

Das Wort von Gott her und vor Gott verkünden, dies bedeutet vor allem, es nicht einfach als ein historisches Wort zu verkünden, das von einer langen Vergangenheit her auf uns zu kommt. Der Theologe hat das Wort Gottes vielmehr als ein solches zu vertreten, das Gott zwar durch Menschen einer vergangenen Zeit gesprochen hat, das er aber zugleich als ein in jeder Zeit gegenwärtiges Wort uns schenkt. Das Studium der Theologie will uns helfen, in den Texten der Offenbarung dem lebendigen Wort Gottes zu begegnen und es in unser Leben hinein sprechen zu lassen. Billiger ist das Theologiestudium nicht zu haben, wie bereits Origenes von Alexandrien im dritten Jahrhundert betont hat: „Die Ursache der einfältigen Reden von Gott dürfte keine andere sein als die, dass die Schrift nicht geistlich, sondern nach dem blossen Buchstaben aufgefasst wird.“¹ Nur wenn der Theologe, als Lehrer wie als Student, sich selbst immer wieder – geistlich – vom Wort Gottes treffen und nähren lässt, kann er sich auch als Stimme des Evangeliums zur Verfügung stellen, um so seinem Wort Raum zu geben.

Ernstfälle der theologischen Mission

Der Theologe ist zunächst immer Hörer des Wortes Gottes, weil er nur so wirklich Diener des Wortes Gottes sein kann. Und nur wenn er in der Wahrheit des Wortes Gottes beheimatet ist, kann er die Sendung wahrnehmen, mit der Jesus im heutigen Evangelium seine Jünger betraut hat. Denn die Sendung, Menschen in den Frieden und die Wahrheit Gottes hineinzuführen, ist keine Pflicht, die dem Glauben äusserlich erst hinzugefügt würde. Sie ist vielmehr die Dynamik und logische Konsequenz des Glaubens selbst. Wenn wir in der Begegnung mit dem Wort Gottes wirklich Jesus Christus begegnet sind und in ihm den lebendigen Gott gefunden haben, dann werden wir von

1. Origenes, Peri archon IV, 2.2.

selbst zu unseren Freunden gehen und ihnen sagen: Wir haben Den gefunden, Der für uns Liebe, Leben und Wahrheit ist.

Hier sehe ich den tiefen Sinn, dass die Kirche uns als Patronin der Weltmission die heilige Theresia von Lisieux, derer wir heute gedenken, geschenkt hat. Sie hat nie unmittelbar missionarische Aktivitäten ausgeübt, und sie hat nie ein Missionsland betreten; sie hat aber mit ihrem geistlichen Weg des Kindseins die Wahrheit des Glaubens so ausgestrahlt, dass sie andere zu überzeugen vermochte. Sie hat die Wahrheit des Glaubens vor allem mit ihrem Leiden bezeugt, nicht nur mit ihrem Leiden an der schweren Krankheit der Tuberkulose, sondern auch mit ihrem Leiden an Gott, an seiner Verlassenheit in den dunklen Nächten ihres Lebens.

Dass die Mission, mit der Jesus seine Jünger betraut, sie vor Leiden nicht verschont, sondern sie ins Leiden hinein führt: auch diesbezüglich spielt Jesus mit offenen Karten, wenn er zu seinen Jüngern sagt: „Ich sende euch wie Schafe mitten unter die Wölfe.“ Damit wird der Ernstfall der christlichen Mission sichtbar. Denn auch den Wölfen hat der christliche Missionar nichts anderes zu bringen als den Frieden Gottes: „Friede diesem Haus“. Er verfügt dabei über keine andere Macht als über das demütige Wort vom Frieden Gottes. Mit rein menschlichen Augen betrachtet ist dies ein hoffnungsloses Unterfangen, da in der Welt nicht die Schafe, sondern immer die Wölfe siegen. Diese trostlose Wahrheit der Weltgeschichte hat Papst Benedikt XVI. einmal schonungslos mit den anschaulichen Worten ausgedrückt: „Kaiphäs und Pilatus waren stärker als Jesus, Nero stärker als Petrus und Paulus, Trajan stärker als Ignatius von Antiochien, Marc Aurel stärker als Polykarp und so die ganze Geschichte hindurch.“²

Dies ist die bittere Wahrheit der Weltgeschichte. Dass sie aber nicht das letzte Wort behält, darin besteht die tröstliche Wahrheit des christlichen Glaubens. Er stellt uns Christus gerade nicht als Wolf vor Augen. So freilich haben die Menschen Jesus damals erwartet, wie vor allem die Zeloten und Sikarier zeigen, die das Reich Gottes mit Gewalt herbeiführen wollten. Auch wir Menschen heute hoffen insgeheim immer wieder, dass Gott mit der Kraft eines Wolfes die Welt und ihre Strukturen aus den Angeln hebt. Doch Christus ist nicht als Wolf und auch nicht als Wölfin gekommen, mit dessen Bild sich das antike Rom zur Schau gestellt hat, um sich mit seiner Ordnungsmacht als Erlöserin der Menschen darzubieten. Jesus Christus ist vielmehr Lamm geworden und hat sich auf die Seite der geschundenen Lämmer gestellt, um mit ihnen mitzuleiden und sie zu erlösen. Christus ist selbst Schaf geworden, er ist unter die Wölfe gegangen und hat das Schicksal von Schafen erlitten. Der christliche Glaube aber verkündet die kraftvolle Wahrheit, dass die Erlösung nicht durch die grossen und mächtigen Tiere kommt, sondern dadurch, dass Christus als Lamm und damit in der Kraft seiner wehrlosen Liebe zu uns Menschen gekommen ist.

Die Wahrheit des christlichen Glaubens heisst: Die Wölfe unserer Welt – sie kommen und gehen; Christus, das geschlachtete Lamm und das gestorbene Schaf ist gekommen und bleibt in Ewigkeit. Ihm gehört der Sieg, weil es nicht ein Sieg von Macht und Gewalt, sondern ein Sieg von Demut und Liebe, ein Sieg seiner „Macht der Milde“³ ist. Von dieser Wahrheit zeugt auch das Martyrium des seligen Zisterzienserpa-

2. J. Ratzinger, „Die Macht der Milde“. 14. Sonntag im Jahreskreis, Madrid, 9. Juli 1989, in: Ders., Predigten. Homilien – Ansprachen – Meditationen. Zweiter Teilband = Gesammelte Schriften 14/2 (Freiburg i. Br. 2019) 792-797, zit. 794.

3. Ebd.

ters Anasztáz János Brenner. Er wurde während des kommunistischen Regimes in Ungarn von einem gemeinen Wolf mit dem Allerheiligsten zu einem angeblichen Verschwörer gelockt, um ihn auf dem Weg dorthin mit 32 Messerstichen zu ermorden. Heute steht der junge Zisterzienser, der mit 26 Jahren sein Leben für den Glauben hingegeben hat, als Märtyrer der Eucharistie, genauer als ungarischer Tarzisius vor uns, der die Wahrheit des Glaubens als Frage auf Leben und Tod bezeugt hat.

In diesen Ernstfall der Wahrheit uns zu vertiefen, um aus ihr zu leben und sie zu den Menschen zu tragen, ist der tiefe Sinn des theologischen Studiums. Bitten wir den Heiligen Geist, dass er uns im kommenden Studienjahr durch die theologischen Lehrer immer tiefer in diese Wahrheit des Glaubens einführt. Und bitten wir ihn, dass er uns aufhilft, damit wir uns von dieser Wahrheit berühren lassen jetzt in der Feier der Eucharistie, in der wir dem geschlachteten Lamm als Sakrament der grenzenlosen Liebe Gottes begegnen und mit Job unsere Hoffnung bezeugen dürfen: „Ich, weiss, mein Erlöser lebt“ (19, 25).

Lesung: Job 19, 21-27

Evangelium: Lk 10, 1-12

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Homilie in der Eucharistiefeier

(Kirche der Katholischen Universität Lublin „Johannes Paul II.“,
16. Oktober 2020)

EHRFURCHT VOR GOTT UND CHRISTLICHE FURCHTLOSIGKEIT

„Fürchtet euch nicht!“

In dieser Zumutung Jesu kulminiert das heutige Evangelium. Diese Zusage dürfte bei uns gewiss zunächst auf offene Ohren und geöffnete Herzen stossen. Denn wir leben in einer Welt, in der wir Grund genug haben, uns zu fürchten. Wir fürchten uns, der Sinn unseres Lebens könnte auf einmal in Frage gestellt werden. Wir fürchten uns, dass eine Freundschaft misslingen oder die Ehe scheitern könnte. Wir fürchten uns um unsere Gesundheit, die vom Coronavirus angegriffen werden könnte, oder dass wir aufgrund der wirtschaftlichen Konsequenzen der Pandemie unsere Arbeit verlieren. Und wenn wir in die grosse Welt hinein blicken, müssen wir Entwicklungen feststellen, die uns fürchten lassen. Denken wir nur an die Globalisierung der Wirtschaft, die weit vorgeschrittene Zerstörung der Ozonschicht und das Flüchtlingsproblem, das dramatische Ausmasse angenommen hat. Diese Entwicklungen lösen in uns Ängste aus. Es kann kein Zweifel bestehen, dass auch die gegenwärtige Lebenssituation von uns Menschen von einer Grundstimmung der Angst geprägt ist.

In dieser Situation hören wir das Wort Jesu: „Fürchtet euch nicht!“ Wenn wir diese Zumutung Jesu in Beziehung mit der Realität unseres Lebens und unserer Welt bringen, stellt sich uns die Frage, mit welcher Vollmacht Jesus denn eine solche Zumutung aussprechen kann. Vielleicht hört sie sich für viele an wie die Zusicherung von Politikern, wenn sie den Bürgern ihre Ängste auszureden oder gar zu verbieten pflegen. Den angesichts von verhängnisvollen Entwicklungen in der heutigen Welt sich ängstigenden Menschen halten sie entgegen, Angst sei in der Politik ein schlechter Ratgeber.

Doch lässt sich die Angst der Menschen einfach in Abrede stellen oder gar verbieten, zumal dort, wo Angst wirklich angebracht ist? Hat nicht der heilige Thomas von Aquin nur zu sehr recht, wenn er in seiner Tapferkeitslehre betont, dass derjenige, der dort keine Angst empfindet, wo Angst angebracht und dringend geboten ist, kein tapferer, sondern ein empfindungsloser Mensch ist? Und gehört die Angst nicht so sehr zum Menschsein von uns Menschen, dass man gleichsam den Menschen abschaffen müsste, wenn man vorgibt, die Angst abschaffen zu können. Denn es gibt für uns Menschen prinzipiell kein angstfreies Leben.

„Mehr wert als viele Spatzen“

Angesichts dieser Feststellungen erhebt sich nochmals die Frage, ob man die Ängste von uns Menschen einfach verbieten kann, wie es Jesus mit seiner Zumutung „Fürchtet euch nicht!“ zu tun scheint. Wir sind deshalb gut beraten, genauer hinzuhören, was Jesus uns wirklich sagen will. Denn Jesus ruft uns nicht nur zu, dass wir uns nicht zu fürchten brauchen; er nennt vielmehr auch einen spezifischen Grund für seine Zumutung: „Ihr seid mehr wert als viele Spatzen.“ Uns nicht fürchten zu müssen, dies ist nicht einfach wegen der gegenwärtigen Situation unseres Lebens und des Zustandes unserer Welt möglich, sondern allein deshalb, weil Gott unbeirrbar treu zu uns Menschen steht und wir bei ihm geborgen sein dürfen, wie Jesus mit einem Bild uns nahelegt, das wir uns realistischere nicht einmal vorstellen können, das uns aber gerade deshalb ungemein berührt: „Verkauft man nicht fünf Spatzen für ein paar Pfennig? Und doch vergisst Gott nicht einen von ihnen. Bei euch aber sind sogar die Haare auf dem Kopf gezählt.“

Mit dieser Verheissung unterscheidet sich Jesus um eine ganze Welt von heutigen Politikern, die den Bürgern ihre Ängste ausreden wollen. Denn das heutige Evangelium zeigt, dass Jesus die Ängste der Menschen ernst nimmt, ja so ernst nimmt, dass er uns auch sagt, vor wem wir uns zu fürchten haben und in der Tat fürchten sollen: „Ich will euch zeigen, wen ihr fürchten sollt: Fürchtet euch vor dem, der nicht nur töten kann, sondern die Macht hat, euch auch noch in die Hölle zu werfen. Ja, das sage ich euch: Ihn sollt ihr fürchten.“ Wenn wir zu dieser Furcht stehen, brauchen wir uns vor nichts mehr zu fürchten. Da gilt vielmehr die Zumutung Jesu: „Fürchtet euch nicht!“ Und Jesus gibt vor allem den einzig tragfähigen Grund an, weshalb wir uns nicht zu fürchten brauchen: „Ihr seid mehr wert als viele Spatzen.“

Dieser Grund, den Jesus im heutigen Evangelium in einem einzigen Satz verdichtet, wird in der Lesung aus dem Brief des Apostels Paulus an die Epheser breit entfaltet und mit verschiedenen Begriffen beschrieben, die eng aufeinander bezogen sind. Es ist die Rede von einem Erbe, das allen gehören wird; es wird von Rettung gesprochen, die uns im Wort der Wahrheit geschenkt ist; und es wird uns Erlösung verheissen, „durch die wir Gottes Eigentum werden“, weil wir von Gott unendlich geliebt sind. Im Geliebtsein liegt der wahre Grund, weshalb wir uns nicht zu fürchten brauchen. Dieser Grund ist nicht unsere eigene Leistung, sondern die Liebe des Dreieinen Gottes, die uns von Ewigkeit ausgesucht und erwählt hat, wie Papst Benedikt XVI. mit den tiefen Worten ausgedeutet hat: „In Gottes Gedanken sind wir ewig schon da, weil wir ja zu seinem Sohn gehören. So haben wir an seiner Ewigkeit, an seiner Vorgängigkeit zu allen Dingen dieser Welt teil. In ihm gibt es uns gleichsam immer schon. Gott sieht uns in ihm an, mit seinen Augen.“⁴¹

Wer darum wissen darf, dass er von den Augen Gottes stets angeschaut wird, dem ist im Leben ein Sinn geschenkt, der grösser und stärker ist als jede Furcht. Denn

er erkennt, dass es nur eine Furcht geben kann, die dem Christen gemäss ist, nämlich die Ehr-Furcht Gott gegenüber. Wer Gott fürchtet, der braucht sich vor nichts mehr zu fürchten. Die Gottesfurcht wird deshalb in der Heiligen Schrift als „Anfang der wahren Weisheit“ gerühmt, weil sie mit der Achtung der Herrlichkeit Gottes identisch ist. Von daher beginnen wir zu verstehen, weshalb die Lesung aus dem Epheserbrief in das Wort mündet, dass wir zum Lob von Gottes Herrlichkeit bestimmt sind. Damit ist der Ernstfall unseres Glaubens angesprochen: Wo Gott nicht mehr gelobt wird, beginnen die Ängste in uns zu wuchern. Wenn wir aber unser Gesicht auf Den hin wenden, der uns mit seinen Augen anschaut, dann brauchen wir uns nicht mehr zu fürchten.

Furchtloser Zeuge des Glaubens

Wer Gott fürchtet, und zwar im Sinne der Ehrfurcht und des dankbaren Lobpreises, der braucht sich vor nichts mehr zu fürchten. Besser als mit vielen Worten wird diese Glaubenswahrheit uns von einem Menschen vor Augen geführt, nämlich vom heiligen Papst Johannes Paul II., der genau heute vor zweiundvierzig Jahren zum Bischof von Rom und Papst der universalen Kirche gewählt worden ist. Er bleibt in unserer dankbaren Erinnerung als ein unerschrockener und furchtloser Zeuge des Glaubens:

Überzeugt vom zutiefst menschenfeindlichen Grundzug des Kommunismus hat er wesentlich zum Zusammenbruch der kommunistischen Regimes und zur Wende in Europa beigetragen, wie kein geringerer als Michail Gorbatschow bekannt hat: „Was in Europa in den letzten Jahren geschehen ist, wäre nicht möglich gewesen ohne diesen Papst, ohne Johannes Paul II., ohne die grosse Rolle, die er im Weltgeschehen gespielt hat.“ Was Papst Johannes Paul II. weltgeschichtlich bewegt und gewirkt hat, dies hat er auch entschieden vertreten, vor allem in seinen bedeutenden Sozialzyklen, in denen er immer wieder den Vorrang des Menschen vor den Produktionsmitteln, den Vorrang der Arbeit vor dem Kapital und den Vorrang der Ethik vor Technik und Politik betont hat. Eng mit dieser sozialen Botschaft zusammen hängt der leidenschaftliche Einsatz von Papst Johannes Paul II. für das menschliche Leben von seinem Beginn bis zu seinem natürlichen Sterben, für einen umfassenden Lebensschutz und für eine „Kultur des Lebens“ angesichts der heutigen „Zivilisation des Todes“.

Mit derselben Kraft und Überzeugung ist Papst Johannes Paul II. auch für den katholischen Glauben eingestanden. Angesichts des schwierigen Erbes der nachkonziliaren Kirche hat er sie im Spannungsfeld von Tradition und Erneuerung und von Glaubenstreue und Zeitgenossenschaft geleitet, indem er sich stets an den Grundimpulsen des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils und noch grundlegender an der biblischen Botschaft orientiert hat. Papst Johannes Paul II. steht so als unermüdlicher und unerschrockener Zeuge des Glaubens vor uns, den er in zahllosen Predigten, Apostolischen Schreiben und vor allem in seinen vierzehn grossen Enzykliken uns nahe gebracht hat.

Dies alles ist nur möglich gewesen, weil Papst Johannes Paul II. seine Kraft und seinen Mut im Glauben an den Dreieinen Gott und im Gebet gefunden hat. Er ist im Geheimnis Gottes ganz verwurzelt gewesen und hat im Vertrauen auf die von Gott her fliessende Liebe zum Menschen gelebt und gewirkt, von dem er stets betont hat, er sei der Weg der Kirche. Der christliche Gottesglaube ist das Fundament gewesen, auf dem er sich bewegt hat. Der Nachfolger des Petrus, des „Felsen“, ist unbeirrbar auf dem Felsen des Glaubens gestanden und hat wie ein Fels in der Brandung der heutigen Zeit gewirkt.

Wir erinnern uns alle an seinen energischen Zuruf bei seiner Amtseinsetzung als Papst, dass wir keine Angst haben sollen: „Non avete paura“. Wir brauchen deshalb

keine Angst zu haben, weil wir Ehrfurcht vor Gott haben. Der heilige Papst Johannes Paul II. ist ein furchtloser Zeuge des Glaubens gewesen und steht vor uns als überzeugender Exeget des heutigen Evangeliums. Dafür sind wir ihm dankbar und lassen unseren Dank einmünden in das grosse Dankgebet der Kirche, in die Feier der Eucharistie. In ihr bringen wir Gott das „Lob seiner Herrlichkeit“ dar, wozu wir in ewiger Liebe von Gott her bestimmt sind; und in dieser Feier dürfen wir die schöne Wahrheit unseres Glaubens ganz persönlich erfahren: „Fürchtet euch nicht! Ihr seid mehr wert als viele Spatzen.“ Amen.

Lesung: Eph 1, 11-14

Evangelium: Lk 12, 1-7

1. J. Ratzinger, „... zum Lob seiner Herrlichkeit“ (Eph 1, 12), in: Ders., Predigten. Homilien – Ansprachen – Meditationen. Zweiter Teilband = Gesammelte Schriften. Band 14/2 (Freiburg i. Br. 2019) 808-809.

OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE DICASTERY

Pontifical Council represented at 50th anniversary of Permanent Mission of Holy See to Council of Europe

(9 January 2020)

Marking the 50th anniversary of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the Council of Europe, a conference was held at the University of Strasbourg from 7-9 January on the theme “Building Europe Together. 50 Years of the Holy See to the Council of Europe”.

The conference, organized by the Faculty of Catholic Theology of Strasbourg together with the Permanent Mission of the Holy See, reflected on the contribution of Christians to the construction of Europe and on its ecumenical dimension.

Reverend Father Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP, official of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, presented a paper on “The Orthodox Churches in Europe Today”.

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Participation in the enthronement of His Beatitude Sahak II as Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople

(11 January 2020)

On 11 January 2020, His Beatitude Sahak II was enthroned as the 85th Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople at the Armenian Cathedral of the Holy Mother of God in Istanbul. The Holy See was represented by a delegation comprising Bishop Rubén Tierrablanca Gonzalez, OFM, Apostolic Vicar of Istanbul and President of the Episcopal Conference of Turkey, together with Monsignor Luis Miguel Munoz Cardaba, Chargé d'affaires at the Apostolic Nunciature in Turkey, and Reverend Father Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP, Official of the Eastern Section of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

At the end of the ceremony Bishop Tierrablanca Gonzalez read the message of Pope Francis and presented the Holy Father's gift, a pectoral cross. In his address on behalf of the delegation Bishop Tierrablanca Gonzalez recalled the visits of Saint Paul VI, Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis to the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, as well as the visits to Rome of the predecessor of Patriarch Sahak II, His Beatitude Mesrob II.

Reverend Destivelle conveyed to the new Patriarch the greetings of Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, who had sent a message to His Beatitude at the time of his election.

The enthronement ceremony was also attended by His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, His Eminence Filiksinos Yusuf Çetin, Patriarchal Vicar of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Turkey, and Most Reverend Levon Boghos Zekian, Catholic Archbishop of Istanbul of the Armenians.

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Participation in meetings of the Faith and Order Working Groups
(8–11 January 2020)

Catholic theologians who are members and consultants of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (Geneva) participated in annual meetings of working groups recently held in Bossey, Switzerland. From 8–11 January 2020, Father Andrzej Choromanski (PCPCU) attended a meeting of the Ecclesiology Study Group, which continued to analyse the responses to “The Church: Towards a Common Vision” (TCTCV), a Faith and Order convergence statement on the Church published in 2013. The 75 responses from individual churches, including the Response of the Catholic Church, as well as national councils of churches, ecumenical groups, and individual scholars received by the Geneva office of the Commission show a remarkable level of convergence among various Christian traditions regarding the nature, mission and unity of the Church. The final report on the TCTCV process together with studies on sixteen themes identified as relevant in the responses will be published this year.

Professor Dr Myriam Wijlens (University of Erfurt, Germany), Professor David Kirchhoffer (Australian Catholic University, Brisbane) and Father Professor William Henn (Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome) represent the Catholic Church in the study group on Moral Discernment in the churches. The group met in Bossey from 10–14 January 2020 exploring the common ground that churches from different traditions hold in relation to moral issues that continue to divide them. Despite remaining divergences, several similarities can be uncovered regarding the processes in the churches leading to moral discernment. Reflecting on examples taken from history, the group sought to develop means that might enable the churches to understand better how moral discernment processes occur in their own and other traditions. It is hoped that this will assist churches to constructively engage in conversation about ethical decision-making.

On Saturday 11 January both groups met together for a preliminary discussion on the possibility of organizing the World Conference on Faith and Order in 2025 in order to commemorate the 1700th anniversary of the first ecumenical council, Nicea 325.

**Annual joint staff meeting of the Lutheran World Federation and
the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity**
(Geneva, 14 January 2020)

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) held their annual joint staff meeting on 14 January in Geneva. LWF General Secretary Reverend Dr Martin Junge and PCPCU President Kurt Cardinal Koch co-chaired the meeting at the LWF Communion Office.

At the meeting, the LWF and the PCPCU agreed to jointly mark the 500th anniversary of the excommunication of Luther in 1521.

In the spirit of the pledge of Catholics and Lutherans to continue moving from conflict to communion, the joint event will bring into focus the important ecumenical developments of recent times. It will outline how the ecumenical journey of recent decades has made it possible to relate to a painful moment in history with an openness towards the gift of unity, for which Lutherans and Catholics continue to pray and work.

The event will take place in Rome and will include a liturgical service. To express this ecumenical openness, it will take place on 25 June 2021, in anticipation of the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, which was presented on that date in 1530.

Speaking about this joint plan, the LWF General Secretary Junge reflected: “History cannot be undone. Yet, as believers, we can rely on the gifts of understanding, healing and reconciliation to continue shaping the relationship between Catholics and Lutherans. We will remember the events that took place five centuries ago, yet we will not remain in the past but embrace the future into which God continues to call us.”

In his reflections, PCPCU President Koch said: “We cannot erase what has happened, but we must pay attention, so that the burden of the past does not make the future impossible. When we, after 500 years, look back on the Diet of Worms and Luther's excommunication, we do not return to conflict on our way to communion. Rather, we want to continue on the path of reconciliation.”

In their annual staff meetings, LWF and PCPCU update each other on major developments, discuss their bilateral process and envision specific plans for joint work.



Revd Father Augustinus Sander, OP, Revd Dr Martin Junge, Cardinal Kurt Koch, Revd Anne Burghardt, Bishop Brian Farrell, Annual joint staff meeting of LWF and PCPCU, Geneva, 14 January 2020

Participation in the Ecumenical Consultation
“Towards a More Responsive and Inclusive Ecumenical Vision”
(Antelias, Lebanon, 31 January–1 February 2020)



*His Holiness Catholicos Aram I with Bishop Brian Farrell and other participants, Antelias, 1 February 2020
Photo © Armenian Church Catholicosate of Cilicia | Communication & Information Department*

On 31 January and 1 February an Ecumenical Consultation on the theme ‘Towards a More Responsive and Inclusive Ecumenical Vision’ took place at the Armenian Catholicosate in Antelias, Lebanon, hosted His Holiness Catholicos Aram I.

The participants, experienced ecumenists from many parts of the world, reflected on the present state of the ecumenical movement and the need for a more inclusive and responsive approach to the challenges of this time. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity was represented by Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary.

On Sunday 2 February the group attended the Solemn Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral Church of the Great House of Cilicia, presided over by His Holiness Catholicos Aram I. A report was issued after the conclusion of the meeting.

Participation in the Conference at the San Lazzaro
Mekhitarist Monastery of Venice
(7–9 February 2020)

A conference on the theme “Faith and Works” jointly promoted by the Mekhitarist Congregation and the Legation of the Armenian Apostolic Church for Western Europe was held from 7–9 February at San Lazzaro Mekhitarist Monastery on the island of San Lazzaro of Venice.

Gathering representatives of the Armenian communities throughout the world and from different contexts – ecclesiastical, academic, literature, commerce, art – the conference reflected on issues such as faith in the digital age, new urban situations as a challenge for living one’s faith, and prayer as the source and strength of faith.

Reverend Father Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP, representing the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, read the message (cf. p.136) of Cardinal Kurt Koch,

President of the Dicastery, in which the Cardinal highlighted the ecumenical dimension of the work of the Venerable Mekhitar, an exemplar of “cultural ecumenism”. “He achieved in his work a synthesis, or better [...] an ‘exchange of gifts’ or a ‘breath taken with two lungs’, between the monastic sapiential theology of the Armenian tradition and Western systematic theology, between the Armenian humanistic ideal and the Western classical”.

**Fourth anniversary of historic meeting between
Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill**
(12 February 2020)



Participants in the conference “The Saints – Signs and Seeds of Unity”, Angelicum, 12 February 2020

Two main events took place in Rome on 12 February to mark the fourth anniversary of the historic meeting in Havana in 2016 between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill. Both events, a conference followed by a concert, were jointly organized by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The conference on “The Saints – Signs and Seeds of Unity” was held at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas – Angelicum. In his address, Cardinal Kurt Koch welcomed participants, and reflected on the themes of the *Joint Declaration* signed in Havana which have been taken up in the successive anniversaries of its signing. Cardinal Koch presented a paper (cf. p.138) on the theme of the celebration, namely the ecumenism of holiness, calling to mind §4 of the Joint Declaration in which thanksgiving to God is given for our shared “spiritual Tradition of the first millennium of Christianity,” the witnesses of which are “the Most Holy Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, and the saints we venerate. Among them are innumerable martyrs who have given witness to their faithfulness to Christ and have become the “seed of Christians”. Cardinal Koch continued, “The veneration of the saints is a particularly effective means of inviting and welcoming of faithful into the ecumenical movement. It is a constructive way of providing a deeper engagement of the people of God in the rapprochement between our Churches”. Cardinal Koch affirmed that the blood of our martyrs must

unite us in the “ecumenism of blood” – *Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum*, concluding that “the suffering of so many Christians creates a unity that is stronger than the differences that still separate our Churches” and that “through the blood our martyrs we are already one”.

Metropolitan Hilarion then spoke of the historical overview of the meeting in Havana, and its importance in defining the prospect for developing bilateral relations for many years ahead. His Eminence reflected, “Our meeting is held in Rome, a city in which the relics of the holy first hierarchal apostles Peter and Paul and of many other apostles, martyrs and people of God rest ... The theme of holiness and saints occupies an important place in the Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill”. Metropolitan Hilarion also recalled the exposition of the relics of St Nicholas and Moscow and St Petersburg loaned from Bari.

Presentations were given by Revd Alexiy Andreyev, lecturer at the St Tikhon Orthodox University of the Humanities, on “The Understanding of Holiness in the Russian Orthodox Church” and Father Marko Rupnik, SJ, on “Holiness and Communion”. Testimonials followed by Archpriest Kirill Kaleda on “Holy Martyrs Vladimir Ambartsumov and Archpriest Gleb Kaleda” and Sister Gabriella Masturzo on Blessed Maria Gabriella of Unity. The film “The Apostle Peter” directed by Metropolitan Hilarion was premiered afterwards accompanied by an Italian translation.

Later in the evening, a concert was held at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran by the Synodal Choir of Moscow, directed by Maestro Aleksej Puzakov, together with the Papal Sistine Chapel Choir, directed by Maestro Monsignor Marcos Pavan.



Meeting of the Joint Working Group for Cultural Projects between the Holy See and the Russian Orthodox Church

(12 February 2020)



Meeting of Joint Working Group between Holy See and Russian Orthodox Church, 12 February 2020

On 12 February 2020, the Joint Working Group for Coordination of Cultural and Social Projects between the Holy See and the Russian Orthodox Church held its annual

meeting at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome. Founded in 2015, the Joint Working Group aims at promoting a range of initiatives in the cultural, academic and social spheres.

Cardinal Kurt Koch, Co-President of the Joint Working Group, welcomed the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church, led by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Department for External Church Relations (DECR) of the Moscow Patriarchate, and Co-President of the Group.

The meeting commenced with a reflection on the work undertaken to date, particularly the successful outcome of the reciprocal study visits of young clergy to deepen understanding and friendship between the two Churches. Both Cardinal Koch and Metropolitan Hilarion also highlighted the importance of widening the terms of reference of the Joint Working Group by including social issues that are commonly shared. Lastly, the Group discussed the implementation of new projects to be carried out in the cultural and social spheres in 2020–2021, including humanitarian projects in the Middle East.

Participation in 29th Seminar for Ecumenism in Spain (Madrid, 10–12 February 2020)

The 29th Seminar for episcopal delegates and secretariat directors of Spanish dioceses was held at the venue of the Bishops' Conference of Spain from 10–12 February 2021 presided by Bishop Manuel Herrero Fernández and D. Rafael Vázquez, Director of the Secretariat for Interconfessional Relations. The theme of the meeting was “The Evangelical Churches and Ecclesial Communities and Their Presence in Spain”.

Among other relators, speakers included Julio Díaz Piñero, rector of the Faculty of Theology of the Evangelical Baptist Union of Spain; Gabino Fernández Campos, historian and director of the Centre for Studies on the Reformation; Antonio Montañés J., researcher and professor at the University of St Andrews; Emmanuel Buch Camí, pastor of the ‘Cristo Vive’ Evangelical Church of Madrid; Monsignor Juan Usma Gómez of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; and Santiago Madrigal, SJ, professor at the Comillas Pontifical University.



Monsignor Usma Gómez speaks at the 29th Seminar for Ecumenism in Spain, 10–12 February 2020

Participation in Third Meeting of the Pro Oriente Commission for Ecumenical Encounter between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church
(Vienna, 24–26 February 2020)

The third meeting of the Pro Oriente Commission for Ecumenical Encounter between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church (CEE) was held in Vienna from 24–26 February. The meeting gathered theologians of the Catholic Church and of the diverse Oriental Orthodox Churches (Syrian Orthodox Church, Armenian Apostolic Church – See of Etchmiadzin, Coptic Orthodox Church, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, with the exception of the Eritrean Orthodox Church). Reverend Hyacinthe Destivelle, Official of the Oriental Section, represented the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity as an observer. The exchanges focused on information about the official and unofficial dialogues between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, as well as on the preparation of the Second Consultation of the CEE.

The CEE consists of representatives of the Catholic Church and of each of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, as well as observers and consultants. It was established in Vienna in November 2015 to promote unofficial scholarly ecumenical encounter between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. A first Consultation was organized in 2016 in Vienna on the topic “Signs of Communion and Communication after the Division”.



Participants in Pro Oriente Commission for Ecumenical Encounter between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church, Vienna, 24–26 February 2020

**Participation in Presentation in Moscow of the document
“Serving Communion” of the Saint Irenaeus Group**
(Moscow, 28 February 2020)

The Russian translation of the document *Serving Communion. Rethinking the Relationship between Primacy and Synodality* of the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox–Catholic Working Group was presented on 28 February at the Saints Cyril and Methodius Institute of

Post-Graduate and Doctoral Studies in Moscow. After a general introduction on the group's methodology presented by Dr Johannes Oeldemann, Co-Secretary, three other Group members outlined the different parts of the document: Reverend Vladimir Khlukap, Vice Rector of the Academy of Theology of Saint Petersburg, presented the hermeneutical part; Reverend Hyacinthe Destivelle, Official of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the historical part; and Dr Evgeny Pilipenko, member of the editorial committee of the Orthodox Encyclopedia, the systematic part.

Comments on the document were presented by Dr Andrey Shishkov, Secretary of the Synodal Theological Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as by Archpriest Vladimir Shmalij, Vice-Rector of the Doctoral School, and Dr E. Selivestrova of the same School.

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group, established in 2004 at Paderborn (Germany), is composed of 26 theologians, 13 Orthodox and 13 Catholics, from a number of European countries, the Middle East, and the Americas. Its 17th meeting will be held in October 2020 at the Institute for Ecumenical Studies of the Angelicum.



Presentation of document “Serving Communion” of Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group, Moscow, 28 February 2020

60th Anniversary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (5 June 2020)

On 5 June 2020 the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity celebrated the 60th anniversary of its foundation. On the day of Pentecost 5 June 1960, Saint John XXIII created the then Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity with the *Motu proprio Superno dei Nutu*. The establishment of the Secretariat marked the first official step of the Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement.

As stated in the recent letter of the Holy Father to Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the anniversary will be marked by two initiatives. The first is the *Ecumenical Vademecum* (cf. p.225) for bishops, to be published in autumn, as an encouragement and guide for to bishops their ecu-

menical responsibilities. The second is the launch of the journal *Acta Œcumenica*, renewing the Dicastery's bulletin *Information Service/Service d'Information*, which aims at providing a useful instrument to all those working in the service of unity.

To commemorate the anniversary, several articles prepared by the Officials of the Pontifical Council were published in *L'Osservatore Romano* from 4 June (cf. p.399).

Cardinal Koch presided over a Mass of thanksgiving in the Chapel of Our Lady Mother of the Family situated in the Governorate of the Vatican on Friday 5 June, during which he delivered a homily (cf. p.176).



Saint Pope John XXIII and the first staff of the Secretariat (from left to right): Monsignor Jean-François Arrighi, Cardinal Augustin Bea, Monsignor (later Cardinal) Johannes Willebrands, and Father Thomas Stransky

Launch of *Acta Œcumenica*

(15 June 2020)

Marking the 25th anniversary of *Ut unum sint*, as well as the 60th anniversary of its foundation, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity launched its new publication *Acta Œcumenica*, following on from *Information Service/Service d'information* which had been issued since 1967.

Complementing the website offering immediate updates on ecumenical news from the Holy See, *Acta Œcumenica* is a complete reference source on the official ecumenical documents of the Holy See, generally published in their original language, for academic and research purposes and for all those interested in the ecumenical pursuit.

Nuovi Membri e Consulteri del Pontificio Consiglio

(6 luglio 2020)

La nomina di nuovi membri e consulteri del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani da parte di Papa Francesco è stata annunciata oggi dalla Sala Stampa della Santa Sede.

Il Dicastero è lieto di avere ora tra i suoi membri il Cardinale Joseph William Tobin, CSsR, Arcivescovo di Newark (USA); S.E. Mons. Mario Grech, Vescovo em. di Gozo (Malta), Pro-Segretario del Sinodo dei Vescovi; S.E. Mons. Paulo Cezar Costa, Vescovo di São Carlos (Brasile); S.E. Mons. Paul Rouhana, OLC, Vescovo tit. di Antarado e Ausiliare di Joubbé, Sarba e Jounieh dei Maroniti (Libano); S.E. Mons. Richard Kuuia Baawobr, M.Afr., Vescovo di Wa (Ghana).

Il Santo Padre ha inoltre nominato consultori del Dicastero S.E. Mons. Giacomo Morandi, Arcivescovo tit. di Cerveteri, Segretario della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, e S.E. Mons. Giorgio Demetrio Gallaro, Arcivescovo, Vescovo em. di Piana degli Albanesi, Segretario della Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali.

Participation in Global Christian Forum Online Meetings (2–3 September 2020)

On 3 September 2020, Reverend Andrzej Choromanski represented the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity at the video Committee meeting of the Global Christian Forum (GCF). Twenty nine participants representing almost all Christian traditions from all over the world met online to advance the aims of the GCF during the pandemic.

The discussion was based on a paper delivered by Reverend Huibert van Beek, the founding secretary of the GCF. In his reflections he recalled that the GCF was established to create an open space wherein representatives from a broad range of Christian churches and movements could meet on an equal basis in order to testify together to their faith, fostering mutual respect, addressing together common concerns and promoting Christian unity. He underlined that since the foundation of the GCF, unity and mission have been the two fundamental theological concepts inspiring its activities. During the discussion that followed it was agreed that the Forum should intensify its future work in two directions: reaching new generations of leadership and encouraging regional and national meetings of Christian leaders. Taking place during the time when the ecumenical family celebrates the Season of Creation, the meeting ended with the prayer of the Canticle of Creation of Saint Francis.

The Committee meeting was preceded the day before by the meeting of the Facilitation Group, which is an advisory body to the Secretary composed of representatives of the four so-called pillars of the GCF, including the World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance, Pentecostal World Fellowship and Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. It also includes presidents of the two foundations that support financially the GCF.

The GCF aims at fostering fraternal relationships among Christians from different traditions that may lead to common witness. Its distinctive mark is the practice of sharing personal and ecclesial faith stories.

WCC Assembly Planning Committee (22–25 September 2020)

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity was represented by Reverend Andrzej Choromanski at the online meeting of the Assembly Planning Committee (APC) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) held from 22-25 September 2020. The APC is a counselling body that assists the Assembly Secretariat and the WCC governing bodies in planning for the Assembly. Over the four days, some thirty representatives of the member churches together with ecumenical partners discussed the thematic and practical aspects of the Assembly in order to provide further direction for the development of the programme, taking into consideration the implications of COVID-19 on the life of the churches and ecumenical relations. The APC received an update from the interim General Secretary of the WCC on the decision to postpone the Assembly, now rescheduled to take place from 31 August to 8 September 2022 in Karlsruhe, Germany on the theme “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.”

The World Council of Churches has held ten Assemblies to date, starting with the founding Assembly in 1948 in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The last one took place in 2013 in Busan, South Korea, on the theme “God of life, lead us to justice and peace”. Official Catholic observers have taken part in this important WCC event since the Third Assembly in New Delhi in 1961.

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Corso “Ut unum sint” di formazione continua in ecumenismo (Anno accademico 2020–2021)

In ottobre 2020 è iniziato il secondo anno del Corso “Ut unum sint” di formazione continua in ecumenismo. Il Corso, inaugurato nel 2019 in occasione del 25° anniversario dell’enciclica *Ut unum sint*, è una proposta dell’Istituto di Studi Ecumenici dell’Angelicum in collaborazione con il Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell’Unità dei Cristiani.

Questa proposta formativa è rivolta a delegati diocesani per l’ecumenismo, a studenti delle varie facoltà pontificie e degli istituti superiori di scienze religiose, nonché a sacerdoti, religiosi e religiose, laici e laiche desiderosi di aggiornare e approfondire le loro conoscenze in campo ecumenico.

Il programma prevede, tra l’altro, lo studio delle relazioni con gli Evangelicali e Pentecostali, con il Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese, come pure riflessioni riguardo a temi essenziali quali la *communicatio in sacris*, il battesimo, i matrimoni misti, la giustizia e la pace. Si affronteranno anche temi relativi al dialogo con l’ebraismo, al dialogo inter-religioso, così come all’ecumenismo in Italia. Ogni modulo prevede una visita ecumenica a Roma. Le lezioni sono tenute in lingua italiana da professori di diverse Chiese. Il programma si svolge per un periodo di due anni.

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Cattedra Tillard
(Anno accademico 2019–2020)

In occasione del 25mo anniversario dell'*Ut unum sint* (1995) si è tenuto nell'anno accademico 2019-2020 presso la Pontificia Università San Tommaso d'Aquino (Angelicum) un ciclo mensile di conferenze dedicate all'enciclica. Il programma di conferenze si intitolava "L'enciclica *Ut unum sint*: Tra profezia e realtà. 25 anni dopo".

L'iniziativa è stata promossa congiuntamente dall'Istituto di Studi Ecumenici dell'Angelicum e dal Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani, nell'ambito della "Cattedra Tillard". I relatori, figure di spicco del cristianesimo odierno, hanno affrontato diversi argomenti relativi all'enciclica e al movimento ecumenico.

La "Cattedra Tillard", dedita all'ecumenismo, è stata fondata nel 2003 presso l'Angelicum in onore del famoso teologo ed ecumenista francese Jean-Marie Tillard, OP (1927-2000).

Il programma nell'anno accademico 2019–2020 comprendeva:

25 ottobre 2019

Fra Enzo Bianchi, Fondatore del Monastero di Bose
Ut unum sint: Punto di arrivo e punto di partenza

15 novembre 2019

Dott.ssa Maria Voce, Presidente del Movimento dei Focolari
Ut unum sint e i nuovi movimenti ecclesiali: il carisma dell'unità

13 dicembre 2019

Rev.do Olav Fykse Tveit, Segretario generale del Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese
Ut unum sint e il suo contributo al movimento ecumenico

17 gennaio 2020

Sua Eminenza Cardinale Walter Kasper, Presidente emerito del Pontificio Consiglio per la promozione dell'unità dei cristiani
Ut unum sint: appello alla riforma e alla ricomposizione dell'unità

14 febbraio 2020

Sua Beatitudine Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Arcivescovo Maggiore della Chiesa Greco-Cattolica Ucraina
Ut unum sint: la sua rilevanza per le Chiese cattoliche orientali

27 novembre 2020

Frère Alois, Priore della Comunità di Taizé
Ut unum sint: nuovi orizzonti, nuove generazioni

4 dicembre 2020

Conferenza per il 25e anniversario dell'Enciclica *Ut unum sint* e il 60e anniversario del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani

Cardinale Kurt Koch, Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la promozione dell'unità dei cristiani

Ut unum sint: la via imprescindibile della Chiesa

Professore Philippe Chenaux, Professore della Pontificia Università Lateranense

Un indirizzo a Roma? La nascita del Segretariato per l'Unità dei Cristiani (1960)

18 dicembre 2020

Arcivescovo Giobbe di Telmessos

Rappresentante del Patriarcato ecumenico presso il Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese
Copresidente della Commissione mista internazionale di dialogo teologico tra la Chiesa cattolica e la Chiesa ortodossa

Ut unum sint: una lettura ortodossa

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**Participation in Annual Conference of the Secretaries of
Christian World Communions**

(20–22 October 2020)

More than thirty participants attended the annual Conference of the Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CS/CWC) that took place online from 20–22 October 2020. The Catholic Church was represented by Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, assisted by Reverend Andrzej Choromanski, staff member responsible for the multilateral relations.

The meeting was chaired by Reverend Gretchen Castle (Friends World Committee for Consultation), with Reverend Dr Ganoune Diop (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists), acting as secretary. The conference opened with a prayer led by former Chair Reverend Dr Martin Junge (Lutheran World Federation), followed by a time of sharing from the participants on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the life of churches. It was underlined that the anti-COVID-19 measures had created an unprecedented challenge for Christian communions worldwide, limiting the access of the faithful to the usual pastoral care and restraining ecumenical relations. At the same time, the crisis had necessitated the use of modern technologies, with churches developing new and enduring forms of pastoral ministry and ecumenical life.

Time was dedicated to reflection on the nature and identity of the CS/CWC. It was underlined that the Conference is not an organisation with programmatic aims and determined agenda but a fraternal forum of secretaries from diverse Christian communions as well as representatives of some global ecumenical organisations who meet annually to exchange information, learn from each other and nurture fraternal relationships among their churches.

The recent encyclical of Pope Francis *Fratelli tutti* was acknowledged as an important encouragement to all Christian communions to unite efforts in building a culture of encounter, solidarity and universal fraternity across political, social, and religious borders.

Participation in Webinar of the WCC on Bilateral Dialogues (27 October 2020)

On 27 October the World Council of Churches (WCC) hosted the first in a webinar series on “Ecumenical Bilateral Dialogues: Yesterday and Today” focusing on the importance of ecumenical bilateral dialogues for the churches. The theme of the first webinar was “The role of bilateral dialogues within the one ecumenical movement: experience and results”.

Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity was a speaker in the event. Reflecting that while we are all aware that divisions between churches have existed since the beginning, “[w]hat is new in this era of ecumenical relations is the fact that the churches themselves are now systematically talking to each other about Christian unity”. He continued, “Bilateral dialogue is no longer a question of individuals interested to get together and talk—it is an activity of the churches themselves.”

The webinar drew on the profound experience of those involved in bilateral dialogues, who shared their processes, methodologies, results, and reception. Speakers also fielded questions on emerging issues and trends.

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Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: 20th Anniversary Edition (4 November 2020)

The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* is the historic agreement signed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church in 1999, effectively resolving one of the key theological conflicts of the Reformation, the understanding of salvation. The *Joint Declaration* was later affirmed by the World Methodist Council (2006), the Anglican Consultative Council (2016) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (2017), making it a multilateral agreement.

In March 2019, all five partners gathered at a consultation at Notre Dame University (Indiana, USA), issuing a statement recommitting themselves to communicating the biblical message of salvation in new ways to contemporary society.

On the 20th anniversary of the historic agreement, a new edition of the *Joint Declaration* and related documents, including the *Notre Dame Consultation Statement*, has been published in English and German by the Lutheran World Federation, the Catholic Church, the World Methodist Council, the Anglican Communion, and the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The new edition comprises:

- The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine Justification, the Official Common Statement and the Annex
- The World Methodist Council Statement of Association
- The Anglican Consultative Council Resolution 16.17
- The Association of the World Communion of Reformed Churches with the Joint Declaration
- The Notre Dame Consultation Statement

French and Spanish translations of all the documents have also been completed and will be published later.

**Participation in Third Meeting of the Pro Oriente Steering Committee for
Orthodox–Catholic Dialogue**
(6–7 November 2020)



*Participants in Third Meeting of the Pro Oriente Steering Committee for Orthodox–Catholic Dialogue,
6–7 November 2020*

The Pro Oriente Steering Committee for Orthodox–Catholic Dialogue (POSCOCD) held its third meeting online on 6–7 November 2020. The aim of the meeting was to update on three projects of the Steering Committee promoting Orthodox–Catholic rapprochement. The “Healing of Memories” working group, which deals with the particularly sensitive historical issues relating to the relationship between Orthodox and Catholics, is reflecting on specific situations in the Middle East, the Balkans and Eastern Europe. The working group on “Connecting Dialogues” is planning a database in various languages on documentation on the different dialogues between Catholics and Orthodox. The “Reception and Inspiration” group has proposed various projects aimed at facilitating reception of the results of dialogue in the Church and in wider society.

The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee will take place in November 2021 in Vienna. In the meantime, the members will continue their activities in the working groups.

The Pro Oriente Steering Committee for Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue is an informal Orthodox-Catholic dialogue of the Pro Oriente Foundation. Established in 2018, it gathers annually 16 Catholic and Orthodox theologians from different countries with a view to presenting proposals to Pro Oriente to promote Orthodox-Catholic rapprochement.

Reverend Father Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP, Official of the Eastern Section, represented the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Publication of “The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum”
(4 December 2020)

With the blessing of Pope Francis, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity published *The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum* (cf. p.225). The new document, published in English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, is also available on the PCPCU website

The text offers useful recommendations for promoting the involvement of dioceses in the ecumenical movement under the guidance of their pastors and inspired by the Catholic principles of ecumenism. As stated by Cardinal Kurt Koch in his Preface, the Vademecum “is offered as an aid to diocesan and eparchial bishops to help them better understand and fulfil their ecumenical responsibility”: a fundamental aspect of their episcopal ministry.

A press conference in live streaming from the Press Office of the Holy See was held for the presentation of the new document. Presentations were made by Cardinals Kurt Koch, Marc Ouellet, PSS, Luis Antonio G. Tagle, and Leonardo Sandri.

Conferenza stampa per la presentazione del documento
“Il Vescovo e l’unità dei cristiani: Vademecum ecumenico”
(Sala Stampa della Santa Sede, 4 dicembre 2020)

Venerdì 4 dicembre 2020, alle ore 11.30, si è svolta in diretta streaming dalla Sala Stampa della Santa Sede una conferenza stampa di presentazione del nuovo documento del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell’Unità dei Cristiani: Il Vescovo e l’unità dei cristiani: vademecum ecumenico. Sono intervenuti i Cardinali Kurt Koch, Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell’Unità dei Cristiani; Marc Ouellet, Prefetto della Congregazione per i Vescovi; Luis Antonio G. Tagle, Prefetto della Congregazione per l’Evangelizzazione dei Popoli; e Leonardo Sandri, Prefetto della Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali.



I Cardinali Sandri, Tagle, Koch e Ouellet (da sinistra a destra), Conferenza stampa, 4 dicembre 2020

Intervento del Cardinale Kurt Koch

“*Vademecum*”, etimologicamente significa “*vieni con me*”. Il documento che vi presentiamo oggi è stato pensato come una guida, una bussola, o come un compagno di viaggio, per il cammino ecumenico del Vescovo assieme alla sua diocesi. Vorrei brevemente presentare lo scopo, la preparazione e il contenuto di questo nuovo documento del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell’Unità dei Cristiani.

Scopo

Il *Vademecum* ecumenico è nato da una richiesta avanzata dai membri e dai consultori del Dicastero durante la plenaria del 2016. Essi espressero l’auspicio di un breve documento che potesse incoraggiare, assistere e guidare i Vescovi cattolici nel loro servizio di promozione dell’unità dei cristiani attraverso il loro ministero.

Infatti, se il *Direttorio per l’applicazione dei principi e delle norme sull’ecumenismo* del 1993 è il documento di riferimento per il compito ecumenico dell’intera Chiesa cattolica, si avvertiva la mancanza di un testo destinato ai Vescovi per l’adempimento delle loro responsabilità ecumeniche.

Il Vescovo non può considerare la promozione dell’unità dei cristiani semplicemente come uno dei tanti compiti del suo ministero, un compito che potrebbe o dovrebbe essere posposto ad altre priorità, apparentemente più importanti. L’impegno ecumenico del Vescovo non è una dimensione opzionale del suo ministero, bensì un dovere e un obbligo.

Preparazione

Il processo di preparazione del *Vademecum* è durato circa tre anni. Una prima bozza è stata preparata dagli ufficiali del Pontificio Consiglio con la consulenza di esperti, e poi presentata durante la plenaria del Dicastero nel 2018. Il testo è stato in seguito inviato a numerosi Dicasteri della Curia Romana, che vorrei qui calorosamente ringraziare per il loro prezioso contributo.

Le linee guida del *Vademecum* si basano sul Decreto *Unitatis redintegratio* del Concilio Vaticano II, sull’Enciclica *Ut unum sint*, e su due documenti del Pontificio Consiglio: il *Direttorio ecumenico* e *La dimensione ecumenica nella formazione di chi si dedica al ministero pastorale*. Non si trattava, tuttavia, di ripetere questi documenti, ma piuttosto di proporre una breve sintesi, aggiornata e arricchita dai temi portati avanti nel corso degli ultimi pontificati, e sempre adottando il punto di vista del Vescovo: una guida che possa ispirare lo sviluppo dell’azione ecumenica e che sia di facile consultazione.

Il Santo Padre ha approvato il *Le vi ha fatto riferimento* nella sua Lettera del 24 maggio scorso in occasione del 25° anniversario dell’Enciclica *Ut unum sint* (1995). Ricordando che “il servizio dell’unità è un aspetto essenziale della missione del Vescovo”, Papa Francesco ha espresso l’auspicio che il *Vademecum* serva come “incoraggiamento e guida” all’esercizio delle responsabilità ecumeniche dei Vescovi.

Il Pontificio Consiglio si è dato premura di preparare la traduzione del *Vademecum* in diverse lingue. Per il momento sono pronte le versioni in inglese, italiano, francese, spagnolo, portoghese e tedesco.

La pubblicazione del *Vademecum ecumenico* segna non solo il 25° anniversario dell’Enciclica *Ut unum sint*, ma anche un altro importante anniversario per l’impegno ecumenico della Chiesa cattolica: il 60° anniversario dell’istituzione del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell’Unità dei Cristiani, avvenuta in seguito all’annuncio del

Concilio Vaticano II. Per celebrare queste due ricorrenze si terrà questo pomeriggio un Atto accademico trasmesso in diretta streaming dall'Angelicum.

Contenuto

Per quanto riguarda il contenuto, il documento si articola in due parti. La prima parte, intitolata “La promozione dell’ecumenismo nella Chiesa cattolica”, espone ciò che viene richiesto alla Chiesa cattolica nell’adempimento della sua missione ecumenica. Infatti, come afferma il *Vademecum* “La ricerca dell’unità è innanzitutto una sfida per i cattolici” (6). In questa prima parte il *Vademecum* prende dunque in considerazione le strutture e le persone attive in campo ecumenico a livello diocesano e nazionale, la formazione ecumenica e l’uso dei mass media diocesani.

La seconda parte, intitolata “Le relazioni della Chiesa cattolica con gli altri cristiani”, esamina quattro modi in cui la Chiesa cattolica interagisce con altre comunità cristiane. Il primo modo è quello dell’**ecumenismo spirituale**, che, come dice il Concilio, è l’“anima del movimento ecumenico” (UR 8). Il *Vademecum* sottolinea in particolare l’importanza delle Sacre Scritture (20), dell’“ecumenismo dei santi” (22), della purificazione della memoria (24).

Il secondo modo è il **dialogo della carità**, che si occupa della promozione di una “cultura dell’incontro” a livello di contatti e di collaborazione quotidiani, alimentando e approfondendo la relazione che già unisce i cristiani in virtù del battesimo. Come dice San Giovanni Paolo II nell’Enciclica *Ut unum sint*: “il riconoscimento della fraternità [...] va ben al di là di un atto di cortesia ecumenica e costituisce una basilare affermazione ecclesologica” (UUS 42). Il *Vademecum* fa alcune raccomandazioni pratiche al riguardo; per esempio assistere, per quanto possibile e opportuno, alle liturgie di ordinazione o insediamento dei responsabili di altre Chiese, invitare i responsabili di altre Chiese a celebrazioni liturgiche e ad altri eventi significativi della Chiesa cattolica.

Il terzo modo è il **dialogo della verità**, che si riferisce alla ricerca della verità di Dio che i cattolici intraprendono insieme ad altri cristiani attraverso il dialogo teologico. Sono qui menzionati alcuni principi del dialogo come scambio di doni (27), del dialogo teologico che “non cerca un minimo comune denominatore teologico sul quale raggiungere un compromesso, ma si basa piuttosto sull’approfondimento della verità tutta intera” (28). Il documento menziona la sfida della ricezione che deve coinvolgere l’intera Chiesa nell’esercizio del *sensus fidei* (30).

Il quarto modo è il **dialogo della vita**. Con questa espressione si designano occasioni di scambio e di collaborazione con altri cristiani in tre campi principali: la cura pastorale, la testimonianza al mondo e la cultura. Per quanta riguarda l’ecumenismo pastorale il *Vademecum* affronta temi come la collaborazione nel campo della missione e della catechesi (34), i matrimoni misti (35), la *communicatio in sacris* (36). Nel campo dell’ecumenismo pratico il *Vademecum* tratta della collaborazione nel servizio al mondo (38), e del dialogo interreligioso come sfida ecumenica (39). Infine il documento tratta dell’ecumenismo culturale, in particolare mediante progetti comuni in ambito accademico, scientifico e artistico (41).

Il *Vademecum* non solo ricorda i principi dell’impegno ecumenico del Vescovo ma, alla fine di ciascuna sezione, riporta un elenco di “**raccomandazioni pratiche**”, che riassumono in termini semplici e diretti i compiti e le iniziative che il Vescovo può promuovere a livello locale e regionale. Infine, un’**Appendice** offre una breve descri-

zione dei partner della Chiesa cattolica nei dialoghi teologici internazionali bilaterali e multilaterali e dei principali frutti già raccolti.

Papa Francesco spesso ribadisce che l'unità si fa camminando; se camminiamo insieme con Cristo, Lui stesso realizzerà l'unità. "L'unità non verrà come un miracolo alla fine: l'unità viene nel cammino, la fa lo Spirito Santo nel cammino" (Basilica di San Paolo fuori le Mura, 25 gennaio 2014). Possa questo *Vademecum* essere un aiuto sul cammino dei Vescovi e di tutta la Chiesa cattolica verso la piena comunione per la quale il Signore ha pregato. Grazie.

**Academic event for 25th anniversary of "Ut unum sint"
and 60th anniversary of PCPCU**
(4 December 2020)



From left: Professor Philippe Chenaux, Cardinal Kurt Koch and Rector Michal Paluch, Academic event, Angelicum, 4 December 2020

To mark the 25th anniversary of the encyclical "Ut unum sint" and the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, lectures were held in live streaming by Cardinal Kurt Koch and Professor Philippe Chenaux on 4 December 2020 from the "Tillard Chair" of the Angelicum Institute of Ecumenical Studies.

Cardinal Koch spoke in Italian (cf. p.121) on "Ut unum sint: The Irrevocable Way of the Church", while Professor Chenaux's lecture (in French) was entitled "An Address in Rome? The Origins of the Secretariat for Christian Unity (1960)".

Catholics and Disciples of Christ: A Journey Towards Unity (10–11 December 2020)



Participants in video conference with Catholics and Disciples of Christ, 10–11 December 2020

On 10–11 December 2020, during a video conference to celebrate the publication of the final report of the fifth phase of the Disciples–Catholic international dialogue, *Do This in Memory of Me: Christians Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist* (cf. p.257), members of the dialogue from different countries around the world shared their personal experiences of dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. Their testimonies expressed regret for those who have died due to COVID-19, as well as for their own isolation, in particular their inability to celebrate the Eucharist in local parishes and congregations. However, they also expressed the hope emanating from their deepened spirituality and growing sense of communion, despite the physical separation due to restrictions.

Reverend Robert Welsh, Disciples of Christ Co-Chair affirmed: “The gathering turned out to be a celebration of life – and of faith – and of growing friendships between Disciples and Catholics that bear witness to our common experience of the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit.”

Bishop David Ricken, Catholic Co-Chair, reflected: “The virtual gathering of the Fifth Phase of the Dialogue was truly a fitting conclusion to a significant journey of discovery, shared faith experience and gratitude for the Holy Spirit’s work among us. Gratitude to all for this journey together toward unity!”

VISITS

Annual study visit to Rome and the Vatican of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute (20–26 January 2020)

A group of 37 students, faculty members and staff from the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, Switzerland, visited Rome and the Vatican from 20–26 January 2020. The students came from 19 countries and represented over 20 different Christian Churches including the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, as well as various Protestant communities, both historic and new, such as Evangelicals and Pentecostals.

The programme covered visits to different dicasteries of the Roman Curia, encounters with representatives of religious orders and with Catholic lay movements, visits to theological faculties and guided tours to the main sites of Christian history in Rome. The students visited the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, where they were received by the President, Cardinal Kurt Koch, and met with some staff members who introduced them to the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church. One of the highlights of this year's visit was the participation in an ecumenical panel held at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas commemorating the 25th anniversary of the publication of the Encyclical *Ut unum sint* of Pope John Paul II. The group also attended the Wednesday audience with the Holy Father and on Sunday participated in the Catholic Mass in one of Rome's parishes.

The culmination of the programme was their participation in the Vespers presided over by Pope Francis to conclude the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which was held in the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls on Saturday 25 January.

This annual study visit organized and sponsored by the Pontifical Council offers a unique opportunity to the students of Bossey to gain a fuller understanding of the Catholic Church.



Pope Francis meets the staff and students of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, 22 January 2020

Representatives of the Ecumenical Research Forum
(7 February 2020)



Representatives of the Ecumenical Research Forum meet with Monsignor Usma Gómez, 7 February 2020

Monsignor Juan Usma Gómez, Head of the Western Section of the Pontifical Council, met with representatives of the Executive Committee of the Ecumenical Research Forum (ERF) on 7 February 2020 at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The ERF is an international organization of young scholars dealing with Ecumenical Theology and Missiology. The Executive Committee consisted of four young students from major European Universities that held the responsibility to plan and coordinate the annual meetings. At present it is composed by two Catholics, Ms Vera La Mela (Finland, doctoral student at the University of Lund) and Sr Estelle M. Sogbou (France, professor at the Institute Teologique des Dombes), one Orthodox, Mr Nikolaos Amantidis (Greece, PhD Student at the Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Tübingen, Germany) and one Protestant, Mr Quentin Milan-Laguerre (France, Institut Protestant de Théologie – Montpellier). The main topics of discussion in the meeting were the PCPCU's activities, the current trends and challenges of the ecumenical movement, as well as the role of new generations in promoting Christian unity.

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**First Study Visit of Young Priests and Monks of the
Oriental Orthodox Churches**
(15–22 February 2020)

Upon the invitation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, a delegation of young priests and monks from different Oriental Orthodox Churches took part for the first time in a study visit from 15–22 February 2020 aimed at deepening their understanding of the Catholic Church.

Eighteen monks and priests nominated by their respective Heads of Churches (three from each Oriental Orthodox Church, namely the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church [See of Etchmiadzin and See of Cilicia], the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church) took part in the initiative, coming from Egypt, Armenia, Lebanon, Syr-

ia, India and Ethiopia. The group visited some holy sites of Rome, dicasteries of the Roman Curia, Pontifical universities and colleges, communities and monasteries.

On Friday 21 February the group was received in a private audience with the Holy Father.



Group of young priests and monks of the Oriental Orthodox Churches with Revd Father Destivelle, OP

Brother Alois of the Community of Taizé

(26 June 2020)

On Friday 26 June Brother Alois, accompanied by the members of the Community of Taizé, met with Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Community of Taizé is made up of over a hundred brothers, Catholics and from various Protestant backgrounds, from around thirty nations. It seeks to be a “parable of community”, a sign of reconciliation between divided Christians and between separated peoples.



Brother Alois and other members of the Community of Taizé meet with Cardinal Koch, 26 June 2020

Delegation of New Apostolic Church (14 October 2020)



Delegation of New Apostolic Church visit Pontifical Council and meet with Revd Fr Augustinus Sander, OSB, of the Western Section, 14 October 2020

On 14 October 2020 a delegation of the New Apostolic Church visited the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU). Bishop Peter Johanning, Apostle* Volker Kühnle and Apostle* Rolf Camenzind reported on the various ecumenical contacts of their church at local and regional levels. In conversation with Father Augustinus Sander, OSB, official of the PCPCU, questions relating to the theological understanding of worship and to the recognition of baptism were discussed in particular.

The New Apostolic Church belongs to the group of apostolic communities with common roots in the Catholic Apostolic Movement which emanated from England in the 19th century. The New Apostolic Church has some nine million members worldwide.

(* “Apostle” is a title commonly used in the New Apostolic Church for leading ministers).

COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS

‘Abrahamic Faiths Initiative’

(Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, 14–16 January 2020)



Participants in the Abrahamic Faiths Initiative meet with Pope Francis, 15 January 2020

The ‘Abrahamic Faiths Initiative’, a consultation held from 14–16 January at the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome, gathered 25 Jewish, Muslim and Christian world leaders, representing the three Abrahamic faiths, to discuss ways of working together to promote world peace, religious freedom and interreligious understanding. A statement was issued at the conclusion of the consultation.

The event, organized by the Multi-Faith Neighbors Network (MFNN), under the leadership of Pastor Bob Roberts, Imam Mohamed Magid, and Rabbi David Saperstein, was inspired by the Document on Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in 2019 in an effort for peace and reconciliation.

Participants included Rabbi David Rosen, of the American Jewish Committee, Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah, President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies; the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, Cardinal Ayuso Gui-

zot of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Reverend Father Norbert Hofmann, SDB, Secretary of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

On Wednesday evening 15 January, participants visited Pope Francis in a private meeting at his residence in Domus Sanctae Marthae, where they discussed a wide range of issues.

Delegation from Simon Wiesenthal Centre (20 January 2020)



Pope Francis meets with delegation of Simon Wiesenthal Centre, 21 January 2020

In his address on 20 January to members of a delegation from the Simon Wiesenthal Centre led by Rabbi Marvin Hier, Pope Francis recalled his visit to Auschwitz–Birkenau on 26 July 2016, and reiterated his condemnation of antisemitism in every form. Noting that 27 January would mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp, Pope Francis reflected, “May the anniversary of the unspeakable cruelty that humanity learned of seventy-five years ago serve as a summons to pause, to be still and to remember”. Pope Francis concluded with a prayer to “make the earth a better place by sowing seeds of peace”. We need to put the “rich spiritual patrimony that Jews and Christians possess” at the service of others, he said. “Not to take the path of distance and exclusion, but that of proximity and inclusion; not to force solutions, but to initiate ways of drawing closer together”. “If we do not do this”, asked Pope Francis, “then who will?” The Simon Wiesenthal Centre has had a long-standing friendship with the Holy See over many decades, strengthened by regular visits to the Vatican and contact with the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

Address of Pope Francis

Dear Friends,

I offer you a cordial welcome. Your Center, active throughout the world, seeks to combat all forms of antisemitism, racism and hatred towards minorities. For decades, you

have maintained contacts with the Holy See, in a shared desire to make the world a better place in respect for human dignity. This dignity is due to every person in equal measure, regardless of his or her ethnic origin, religion or social status. It is essential to teach tolerance, mutual understanding and freedom of religion, and the promotion of peace within society.

In a particular way, you help keep alive the memory of the Holocaust. A week from now, 27 January, will mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. In 2016, I went there to reflect and to pray in silence. In our world, with its whirlwind of activity, we find it hard to pause, to look within and to listen in silence to the plea of suffering humanity. Our consumerist society also squanders words: how many unhelpful words are spoken, how much time is wasted in arguing, accusing, shouting insults, without a real concern for what we say. Silence, on the other hand, helps to keep memory alive. If we lose our memory, we destroy our future. May the anniversary of the unspeakable cruelty that humanity learned of seventy-five years ago serve as a summons to pause, to be still and to remember. We need to do this, lest we become indifferent.

It is troubling to see, in many parts of the world, an increase in selfishness and indifference, lack of concern for others and the attitude that says life is good as long as it is good for me, and when things go wrong, anger and malice are unleashed. This creates a fertile ground for the forms of factionalism and populism we see around us, where hatred quickly springs up. Hatred and the sowing of evil. Even recently, we have witnessed a barbaric resurgence of cases of antisemitism. Once more I firmly condemn every form of antisemitism. To tackle the cause of the problem, however, we must commit ourselves also to tilling the soil in which hatred grows and sowing peace instead. For it is through integration and seeking to understand others that we more effectively protect ourselves. Hence it is urgent to reintegrate those who are marginalized, to reach out to those far away, to support those ignored for lack of resources or funds, and assist to those who are victims of intolerance and discrimination.

The Declaration *Nostra Aetate* pointed out that Jews and Christians possess a rich spiritual patrimony (cf. no. 4), which needs to be increasingly appreciated and put at the service of others. I feel that we, above all, are summoned, especially today, to such service: not to take the path of distance and exclusion, but that of proximity and inclusion; not to force solutions, but to initiate ways of drawing closer together. If we do not do this – we who believe in Him who from on high remembered us and showed compassion for our weaknesses – then who will? I am reminded of the words of the Book of Exodus: “God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the people of Israel – and God knew their condition” (2:24-25). Let us too remember the past and have compassion on those who suffer, and in this way till the soil of fraternity.

Dear friends, I thank you for your efforts; may we continue to cooperate in the defence of the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters. May the Almighty help us to respect one another and to love one another more, and to make the earth a better place by sowing seeds of peace. *Shalom!*

Cardinal Kurt Koch attends Fifth World Holocaust Forum in Jerusalem (23 January 2020)

The Fifth World Holocaust Forum held on 23 January at Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem was attended by Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, who led on behalf of Pope Francis the delegation of the Holy See. The event commemorating the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz–Birkenau was attended by about 50 world leaders. Pope Francis sent the message below that was included in the publication issued for the occasion entitled “Remembering the Holocaust: Fighting Antisemitism”, which was the theme of the Forum. In speaking to Vatican News, Cardinal Koch reaffirmed that the Catholic Church is called in a special way to deepen the common heritage with Judaism, the common traditions and the shared values. He also recalled the milestone document Nostra aetate of the Second Vatican Council which opened a new era in Christian–Jewish dialogue.

Statement of Pope Francis

On the occasion of the seventy–fifth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz–Birkenau concentration camp, as the world recalls the horrors unleashed during the Second World War, the present volume “Remembering the Holocaust, Fighting Antisemitism” provides a timely encouragement to renewed impetus in the fight against antisemitism. All forms of hatred are anathema to both right reason and genuine religious belief, yet tragically, even in our own time, persecution continues to disfigure and damage the human family, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. *Gen* 1:26–27).

I express my fervent hope that by continued vigilance and positive education, the iniquities perpetrated during one of the darkest periods in our history will be eliminated from the face of the earth. Reiterating the Holy See’s commitment to pursuing the path of friendship between all, I appeal to men and women of good will everywhere to remain steadfast in efforts for promoting dialogue, mutual understanding and human fraternity as the basis of lasting peace in our world (cf. *Document on Human Fraternity*, 4 February 2019).

Pope Francis calls for remembrance and prayer on Auschwitz liberation anniversary (26 January 2020)

After the Angelus prayer in Saint Peter’s Square on Sunday 26 January, Pope Francis recalled that the following day would commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz–Birkenau concentration camp. The Holy Father called for remembrance of the Holocaust saying that “in the face of this immense tragedy indifference is not admissible and memory is due.” He called on all to set aside a moment of prayer and remembrance, saying in their hearts, “Never again, never again!”

Delegation of International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (4 February 2020)

From 3–5 February a leadership delegation of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) visited the Vatican. Since the 1970s the IJCIC has represented member organizations in maintaining and developing relations with the Holy See’s Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews, as well as with the Orthodox Church, the World Council of Churches, and other international religious bodies.

During the visit, the members of the delegation met among others Prefects of some dicasteries of the Roman Curia, including Cardinals Pietro Parolin, Leonardo Sandri and Peter Turkson, as well as Archbishop Paul Gallagher of the Secretariat of State.

On Tuesday 4 February the delegation met with Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. During the meeting, the group spoke also with Reverend Fr Norbert Hofmann, Secretary of the Commission, reflecting in particular on the current situation of the Jewish–Catholic dialogue.



Cardinal Kurt Koch meets with IJCIC delegation, 4 February 2020

55th anniversary of “Nostra aetate” (28 October 2020)

The Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (CRRJ) and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), the official partner representing world Jewry, exchanged messages to mark the 55th anniversary of Nostra aetate. That milestone document was issued on 28 October 1965 as a Declaration of the Second Vatican Council on the Catholic Church’s relations to non–Christian religions. Chapter 4 specifically addresses Judaism, and is recognized to have inaugurated a new and constructive era in Jewish–Catholic relations. Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of CRRJ, and Rabbi Noam Marans, Chair of IJCIC, issued a joint press release and exchanged mes-

sages affirming the reconciliatory themes of “Nostra aetate” and praising the progress achieved during the past 55 years. Cardinal Koch’s message states, “It is without doubt that ‘Nostra aetate’ (no.4) laid the foundation for relations between Catholics and Jews and can therefore rightly be considered to be the ‘Magna Carta’ of Catholic–Jewish relations.” Rabbi Marans’s message noted that “Nostra aetate” (no.4) “has been dramatically amplified by papal visits to synagogues, to the horrific yet sacred sites of the crimes of the Holocaust, and to the State of Israel following the establishment of Vatican–Israel diplomatic relations in 1993.” IJCIC praised Pope Francis’s leadership in condemning rising antisemitism and expressed solidarity with Christians facing persecution. The CRRJ was founded in 1974, and over the decades it has implemented many initiatives aimed at fostering Catholic relations with Judaism, including the document published in 2015 entitled “The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable” (Rom 11:29). A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic–Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of ‘Nostra aetate’. The Commission also co-convenes with IJCIC the biennial International Catholic–Jewish Liaison Committee to address ongoing issues of mutual concern.

Cardinal Koch’s message

It is with great joy and satisfaction that on 28 October 2020 we commemorate the 55th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration “Nostra aetate” (no.4). In order to mark this occasion it is my pleasure to address the “International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations” (IJCIC), which since its foundation in 1970 has been the official partner of the Holy See’s “Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews” for promoting and fostering Jewish–Catholic dialogue on the worldwide level. It is without doubt that “Nostra aetate” (no.4) laid the foundation for relations between Catholics and Jews, and can therefore rightly be considered to be the “Magna Carta” of Jewish–Catholic dialogue. It was in pondering the mystery of the Church itself that the Second Vatican Council was drawn to exploring its relationship with the descendants of Abraham. This is a most significant affirmation, for it underlines the fact that it was due neither to a reason that is external to the life of the Church, nor to coincidental or optional motives, that Catholics were inspired to reflect on their bond with the Jewish people, but rather due to its own reflection on the mystery of the Church.

We read in the first verse of Psalm 133: “How good it is, how pleasant, where the people dwell as one!” While the original understanding of the word “people” was exclusively intended as those belonging to the people of Israel, today – after Pope John Paul II spoke of Jews as the elder brothers of Christians, and Pope Benedict XVI as our fathers in faith – we can speak of a community of brothers and sisters among Jews and Christians. We are inseparably linked in the essential foundation of faith in the God of Israel, and we are united by a rich common spiritual heritage and the legacy of a longstanding shared past. Christianity has its roots in Judaism; the latter constitutes the nucleus of its identity. Jesus is and remains a son of the people of Israel; he is shaped by that tradition and, for this reason, can only be truly understood in the perspective of this cultural and religious framework.

The dialogue between Catholics and Jews has made its own this vision, in a spirit of fraternal and authentic friendship. It is with gratitude that I reflect that on the level of daily coexistence, many groups around the globe have emerged aimed at building bridges between Jews and Catholics in the spirit of “Nostra aetate” (no.4). Ultimately, it is a question of gaining deeper mutual understanding, always in the mutual respect

of each other's religious traditions, and of nurturing the value of each other. Catholics and Jews should always aim to gain a deeper mutual familiarity. This aspect should never be neglected, particularly in the fields of education and formation.

Originally our "Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews" and IJCIC had the intention to commemorate the 55th anniversary of "Nostra aetate" (no. 4) on the occasion of the "International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee" (ILC) Meeting scheduled in São Paulo (Brazil) at the end of October 2020. However, for obvious reasons it was not possible to organize this conference. Yet even if we are not able to meet personally, our contact remains steadfast, attesting to the fact that our friendship is stable and strong. Let us give thanks to God the Eternal and Almighty for these bonds of friendship and for all that has been achieved in the last decades of Jewish-Catholic dialogue.

Meeting with Representatives of the World Jewish Congress (Online, 23 November 2020)

A zoom meeting was held on 23 November 2020 gathering senior representatives of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) and Vatican officials. Participants expressed their strong commitment to strengthening ties between Jewish and Catholic communities globally. The forum included among other exchanges a conversation between Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, and Claudio Epelman, WJC's Commissioner for Interfaith Dialogue and Executive Director of the Latin American Jewish Congress. In his address, Cardinal Koch reflected, "With our shared patrimony, we have a common responsibility to work together for the good of humankind ... to work for justice and solidarity, reconciliation and peace". Cardinal Koch also referred to the recent celebration of the 55th anniversary of the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council's Document "Nostra aetate" (no.4). The conference was organized by Claudio Epelman and Reverend Norbert Hofmann, SDB, Secretary of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

Cardinal Koch's address

Dear Jewish friends,

This is the first time that I speak to you since the beginning of the difficult situation we have confronted since March 2020. Many meetings and conferences have been cancelled over the last months, and therefore it gives me pleasure to be able to address you during this zoom conference.

The basis of Jewish-Catholic dialogue is undoubtedly the friendship that has developed over the decades since the promulgation of the Conciliar Declaration "Nostra aetate" (no.4) on 28 October 1965. This date marks the official starting point of the institutional dialogue of the Catholic Church with the Jewish people. Some weeks ago we celebrated the 55th anniversary of this landmark document, that can be considered to be the "Magna Carta" of the Jewish-Catholic dialogue. To mark the occasion, I sent a message of the "Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews" to the official Jewish dialogue partner of the Holy See, namely the "International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations" (IJCIC). In response the IJCIC also prepared a message underlining the depth of the relationship between Catholic and Jewish leaders.

Drawing in particular on “Nostra aetate” (no.4), the abovementioned message to our Jewish partners states: “It was in pondering the mystery of the Church itself that the Second Vatican Council was drawn to exploring its relationship with the descendants of Abraham. This is a most significant affirmation, for it underlines the fact that it was due neither to a reason that is external to the life of the Church, nor to coincidental or optional motives, that Catholics were inspired to reflect on their bond with the Jewish people, but rather due to its own reflection on the mystery of the Church. We read in the first verse of Psalm 133: ‘How good it is, how pleasant, where the people dwell as one!’ While the original understanding of the word ‘people’ was exclusively intended as those belonging to the people of Israel, today – after Pope John Paul II spoke of Jews as the elder brothers of Christians, and Pope Benedict XVI as our fathers in faith – we can speak of a community of brothers and sisters among Jews and Christians. We are inseparably linked in the essential foundation of faith in the God of Israel, and we are united by a rich common spiritual heritage and the legacy of a longstanding shared past. Christianity has its roots in Judaism; the latter constitutes the nucleus of its identity”.

In response, the message of IJCIC states that after “Nostra aetate” (no.4) we now experience “an era that transformed two millennia of enmity into a blessing of amity”. Most important is the increasing friendship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, making it now possible to discuss difficult issues with openness and confidence. The two messages are a clear sign of the great progress in Jewish–Catholic relations over the last fifty–five years and are in line with the ideas of Pope Francis in his recent encyclical “Fratelli tutti”, affirming that we are all brothers and sisters created in the image of God.

Fifty–five years of an institutionalised dialogue is not a long time in comparison to the venerable history of the Jewish people and the millennial history of the Catholic Church. But what has happened in these fifty–five years can be really seen as a great miracle brought about by the Holy Spirit “because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). Over this period, following the ground–breaking declaration “Nostra aetate” (no.4) of the Second Vatican Council, our relationship has changed irreversibly not only for our own mutual benefit but importantly also for the good of all who are committed to interreligious dialogue. It is my impression that in these years many old prejudices and enmities have been overcome, reconciliation and cooperation have been developed, and personal friendship has been deepened. It is with profound gratitude that we recall all those who have been and continue to be committed to this important dialogue and have aspired to strengthening mutual trust and respect. But our first debt of gratitude is directed to the Eternal One who has accompanied our efforts and has given us patience and strength to follow the path opened by “Nostra aetate” (no.4). “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain” (Ps 127:1).

In our future journey together, as in the last fifty–five years, for the Catholic Church “Nostra aetate” (no.4) remains the binding document of our dialogue, and in our future efforts it will always be our compass that orientates us towards new goals. Our dialogue with the Jewish people is not just a luxury engagement, an option that can be left behind, but has to do with our own Christian identity; therefore it is an inner obligation and duty for us to be in dialogue with the Jewish people.

The document of our “Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews” with the title “‘The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable’ (Rom 11:29)” which

was published in December 2015 furthermore stresses that “from the theological perspective the dialogue with Judaism has a completely different character and is on a different level in comparison with the other world religion ... the Jewish-Christian dialogue can only with reservations be termed ‘interreligious dialogue’ in the true sense of the expression; one could however speak of a kind of ‘intra-religious’ or ‘intra-familial’ dialogue”.

When Pope Francis visited the synagogue of Rome on 17 January 2016, he clearly referred to “*Nostra aetate*” (no.4) and said: “Indifference and opposition have changed into cooperation and benevolence. From enemies and strangers we have become friends and brothers. The Council, with the Declaration *Nostra aetate*, indicated the way: ‘yes’ to rediscovering Christianity’s Jewish roots; ‘no’ to every form of anti-Semitism and blame for every wrong, discrimination and persecution deriving from it. For the first time, *Nostra aetate* theologically defined in an explicit way the relationship between the Catholic Church and Judaism. Naturally it did not resolve all the theological questions that concern us, but it made reference to them in an encouraging way, providing an important stimulus for further, necessary reflection”.

Among our future common tasks I wish to mention especially the field of education, which is of great importance. The future of our dialogue is dependent on the formation of the younger generations, which must be taught the history of Jewish-Catholic dialogue and the progress it has made in the last decades. In this perspective, the “Commission for Religious Relation with the Jews” together with IJCIC has organized since 2009 the gatherings known as “Emerging Leadership Conferences” addressing young Jews and Catholics.

Jews and Christians have – as we read in “*Nostra aetate*” (no.4) – a great common spiritual patrimony. With our shared patrimony we have a common responsibility to work together for the good of humankind, refuting anti-Semitism and anti-Catholic and anti-Christian attitudes, as well as all kinds of discrimination, to work for justice and solidarity, reconciliation and peace. In the last weeks there have been terroristic attacks in France, Germany and Austria, which are recent testimonies that on a worldwide level Christians also suffer persecution. They need special protection and the solidarity of religious leaders of all religions in the world.

Religious freedom and human rights should be granted fully to everybody in every country. Jews and Christians can raise their voice together for the protection of those who are persecuted for religious reasons, wherever they live and whatever they confess regarding their own faith traditions. It should be our task to give clear and public signs of solidarity and to pray for our brothers and sisters in these difficult situations.

Many thanks for your kind attention.

DOCUMENTATION SUPPLEMENT

THE BISHOP AND CHRISTIAN UNITY: AN ECUMENICAL VADEMECUM

PREFACE

The ministry entrusted to the bishop is a service of unity both within his diocese and of unity between the local church and the universal church. That ministry therefore has special significance in the search for the unity of all Christ's followers. The bishop's responsibility for promoting Christian unity is clearly affirmed in the Code of Canon Law of the Latin Church among the tasks of his pastoral office: "He is to act with humanity and charity toward the brothers and sisters who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church and is to foster ecumenism as it is understood by the Church" (Can 383 §3 CIC 1983). In this respect, the bishop cannot consider the promotion of the ecumenical cause as one more task in his varied ministry, one that could and should be deferred in view of other, apparently more important, priorities. The bishop's ecumenical engagement is not an optional dimension of his ministry but a duty and obligation. This appears even more clearly in the Code of Canons of Eastern Churches, containing a special section dedicated to the ecumenical task, in which it is particularly recommended that pastors of the Church "work zealously in participating in ecumenical work" (Can 902–908 CCEO 1990). In the service of unity, the bishop's pastoral ministry extends not just to the unity of his own church, but to the unity of all the baptized into Christ.

The present document, issued by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Bishop and Christian Unity. An Ecumenical Vademecum*, is offered as an aid to diocesan and eparchial bishops to help them better understand and fulfil their ecumenical responsibility. The genesis of this Vademecum began with a request from a Plenary Assembly of this Pontifical Council. The text was developed by the Council's officials in consultation with experts and with the agreement of the relevant dicasteries of the Roman Curia. We are now happy to publish it with the blessing of the Holy Father Pope Francis.

We place this work in the hands of the world's bishops, hoping that in these pages they will find clear and helpful guidelines, enabling them to lead the local churches entrusted to their pastoral care towards that unity for which the Lord prayed and to which the Church is irrevocably called.

Kurt Cardinal Koch

President

✠ **Brian Farrell**

Titular Bishop of Abitine

Secretary

ABBREVIATIONS

- CCEO* *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (1990)
- CIC* *Code of Canon Law* (1983)
- ED* *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* (1993), Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
- EG* *Evangelii gaudium* (2013), Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis
- LG* *Lumen gentium* (1964), Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council
- PCPCU* Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
- UR* *Unitatis redintegratio* (1964), Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council
- UUS* *Ut unum sint* (1995), Encyclical letter of Saint John Paul II on the ecumenical commitment

INTRODUCTION

1. *The search for unity as intrinsic to the nature of the Church*

Our Lord's prayer for the unity of his disciples "that they may all be one" is tied to the mission that he gives to them, "so that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21). The Second Vatican Council stressed that division among Christian communities "openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature" (*Unitatis redintegratio* [UR] §1). Insofar as Christians fail to be the visible sign of this unity they fail in their missionary duty to be the instrument bringing all people into the saving unity which is the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this we understand why the work of unity is fundamental to our identity as Church, and why Saint John Paul II could write in his milestone encyclical *Ut unum sint*, "the quest for Christian unity is not a matter of choice or expediency, but a duty which springs from the very nature of the Christian community" (*Ut unum sint* [UUS] §49, see also §3).

2. *A real, though incomplete, communion*

The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, recognised that those who believe in Christ and are baptised with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are truly our brothers and sisters in Christ (see UR §3). Through baptism they "are incorporated into Christ" (UR §3), that is "truly incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ, and reborn to a sharing of the divine life" (UR §22). Moreover, the Council recognised that the communities to which these brothers and sisters belong are endowed with many essential elements Christ wills for his Church, are used by the Spirit as "means of salvation," and have a real, though incomplete, communion with the Catholic Church (see UR §3). The Decree began the work of specifying those areas of our ecclesial lives in which this communion resides, and where and why the extent of ecclesial communion varies from one Christian community to another. Lastly, in recognising the positive value of other Christian communities, *Unitatis redintegratio* also acknowledged that because of the wound of Christian division "the Church herself finds it more difficult to express in actual life her full catholicity in all her bearings" (UR §4).

3. *Christian unity as the concern of the whole Church*

"Concern for restoring unity," wrote the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, "pertains to the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone according to the ability of each, whether it be exercised in daily living or in theological and historical studies" (UR §5). The insistence of the Council that the ecumenical endeavour demands the engagement of all the faithful, and not only of theologians and church leaders meeting in international dialogues, has been repeatedly emphasised in subsequent Church documents. Saint John Paul II in *Ut unum sint* wrote that the commitment to ecumenism, "far from being the responsibility of the Apostolic See alone, is also the duty of individual local and particular Churches" (§31). The real, though incomplete, communion that already exists between Catholics and other baptised Christians can and must be deepened at a number of levels simultaneously. Pope Francis has captured this in the phrase, "walking together, praying together and working together". By sharing our Christian lives with other Chris-

tians, by praying with and for them, and by giving common witness to our Christian faith through action, we grow into the unity which is the Lord's desire for his Church.

4. *The bishop as the "visible principle" of unity*

As a shepherd of the flock the bishop has the distinct responsibility of gathering all into unity. He is "the visible principle and foundation of unity" in his particular church (*Lumen gentium* [LG] §23). The service of unity is not just one of the tasks of the bishop's ministry; it is fundamental to it. The bishop "should sense the urgency of promoting ecumenism" (*Apostolorum Successores* §18). Rooted in his personal prayer, concern for unity must inform every part of his ministry: in his teaching of the faith, in his sacramental ministry, and through the decisions of his pastoral care, he is called to build and strengthen that unity for which Jesus prayed at the Last Supper (cf. Jn 17). A further dimension of his ministry of unity became evident with the Catholic Church's embrace of the ecumenical movement. As a consequence, the bishop's concern for the unity of the Church extends to "those who are not yet of the one flock" (LG §27) but are our spiritual brothers and sisters in the Spirit through the real though imperfect bonds of communion that connect all the baptised.

The episcopal ministry of unity is deeply related to synodality. According to Pope Francis, "a careful examination of how, in the Church's life, the principle of synodality and the service of the one who presides are articulated, will make a significant contribution to the progress of relations between our Churches".¹ The bishops who compose one college together with the Pope exercise their pastoral and ecumenical ministry in a synodal manner together with the entire People of God. As Pope Francis has taught, "The commitment to build a synodal Church — a mission to which we are all called, each with the role entrusted him by the Lord — has significant ecumenical implications",² because both synodality and ecumenism are processes of walking together.

5. *The Vademecum as a guide to the bishop in his task of discernment*

The ecumenical task will always be influenced by the wide variety of contexts in which bishops live and work: in some regions Catholics will be in the majority; in others, in a minority to another or other Christian communities; and in others Christianity itself will be a minority. Pastoral challenges, too, are extremely diverse. It is always for the diocesan/ eparchial bishop to make an appraisal of the challenges and opportunities of his context, and to discern how to apply the Catholic principles of ecumenism in his own diocese/ eparchy.³ The *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* (1993, henceforth *Ecumenical Directory* [ED]) is the most important reference for the bishop in his task of discernment. This *Vademecum* is offered to the bishop as an encouragement and a guide in fulfilling his ecumenical responsibilities.

1. Address marking the 50th anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015, citing the Address to the Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, 27 June 2015.

2. *Ibid.*

3. It should be understood that all references to dioceses, diocesan bishops and diocesan structures apply equally to eparchies, their bishops and structures.

PART 1

THE PROMOTION OF ECUMENISM WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

6. *The search for unity is first of all a challenge to Catholics*

Unitatis redintegratio teaches that the “primary duty” of Catholics “is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be done or renewed in the Catholic household itself” (§4). For this reason, rather than begin with our relations with other Christians, it is necessary for Catholics, in the words of the decree, first “to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and accordingly to undertake with vigour the task of renewal and reform” (§4). This inner renewal disposes and orders the Church towards dialogue and engagement with other Christians. It is an endeavour which concerns both ecclesial structures (Section A) and the ecumenical formation of the whole People of God (Section B).

A. Ecumenical structures at the local and regional level

7. *The bishop as a man of dialogue promoting ecumenical engagement*

Christus Dominus §13 describes the bishop as a man of dialogue, seeking out those of goodwill in a common pursuit of truth through a conversation marked by clarity and humility, and in a context of charity and friendship. The Code of Canon Law (CIC) Canon 383 §3 refers to the same idea, describing the ecumenical responsibilities of the bishop as “to act with humanity and charity toward the brothers and sisters who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church” and “to foster ecumenism as it is understood by the Church.” The ecumenical task of the bishop therefore is to promote both the “Dialogue of Love” and the “Dialogue of Truth”.

8. *The bishop's responsibility to guide and direct ecumenical initiatives*

Alongside the bishop's personal disposition to dialogue is his role of leadership and governance. *Unitatis redintegratio* envisages the People of God engaged in a variety of ecumenical activities but always under “the attentive guidance of their bishops” (§4). Canon 755, situated in the part of the Code dedicated to the teaching function of the Church, stipulates that it is “for the entire college of bishops and the Apostolic See to foster and direct among Catholics the ecumenical movement” (CIC 755 §1). Moreover, it is the responsibility of bishops, both individually and in episcopal conferences or synods, to establish “practical norms according to the various needs and opportunities of the circumstances” while being “attentive to the prescripts issued by the supreme authority of the Church” (CIC 755 §2 and CCEO 904, see also *Apostolorum Successores* §18). In establishing norms bishops, acting either singularly or in conference, can ensure that confusion and misunderstandings do not arise and that scandal is not given to the faithful.

The Code of Canons of Eastern Churches (CCEO), which dedicates an entire Title to ecumenism (XVIII), underlines the “special duty” of the Eastern Catholic Churches in fostering unity among all the Eastern and Oriental Churches and highlights the role of the eparchial bishops in this endeavour. Unity can be furthered “through prayers, by example of life, by the religious fidelity to the ancient traditions of the East-

ern Churches, by mutual and better knowledge of each other, and by collaboration and fraternal respect in practice and spirit” (Canon 903).

9. *The appointment of ecumenical officers*

The *Ecumenical Directory* §41 recommends that the bishop appoint a diocesan officer for ecumenism who is to be a close collaborator with, and counsellor to, the bishop in ecumenical matters. It also proposes that he establish a diocesan commission for ecumenism to assist him in implementing the ecumenical teaching of the Church as set out in its documents and in the directives of the episcopal conference or synod (§§42-45). The ecumenical officer and members of the ecumenical commission can be important points of contact with other Christian communities and may represent the bishop in ecumenical meetings. In order to ensure that Catholic parishes are also fully engaged ecumenically in their locality, many bishops have found it helpful to encourage the appointment of parish ecumenical officers as envisaged in the *Ecumenical Directory* (§§45 & 67).

10. *The Ecumenical Commission of Episcopal Conferences and Synods of Eastern Catholic Churches*

Where the episcopal conference or synod is sufficiently large the *Ecumenical Directory* recommends that a commission of bishops should be formed with responsibility for ecumenism (§§46-47). These bishops should be assisted by a team of expert consultants and, if possible, a permanent secretariat. One of the principal tasks of the commission is to translate the ecumenical documents of the Church into concrete action appropriate to the local context. When the conference is too small for an episcopal commission at least one bishop should be made responsible for ecumenical activity (ED §46) and may be assisted by suitable advisors.

The commission should support and advise individual bishops as well as the various offices of the conference in fulfilling their ecumenical responsibilities. The *Ecumenical Directory* envisages the commission engaging with existing ecumenical institutions at the national or territorial level. Where it is judged to be appropriate the commission should establish dialogues and consultations with other Christian communities. Members of the commission should represent the Catholic community or nominate a suitable alternative when invited to attend an important event in the life of another Christian community. Reciprocally they should also ensure an appropriate level of representation of ecumenical guests or delegates at important moments in the life of the Catholic Church. *Apostolorum Successores* §170 suggests observers from other Christian communities should be invited to diocesan synods, after consultation with the leaders of these communities.

The visit *ad limina apostolorum* provides an opportunity for bishops to share their own ecumenical experiences and concerns with the Pope, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and other curial offices. It is also an occasion in which bishops can seek information or advice from the Pontifical Council.

B. The ecumenical dimension of formation

11. A people disposed to dialogue and engagement

Through formation the bishop can ensure that the people of his diocese are properly disposed for engagement with other Christians. *Unitatis redintegratio* §11 counsels that those engaging in ecumenical dialogue should approach their task with “love of the truth, with charity, and with humility”. These three fundamental dispositions provide a helpful guide for ecumenical formation of the whole People of God.

Firstly, ecumenism is not premised on compromise as if unity should be achieved at the expense of truth. On the contrary, the search for unity leads us into a fuller appreciation of God’s revealed truth. The bedrock of ecumenical formation, therefore, is that “the Catholic faith must be explained more profoundly and precisely, in such a way and in such terms as our separated brethren can also really understand” (UR §11). These explanations must convey an understanding “that in Catholic doctrine there exists a ‘hierarchy’ of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith” (UR §11). Though all revealed truths are believed with the same divine faith, their significance depends on their relation to the saving mysteries of the Trinity and salvation in Christ, the source of all Christian doctrines. By weighing truths rather than simply enumerating them, Catholics gain a more accurate understanding of the unity that exists among Christians.

Secondly, the virtue of charity demands that Catholics avoid polemical presentations of Christian history and theology and, in particular, that they avoid misrepresenting the positions of other Christians (see UR §4 & §10). Rather, formators informed by an attitude of charity will always seek to emphasise the Christian faith that we share with others and to present the theological differences that divide us with balance and accuracy. In this way the work of formation helps to remove obstacles to dialogue (see UR §11).

The Second Vatican Council insisted that “there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart” (UR §7). An appropriately humble attitude enables Catholics to appreciate “what God is bringing about in the members of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities” (UUS §48), which in turn opens the way for us to learn and receive gifts from these brothers and sisters. Humility is again necessary when, through encounter with other Christians, truth comes to light “which might require a review of assertions and attitudes” (UUS §36).

i) The formation of laity, seminarians and clergy

12. A summary guide to the Ecumenical Directory on formation

The ecumenical dimension should be present in all aspects and disciplines of Christian formation. The *Ecumenical Directory* first of all offers guidelines for the ecumenical formation of all the faithful (§§58–69). It envisages this formation taking place through Bible study, the preached Word, catechesis, liturgy and spiritual life, and in a variety of contexts, such as the family, parish, school and lay associations. Next the document offers guidance for the formation of those engaged in pastoral work, both ordained (§§70–82) and lay (§§83–86). It proposes both that all courses be taught with an ecumenical dimension and sensitivity, and that a specific course in ecumenism be a required part of the first cycle of theological studies (§79). The ecumenical dimension of seminary formation is particularly highlighted and it is recommended that all seminari-

ans should be given ecumenical experience (§§70–82). The document also considers the continuing ecumenical formation of priests, deacons, religious and lay people (§91).

In 1997, the Pontifical Council issued guidelines entitled *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Those Engaged in Pastoral Ministry*. Its two parts deal respectively with the need to give an ecumenical dimension to each area of theological formation, and with the necessary elements for a specific course on the study of ecumenism.

ii) The use of media and diocesan websites

13. *An ecumenical approach in using the media*

A lack of communication with each other over the centuries has deepened the differences among Christian communities. Efforts to foster and strengthen communication can play a key role in drawing divided Christians closer together. Those who represent the Church in social communications should be imbued with the ecumenical dispositions emphasised above. The Catholic presence through the media should demonstrate that Catholics esteem their Christian brothers and sisters and are a people open to listening and learning from them.

14. *Some recommendations for diocesan websites*

Increasingly the internet is the medium through which the face of the Church is perceived by the world. It is a place where both the Catholic faithful and others will find the local Church represented and from where they will judge its priorities and concerns. Attention should be given to this new dimension of ecclesial life. The Church's concern for Christian unity in obedience to Christ, and our love and esteem for other Christian communities, should be immediately evident from the diocesan website. Those who administer diocesan websites must be aware of the responsibility that they have in Christian formation. The diocesan ecumenical officer and the ecumenical commission should be easily found and contacted through the website. The website can very profitably provide links to the webpage of the Ecumenical Commission of the Episcopal Conference or Synod, to the website of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and also to the local and national ecumenical councils.

The ecumenical page of a diocesan website is an excellent place to publicise events and news. However, permission should always be sought before using photographs of ecumenical partners as in some cases publicity can cause difficulties for them.

Practical Recommendations

- ▶ To be familiar with, and make use, of the *Ecumenical Directory*.
 - ▶ To appoint a Diocesan Ecumenical Officer. The *Ecumenical Directory* §41 recommends that each diocese should have an ecumenical officer who acts as a close collaborator with the bishop in ecumenical matters and can represent the diocese to other local Christian communities. Where possible this role should be distinct from the officer for interreligious dialogue.
 - ▶ To establish a Diocesan Ecumenical Commission. The *Ecumenical Directory* (§§42–44) proposes that each diocese should have a commission whose task it is to bring a suitably ecumenical dimension to every aspect of the local Church’s life. This body should oversee ecumenical formation, initiate consultations with other Christian communities, and promote joint witness to our shared Christian faith.
 - ▶ To promote the appointment of Parish Ecumenical Officers. The *Ecumenical Directory* envisages each parish as a “place of authentic ecumenical witness” (§67, see also §45) with a parishioner appointed to be responsible for local ecumenical relations.
 - ▶ To be familiar with the norms established by the episcopal conference or synod. The *Ecumenical Directory* (§§46–47) suggests that each conference or synod should have a commission of bishops with a permanent secretary, or failing that a nominated bishop, with responsibilities for ecumenical engagement. This body or bishop has responsibility not only for the aforementioned norms, but also for engaging with ecumenical bodies at the national level.
 - ▶ To ensure that there is a mandatory course in ecumenism at all seminaries and Catholic theology faculties in the diocese, and ensure that courses in sacred theology and other branches of knowledge have an ecumenical dimension.
 - ▶ To share documentation and ecumenical resources through your diocesan website.
 - ▶ To share ecumenical news through the website so that the faithful of a diocese can see their bishop meeting, praying and working with other Christian communities of the locality.
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PART 2

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ITS RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS

15. *The many ways to engage ecumenically with other Christians*

The ecumenical movement is one and indivisible and should always be thought of as a whole. Nonetheless it takes various forms according to the various dimensions of ecclesial life. Spiritual ecumenism promotes prayer, conversion and holiness for the sake of Christian unity. The Dialogue of Love deals with encounter at the level of everyday contacts and co-operation, nurturing and deepening the relationship we already share through baptism. The Dialogue of Truth concerns the vital doctrinal aspect of healing division among Christians. The Dialogue of Life includes the opportunities for encounter and collaboration with other Christians in pastoral care, in mission to the world and through culture. These forms of ecumenism are here distinguished for clarity of explanation, but it should always be borne in mind that they are interconnected and mutually enriching aspects of the same reality. Much ecumenical activity will engage a number of these dimensions simultaneously. For the purposes of this document distinctions are made in order to help the bishop in his discernment.⁴

A. **Spiritual ecumenism**

16. *Prayer, conversion and holiness*

Spiritual ecumenism is described in *Unitatis redintegratio* §8 as “the soul of the whole ecumenical movement”. At each Eucharist Catholics ask the Lord to grant the Church “unity and peace” (Roman Rite, before the sign of peace) or pray for “the stability of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all” (Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, Litany of peace).

Spiritual ecumenism consists not only of praying for Christian unity but also of a “change of heart and holiness of life” (UR §8). Indeed, “All the faithful should remember that the more effort they make to live holier lives according to the Gospel, the better will they further Christian unity and put it into practice” (UR §7). Spiritual ecumenism requires conversion and reform. As Pope Benedict XVI said: “Concrete gestures that enter hearts and stir consciences are essential, inspiring in everyone that inner conversion that is the prerequisite for all ecumenical progress.”⁵ Similarly, in his handbook of spiritual ecumenism Cardinal Walter Kasper wrote, “Only in the context of conversion and renewal can the wounded bonds of communion be healed”.⁶

4. For example, because this *Vademecum* takes the perspective of the bishop, *communicatio in sacris* is here understood as a pastoral concern rather than an aspect of spiritual ecumenism.

5. First Message of Pope Benedict XVI at the end of the Eucharistic Concelebration with members of the College of Cardinals in the Sistine Chapel, 20 April 2005.

6. Kasper, Walter, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (New York: New City Press, 2007) §6.

17. *Praying with other Christians*

Because we share a real communion as brothers and sisters in Christ, Catholics not only can, but indeed must, seek out opportunities to pray with other Christians. Certain forms of prayer are particularly appropriate in the search for Christian unity. Just as at the conclusion of the rite of Baptism we recognise the dignity we have all gained in being made children of the one Father and so pray the Lord's prayer, it is equally appropriate to pray this same prayer with other Christians with whom we share baptism.

Similarly, the ancient Christian practice of praying the psalms and scriptural canticles together (the Prayer of the Church) is a tradition that continues to be common throughout many Christian communities and therefore lends itself to be prayed ecumenically (see ED §§117–119).⁷

In promoting joint prayer Catholics should be sensitive to the fact that some Christian communities do not practise joint prayer with other Christians, as was once the case for the Catholic Church.

18. *Prayer for unity: the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*

The Second Vatican Council taught that “human powers and capacities cannot achieve ... the reconciling of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ” (UR §24). In praying for unity we acknowledge that unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit and not something we can achieve through our own efforts. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated every year from 18–25 January, or around the feast of Pentecost in some parts of the world. Each year materials are prepared by an ecumenical group of Christians in a particular region, centred on a scriptural text and providing a theme, a joint worship service and brief scriptural reflections for each day of the week. The bishop can very effectively advance the cause of Christian unity by participating in an ecumenical prayer service to mark the week with other Christian leaders, and by encouraging parishes and groups to work with other Christian communities present in the area to jointly organize special prayer events during this week.

19. *Prayer for one another and for the needs of the world*

An important aspect of spiritual ecumenism is simply to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and in particular those who are our neighbours. Even if there are difficulties in local ecumenical relations, or if our openness to others is not reciprocated, we can continue to pray for the blessing of these Christians. Such prayer can become a regular part of our own personal prayer and of the intercessions in our liturgies.

Ut unum sint teaches that “There is no important or significant event which does not benefit from Christians coming together and praying” (§25). Christians from different traditions will share a concern for the local community in which they live and the particular challenges that it faces. Christians can demonstrate their care by marking together significant events or anniversaries in the life of the community, and by praying together for its particular needs. Global realities such as warfare, poverty, the plight of migrants, injustice and the persecution of Christians and other religious groups also

7. See also *O Lord, Open Our Lips*, 2014 document of the French Anglican–Roman Catholic Joint Committee.

demand the attention of Christians who can join together in prayer for peace and for the most vulnerable.

20. *The Sacred Scriptures*

Unitatis redintegratio describes the scriptures as “an instrument of the highest value in the mighty hand of God for the attainment of . . . unity” (§21). The *Ecumenical Directory* urges that everything possible should be done to encourage Christians to read the scriptures together. In so doing, the document continues, the bond of unity between Christians is reinforced, they are opened to the unifying action of God, and their common witness to the Word of God is strengthened (see §183). With all Christians, Catholics share the Sacred Scriptures and with many they also share a common Sunday lectionary. This shared biblical heritage presents opportunities to come together for scripturally-based prayer and discussion, for *lectio divina*, for joint publications and translations,⁸ and even for ecumenical pilgrimages to the holy sites of the Bible. The ministry of preaching can be a particularly powerful means of demonstrating that, as Christians, we are nourished from the common source of the Holy Scriptures. Where appropriate, Catholic and other Christian ministers may be invited to share the ministry of preaching in each other’s non-Eucharistic services (ED §135, see also 118–119).

21. *Liturgical feasts and seasons*

Similarly, we share with most other traditions at least the principal elements of the liturgical calendar: Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. With many we will also share the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent. In various parts of the world our shared calendar allows Christians to prepare together for the celebration of the main Christian feasts. In some dioceses the Catholic bishop joins with other Christian leaders to issue joint statements on these important celebrations.

22. *Saints and martyrs*

“Perhaps the most convincing form of ecumenism,” wrote Saint John Paul II in *Tertio millennio adveniente*, “is the ecumenism of the saints and of the martyrs.” He goes on, “The *communio sanctorum* speaks louder than the things which divide us” (§37). Our churches are already united by the communion that the saints and martyrs share. A common devotion to a particular saint, shrine or image can be the focus of an ecumenical pilgrimage, procession or celebration. Catholics generally, and Catholic bishops in particular, can strengthen the bonds of unity with other Christians by encouraging devotions which are already held in common.

In certain parts of the world Christians suffer persecution. Pope Francis has often spoken of the “ecumenism of blood.”⁹ Those who persecute Christians often recognise better than Christians do themselves the unity that exists among them. In honouring Christians from other traditions who have suffered martyrdom Catholics recognise the riches that Christ has bestowed on them and to which they bear powerful witness

8. See Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and United Bible Societies, *Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible* (revised edition 1987).

9. For example see the address of Pope Francis in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, 25 May 2014.

(see UR §4). Furthermore, although our own communion with the communities to which these martyrs belong remains imperfect, “this communion is already perfect in what we consider the highest point of the life of grace, *martyria* unto death, the truest communion possible with Christ” (UUS §84, see also §§12, 47, 48, and 79).

23. *The contribution of consecrated life to Christian unity*

Consecrated life, which is rooted in the common tradition of the undivided Church, undoubtedly has a particular vocation in promoting unity. Established monastic and religious communities as well as new communities and ecclesial movements can be privileged places of ecumenical hospitality, of prayer for unity and for the “exchange of gifts” among Christians. Some recently founded communities have the promotion of Christian unity as their particular charism, and some of these include members from different Christian traditions. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, Saint John Paul II wrote, “There is an urgent need for consecrated persons to give more space in their lives to ecumenical prayer and genuine evangelical witness.” Indeed, he continued, “no Institute of Consecrated Life should feel itself dispensed from working for this cause” (§§100–101).

24. *The healing of memories*

The expression the “healing of memories” has its roots in the Second Vatican Council. On the penultimate day of the Council (7 December 1965) a joint statement of Saint Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras “removed from the memory” of the Church the excommunications issued in 1054. Ten years later, Saint Paul VI first used the expression the “healing of memories”. As Saint John Paul II wrote, “The Council thus ended with a solemn act which was at once a healing of historical memories, a mutual forgiveness, and a firm commitment to strive for communion” (UUS §52). In the same encyclical Saint John Paul II stressed the need to overcome “certain refusals to forgive”, “an unevangelical insistence on condemning the ‘other side’” and “a disdain born of an unhealthy presumption” (§15). Because Christian communities have grown apart from one another, often harbouring resentments, attitudes such as these have, in some instances, become ingrained. The memory of many Christian communities remains wounded by a history of religious and national conflict. However, when communities on opposing sides of historical divisions are able to come together in a common rereading of history, a reconciliation of memories is made possible.

The commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 was also an example of the healing of memories. In the report *From Conflict to Communion*, Catholics and Lutherans asked themselves how they could hand on their traditions “in such a way that they do not dig new trenches between Christians of different confessions” (§12).¹⁰ They found it was possible to adopt a new approach to their history: “What happened in the past cannot be changed, but what is remembered of the past and how it is remembered can, with the passage of time, indeed change. Remembrance makes the past present. While the past itself is unalterable, the presence of the past in the present is alterable” (§16).

10. Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, *From Conflict to Communion* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt; Paderborn: Bonifatius, 2013).

Practical Recommendations

- ▶ To pray regularly for the unity of Christians.
 - ▶ To mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with an ecumenically organized prayer service and encourage parishes to do the same.
 - ▶ To engage with other Christian leaders about the possibility of holding joint scripture study days, ecumenical pilgrimages/ processions, common symbolic gestures, or the possible exchange of relics and holy images.
 - ▶ To issue a joint message with another Christian leader or leaders at Christmas or Easter.
 - ▶ To hold an ecumenical prayer service for a matter of common concern with other local Christian communities.
 - ▶ To encourage your priests or pastoral assistants to meet regularly for prayer with other Christian ministers and leaders working in their neighbourhoods.
 - ▶ To be aware of the ecumenical work of communities of consecrated life and ecclesial movements, and encourage this work.
 - ▶ To ask the diocesan commission to work with other Christian communities to discern where a healing of memories might be necessary, and suggest concrete steps that may facilitate this.
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B. The Dialogue of Love

25. *The baptismal basis of the Dialogue of Love*

All ecumenism is baptismal ecumenism. While Catholics might recognise all as brothers and sisters by virtue of our common Creator, they recognise a much more profound relationship with baptised Christians from other Christian communities who are their brothers and sisters *in Christ*, following the usage of the New Testament and the Fathers of the Church. Therefore the Dialogue of Love (or the Dialogue of Charity) attends not simply to human fraternity, but rather to those bonds of communion forged in baptism.

26. *A culture of encounter in ecumenical bodies and events*

Catholics should not wait for other Christians to approach them, but rather should always be prepared to take the first step towards others (see UR §4). This “culture of encounter” is a prerequisite for any true ecumenism. Therefore it is important that Catholics participate, as far as possible, in ecumenical bodies at the local, diocesan and national level. Bodies, such as Councils of Churches and Christian Councils, build mutual understanding and co-operation (see ED §§166–171). Catholics have a particular duty to participate in the ecumenical movement when they are in the majority (see ED §32). The Dialogue of Love is built up through the accumulation of simple initiatives which strengthen the bonds of communion: the exchange of messages or delegations on special occasions; reciprocal visits, meetings between local pastoral ministers;

and twinnings or covenants between communities or institutions (dioceses, parishes, seminaries, schools, and choirs). Thus, by word and gesture we show our love not only for our brothers and sisters in Christ but also for the Christian communities to which they belong, because we “joyfully acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments” which we find there (UR §4).

It is the experience of many bishops that in the Dialogue of Love ecumenism becomes much more than a duty of their ministry and is discovered to be a source of enrichment and a fount of joy through which they experience “how very good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity” (Ps 133:1).

Practical Recommendations

- ▶ To take the first step to meet with other Christian leaders.
 - ▶ To pray personally and publically for other Christian leaders.
 - ▶ To attend, insofar as it is possible and appropriate, the liturgies of ordination/ instalment/ welcome of other Christian leaders in your diocese.
 - ▶ To invite, where appropriate, other Christian leaders to significant liturgical celebrations and events.
 - ▶ To be aware of Councils of Churches and ecumenical bodies in your diocese and to participate as far as is possible.
 - ▶ To inform other Christian leaders of important events and news.
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C. The Dialogue of Truth

27. Dialogue as an exchange of gifts

In *Ut unum sint*, Saint John Paul II wrote that dialogue “has become an outright necessity, one of the Church’s priorities” (UUS §31). Through ecumenical dialogue each participant “gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation” of its dialogue partner (UR §4). Saint John Paul II wrote that “Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an ‘exchange of gifts’ ” (UUS §28). In this exchange “Each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church” (LG §13). Pope Francis has called for an active attentiveness to gifts in the other or potential areas of learning from the other which address our own ecclesial needs. “If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us” (EG §246).

28. A dialogue that leads us into all truth

The Dialogue of Truth is the theological dialogue which aims at the restoration of unity of faith. In *Ut unum sint* Saint John Paul II asked, “Who could consider legitimate a reconciliation brought about at the expense of the truth?” (§18). Rather, he insisted, full communion would come about “through the acceptance of the whole truth into which the Holy Spirit guides Christ’s disciples” (UUS §36). This is the same conviction ex-

pressed in the 2014 Jerusalem Common Declaration of Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew when they write, “We affirm once again that the theological dialogue does not seek a theological lowest common denominator on which to reach a compromise, but is rather about deepening one’s grasp of the whole truth that Christ has given to his Church, a truth that we never cease to understand better as we follow the Holy Spirit’s promptings.”

29. *Theological dialogue at the international, national and diocesan level*

In the years following the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church has engaged in many bilateral international theological dialogues with Christian world communions. The task of these dialogue commissions has been to address the theological disagreements which have historically caused division, but doing so in a manner which lays aside the polemical language and prejudices of the past, and that takes as the point of departure the common tradition.¹¹ These dialogues have produced documents which have sought to map out the extent to which the dialogue partners hold the same faith. They have addressed differences and sought to expand what the dialogue partners hold in common, and have identified the areas where further work is needed. The results of the dialogue provide the framework for discerning what we can and cannot appropriately do together on the basis of shared faith.

No less important is the work of the many national dialogue commissions operating under the authority of episcopal conferences. The national commissions are often themselves in dialogue with the international commissions, suggesting new areas for fruitful exploration and also receiving and commenting upon the documents of the international commissions.

The Dialogue of Truth conducted at the national and diocesan levels can have a particular importance with respect to the meaning and valid celebration of baptism. Local Church authorities have been able to formulate common statements expressing the mutual recognition of baptism (see ED §94). Other ecumenical working groups and initiatives also make a valuable contribution to the Dialogue of Truth.¹²

30. *The challenge of reception*

Reception is the process by which the Church discerns and appropriates that which it recognises as authentic Christian teaching. From the first preached word, down through the long history of Ecumenical Councils and Church teaching, the Christian community has exercised this discernment. Reception takes on a new significance in the ecumenical era. While bilateral and multilateral dialogues have over the years produced many agreed statements and declarations, these texts have not always entered into the life of Christian communities. The Joint Working Group between the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church in its document on reception described ecumenical reception as “the evangelical attitude necessary to allow [the results of dialogue] to be

11. Details of these theological dialogues can be found in the appendix to this document.

12. E.g. The Groupe des Dombes, the Ökumenischer Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholischer Theologen, the theological conversations with Oriental Orthodox Churches initiated by the Pro Oriente Foundation, the Malines Conversations, Catholics and Evangelicals Together, and the St Irenaeus Joint Orthodox–Catholic Working Group.

adopted in one's own ecclesial tradition".¹³ Saint John Paul II wrote that in order to receive the bilateral agreements "a serious examination needs to be made, which, by different ways and means and at various levels of responsibility, must involve the whole People of God" (UUS §80). This process of reception should involve the whole Church in the exercise of the *sensus fidei*: lay faithful, theologians, and pastors. Theological faculties and local ecumenical commissions play an important role in this regard. The Church's teaching authority ultimately has the responsibility to express a judgment (see UUS §81). Bishops, therefore, are encouraged to read and evaluate particularly those ecumenical documents that are most relevant to their own contexts. Many contain suggestions which can be implemented at the local level.

While the texts produced by ecumenical dialogues do not constitute official teaching documents of the churches involved, their reception into the life of Christian communities helps all to reach a deeper understanding and appreciation of the mysteries of faith.

Practical Recommendations

- ▶ To identify what bilateral documents have been published between the Catholic Church and the principal Christian communities present in your diocese. The appendix of this *Vademecum* gives an introductory guide to the dialogues whose documents are available on the PCPCU website.
- ▶ To establish a diocesan or regional dialogue commission involving lay and ordained theological experts. The commission might engage in a joint study of the documents of the international or national dialogues or may address issues of local concern.
- ▶ To ask the commission to propose some concrete action that could be undertaken jointly by your diocese and another Christian community or communities on the basis of the ecumenical agreements that have been reached.

D. The Dialogue of Life

31. The truths expressed jointly in theological dialogue seek concrete expression through joint action in pastoral care, in service to the world and through culture. The *Ecumenical Directory* states that the contribution Christians can make in these areas of human life "will be more effective when they make it together, and when they are seen to be united in making it". "Hence," the *Directory* continues, "they will want to do everything together that is allowed by faith" (§162). These words echo an important ecumenical principle, known as the Lund principle, first formulated by the World Council of Churches, that Christians should "act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately" (Third World Conference of

13. *Ninth Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches* (2007-2012), Appendix A "Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress" §15.

the Faith and Order Commission in 1952). By working together Catholics begin to live deeply and faithfully the communion that they already share with other Christians.

In this undertaking Catholics are encouraged to have both patience and perseverance, twin virtues of ecumenism, in equal measure: proceeding “gradually and with care, not glossing over difficulties” (ED §23), under the guidance of their bishops; yet showing genuine commitment in this quest, motivated by the urgent need for reconciliation and by Christ’s own desire for the unity of his disciples (see EG §246, UUS §48).

i) Pastoral ecumenism

32. Shared pastoral challenges as opportunities for ecumenism

Very often Christian communities in a given locality face the same pastoral and missionary challenges. If there is not already a genuine desire for unity among Christians such challenges can exacerbate tensions and even promote a spirit of competition among communities. However, when approached with a properly ecumenical spirit these very challenges become opportunities for Christian unity in pastoral care, called here “pastoral ecumenism”. It is one of the fields which most effectively contributes to fostering Christian unity in the life of the faithful.

33. Shared ministry and sharing resources

In very many parts of the world, and in very many ways, Christian ministers from different traditions work together in providing pastoral care in hospitals, prisons, the armed forces, universities and in other chaplaincies. In many of these situations chapels or other spaces are shared to provide ministry to the faithful of different Christian communities (see ED §204).

Where the diocesan bishop discerns that it will not cause scandal or confusion to the faithful, he may offer other Christian communities the use of a church. Particular discernment is required in the case of the diocesan cathedral. The *Ecumenical Directory* (§137) envisages such situations in which a Catholic diocese comes to the aid of another community which is without its own place of worship or liturgical objects to worthily celebrate its ceremonies. Likewise, in many contexts Catholic communities are the recipients of similar hospitality from other Christian communities. Such sharing of resources can build trust and deepen mutual understanding between Christians.

34. Mission and catechesis

Jesus prayed “that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21), and from its origins the ecumenical movement has always had the Church’s mission to evangelise at its core. Division among Christians impedes evangelization and undermines the credibility of the Gospel message (see UR §1, *Evangelii nuntiandi* §77 and UUS §§98–99). The *Ecumenical Directory* stresses the need to ensure that the “human, cultural and political factors” involved in the original divisions between Christians not be transplanted to new missionary territories and calls for Christian missionaries from different traditions to work “with mutual respect and love” (§207).

The Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae* (1979) notes that in some situations bishops may consider it “opportune or even necessary” to collaborate with other Christians in the field of catechesis (§33, cited in ED §188 and in the *Directory for Catechism* §346). The document goes on to describe the parameters of such collaboration. The

Catechism of the Catholic Church has proved to be a useful tool for co-operation with other Christians in the field of catechesis.

35. *Interchurch marriages*

The diocesan bishop is called upon to authorise interchurch marriages and sometimes to dispense from the Catholic rite for the wedding ceremony. Interchurch marriages should not be regarded as problems for they are often a privileged place where the unity of Christians is built (see *Familiaris Consortio* §78, and *Apostolorum Successores* §207). However, pastors cannot be indifferent to the pain of Christian division which is experienced in the context of these families, perhaps more sharply than in any other context. The pastoral care of interchurch families, from the initial preparation of the couple for marriage to pastoral accompaniment as the couple have children and the children themselves prepare for sacraments, should be a concern at both the diocesan and regional level (see ED §§143–160). A special effort should be made to engage these families in the ecumenical activities of parish and diocese. Mutual meetings of Christian pastors, aimed at supporting and upholding these marriages, can be an excellent ground for ecumenical collaboration (see ED §147). Recent migratory movements have accentuated this ecclesial reality. From one region to another there is a great variety of practice regarding interchurch marriages, the baptism of children born of such marriages, and their spiritual formation.¹⁴ Local agreements on these pressing pastoral concerns are therefore to be encouraged.

36. *Sharing in Sacramental Life (Communicatio in sacris)*

As we have already seen, because we share a real communion with other Christians through our common baptism, prayer with these brothers and sisters in Christ is both possible and necessary to lead us into the unity that the Lord desires for his Church. However, the question of administering and receiving sacraments, and especially the Eucharist, in each other's liturgical celebrations remains an area of significant tension in our ecumenical relations. In treating the subject of "Sharing Sacramental Life with Christians of Other Churches and Ecclesial Communities" (ED §§129–132), the *Ecumenical Directory* draws on two basic principles articulated in *Unitatis redintegratio* §8 which exist in a certain tension and which must always be held together. The first principle is that the celebration of sacraments in a community bears "witness to the unity of the Church" and the second principle is that a sacrament is a "sharing of the means of grace" (UR §8). In view of the first principle the *Directory* states that "Eucharistic communion is inseparably linked to full ecclesial communion and its visible expression" (ED §129) and therefore, in general, participation in the sacraments of the Eucharist, reconciliation and anointing is limited to those in full communion. However, applying the second principle, the *Directory* goes on to state that "by way of exception, and under certain conditions, access to these sacraments may be permitted, or even commended, for Christians of other Churches and ecclesial Communities" (ED §129). In this sense the *Directory* expands on the second principle by stating that the Eucharist is spiritual food for the baptised that enables them to overcome sin and to grow towards the fullness of life in Christ. *Communicatio in sacris* is therefore permitted for the care of souls

14. The bishop should take account of CIC 1125 or CCEO 814 §1.

within certain circumstances, and when this is the case it is to be recognised as both desirable and commendable.

Weighing the claims of these two principles calls for the exercise of discernment by the diocesan bishop, always bearing in mind that the possibility of *communicatio in sacris* differs with respect to the Churches and Communities involved. The Code of Canon Law describes the situations in which Catholics can receive sacraments from other Christian ministers (see CIC 844 §2 and CCEO 671 §2). The canon states that either in danger of death, or if the diocesan bishop judges there to be a “grave necessity,” Catholic ministers can administer sacraments to other Christians “who seek such on their own accord, provided that they manifest Catholic faith in respect to these sacraments and are properly disposed” (CIC 844 §4, see also CCEO 671 §3).

It is important to stress that the bishop’s judgement about what constitutes a “grave necessity” and when exceptional sacramental sharing is appropriate is always a pastoral discernment, that is, it concerns the care and the salvation of souls. Sacraments may never be shared out of mere politeness. Prudence must be exercised to avoid causing confusion or giving scandal to the faithful. Nevertheless, Saint John Paul II’s words should also be borne in mind when he wrote, “It is a source of joy to note that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases, to administer the Sacraments of Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church” (UUS §46).¹⁵

37. *Changing ecclesial affiliation as an ecumenical challenge and opportunity*

Changing of ecclesial affiliation is of its nature distinct from ecumenical activity (UR §4). Nevertheless, the ecumenical documents acknowledge those situations in which Christians move from one Christian community to another. Certain pastoral provisions, such as those formulated by the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*, respond to this reality. Local communities should welcome with joy those who wish to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church, though as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults states, “any appearance of triumphalism should be carefully avoided” (§389).¹⁶ Always maintaining a profound respect for the conscience of the individuals concerned, those who make known their intention to leave the Catholic Church should be made aware of the consequences of their decision. Motivated by the desire to maintain strong relations with ecumenical partners, in some circumstances it is possible to agree a “Code of Conduct” with another Christian community,¹⁷ especially when addressing the challenging issues raised when clergy change affiliation.¹⁸

15. Pastoral agreements have been reached with some Oriental Orthodox Churches for reciprocal admission of the faithful to the Eucharist in case of necessity (in 1984 with the Syrian Orthodox Church, and in 2001 between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East). Many episcopal conferences, synods, eparchies and dioceses have published directives or documents on this matter.

16. *Editio typica*, Appendix 3b.

17. The French Joint Committee for Catholic-Orthodox Theological Dialogue made such a proposal in its 2003 declaration *Éléments pour une éthique du dialogue catholique-orthodoxe*.

18. As an example, the Anglican-Roman Catholic Bishops’ Dialogue of Canada was able to agree a statement, “Pastoral Guidelines for Churches in the case of clergy moving from one communion to the other” (1991).

Practical Recommendations

- ▶ To identify common pastoral needs with other Christian leaders.
 - ▶ To listen to and learn from the pastoral initiatives of other communities.
 - ▶ To act with generosity to help the pastoral work of another Christian community.
 - ▶ To meet with and listen to the experiences of interchurch families in your diocese.
 - ▶ To present to the clergy of your diocese the guidelines given by the *Ecumenical Directory* concerning the sharing of sacraments (summarised above) and, if there are any, the guidelines of the Episcopal Conference or Synods of the Eastern Catholic Churches. Help your clergy to discern when those conditions are to apply and when such sharing in sacramental life might, in individual cases, be appropriate.
 - ▶ If your diocese or episcopal conference has no guidelines regarding the canonical provisions for exceptional sacramental sharing, and if you think such guidelines would be beneficial in your context, contact the ecumenical office of the episcopal conference and seek advice about proposing or preparing such a text.
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ii) Practical ecumenism

38. Co-operation in service to the world

The Second Vatican Council called on all Christians, united in their common efforts and bearing witness to a common hope, to set “in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant” (UR §12). It noted that in many countries this co-operation was already taking place in defence of human dignity and to relieve the afflictions of famine, natural disasters, illiteracy, poverty, housing shortage, and the unequal distribution of wealth. Today we might add to this list: co-ordinated Christian action to care for displaced and migrant peoples; the fight against modern day slavery and human trafficking; peace-building; advocacy for religious freedom; the fight against discrimination; defence of the sanctity of life and care for creation. Christians co-operating in this way is what is intended by “practical ecumenism”. Increasingly, and as new needs arise, Christian communities are pooling their resources and co-ordinating their efforts to respond in the most effective way possible to those in need. Saint John Paul II called Christians to “every possible form of practical co-operation at all levels” and described this kind of working together as “a true school of ecumenism, a dynamic road to unity” (UUS §40). The experience of bishops in many parts of the world is that co-operation between Christian communities in service of the poor is a driving force in promoting the desire for Christian unity.

39. *Joint service as witness*

Through such ecumenical co-operation Christians “bear witness to our common hope” (UR §12). As disciples of Christ, schooled by the Scriptures and Christian tradition, we are compelled to act to uphold the dignity of the human person and the sacredness of creation, in the sure hope that God is bringing the whole of creation into the fullness of his Kingdom. By working together in both social action and cultural projects such as those suggested in §41 Christians promote an integral Christian vision of the dignity of the person. Our common service manifests before the world, therefore, our shared faith, and our witness is more powerful for being united.

40. *Interreligious dialogue*

Increasingly, at both the national and local levels, Christians are finding the need to engage more closely with other religious traditions. Recent trends of migration have brought peoples of different cultures and religions into what were previously predominantly Christian communities. Often the expertise at the disposal of an individual Christian community may be limited. Joint Christian co-operation in interreligious dialogue is therefore often beneficial, and indeed the *Ecumenical Directory* states that it “can deepen the level of communion among [Christians] themselves” (§210). The *Directory* particularly highlights the importance of Christians working together to combat “anti-Semitism, religious fanaticism and sectarianism”. Lastly, it is important not to lose sight of the essential difference between dialogue with different religious traditions which aims at establishing good relations and co-operation, and dialogue with other Christian communities which aims at restoring the unity Christ willed for his Church and is properly called ecumenical.

Practical Recommendations

- ▶ To identify in dialogue with other Christian leaders areas where Christian service is required.
 - ▶ To talk to other Christian leaders and your own diocesan ecumenical officer about what Christians are currently doing separately that could be done together.
 - ▶ To encourage priests to engage with ecumenical partners in service to the local community.
 - ▶ To ask diocesan agencies and Catholics engaged in social action on behalf of the Church in your diocese about past and present co-operation with other Christian communities and how this might be extended.
 - ▶ To talk to other Christian leaders about their relations with other religious traditions in your area. What are the difficulties and what can the Christian communities do together?
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iii) Cultural ecumenism

41. Cultural factors have played a significant role in the estrangement of Christian communities. Very often theological disagreements stemmed from difficulties of mutual understanding arising from cultural differences. Once communities have separated and live in isolation from one another, cultural differences tend to widen and reinforce theological disagreements. More positively, Christianity has also contributed enormously to the development and enrichment of specific cultures around the world.

“Cultural ecumenism” includes all efforts to better understand the culture of other Christians and in so doing to realise that beyond cultural difference, to varying degrees, we share the same faith expressed in different ways. An important aspect of cultural ecumenism is the promotion of common cultural projects which are able to bring different communities together and to inculturate the gospel again in our own age.

The *Ecumenical Directory* (§§211–218) encourages joint projects of an academic, scientific or artistic nature, and provides criteria for the discernment of these projects (§212). The experience of many Catholic dioceses shows that ecumenical concerts, festivals of sacred art, exhibitions, and symposia, are important moments of rapprochement between Christians. Culture, in a broad sense, presents itself as a privileged place for the “exchange of gifts”.

CONCLUSION

42. The long history of Christian divisions and the complex nature of the theological and cultural factors that divide Christian communities are a great challenge to all those involved in the ecumenical endeavour. And indeed the obstacles to unity are beyond human strength; they cannot be overcome by our efforts alone. But the death and resurrection of Christ is God’s decisive victory over sin and division, just as it is His victory over injustice and every form of evil. For this reason Christians cannot despair in the face of Christian division, just as they cannot despair in the face of injustice or warfare. Christ has already defeated these evils.

The task of the Church is always to receive the grace of the victory of Christ. The practical recommendation and initiatives suggested in this *Vademecum* are ways in which the Church and, in particular, the bishop can strive to actualise Christ’s victory over Christian division. Opening to God’s grace renews the Church, and as *Unitatis redintegratio* taught, this renewal is always the first and indispensable step towards unity. An openness to God’s grace demands an openness to our Christian brothers and sisters, and, as Pope Francis has written, a willingness to receive “what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us” (EG §246). The two parts of this *Vademecum* have sought to address these two dimensions of ecumenism: the renewal of the Church in its own life and structures; and engagement with other Christian communities in spiritual ecumenism, and the dialogues of Love, Truth, and Life.

Father Paul Couturier (1881–1953), a Catholic pioneer in the ecumenical movement and particularly of spiritual ecumenism, called upon the grace of Christ’s victory over division in his prayer for unity which continues to inspire Christians of many different traditions. With his prayer we conclude this *Vademecum*.

Lord Jesus, on the night before you died for us,
you prayed that all your disciples may be perfectly one,
as you are in your Father and your Father is in you.
Make us painfully aware of our lack of faith in not being united.
Give us the faithfulness to acknowledge,
and the courage to reject, our hidden indifference,
distrust and even enmity towards one another.
Grant that we all may meet one another in you,
so that from our souls and our lips there may ever arise
your prayer for the unity of Christians
as you will it and by the means that you desire.
In you, who are perfect Love,
grant us to find the way that leads to unity,
in obedience to your love and your truth. Amen.

The Holy Father Pope Francis has given his approval for the publication of this document.

From the Vatican, 5 June 2020

Kurt Cardinal Koch
President

✠ **Brian Farrell**
Titular Bishop of Abitine
Secretary

CATHOLIC DOCUMENTS ON ECUMENISM

Second Vatican Council *Unitatis redintegratio* (1964), Decree on Ecumenism.

Saint John Paul II *Ut unum sint* (1995), Encyclical on Commitment to Ecumenism.

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and United Bible Societies, *Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible* (1987).

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993).

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of those Engaged in Pastoral Work* (1997).

For these documents and for further documentation, information and resources see the website of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (www.christianunity.va).

APPENDIX

The international dialogue partners of the Catholic Church

Bilateral dialogue

The work of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity is both to foster ever-closer relations with our brothers and sisters in Christ (the Dialogue of Love) and to strive to overcome the doctrinal divisions which prevent us from being able to share full, visible communion (the Dialogue of Truth). It conducts bilateral dialogues or conversations with the following Christian communities.¹⁹

Orthodox Churches of the Byzantine Tradition

Churches of the Byzantine tradition are united by the recognition of the seven ecumenical councils of the first millennium and the same spiritual and canonical tradition inherited from Byzantium. These Churches, which form the Orthodox Church as a whole, are organized according to the principle of autocephaly, each with its own primate and the Ecumenical Patriarch having, among them, the primacy of honour. The unanimously recognised autocephalous Churches are: the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Moscow, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, and the Autocephalous Churches of Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, and the Czech Lands and Slovakia. Some of the patriarchates also include so-called “autonomous” churches within them. In 2019 the Ecumenical Patriarch granted a tomos of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. This Church is still in the process of being recognised by other Churches. The International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church as a whole, founded in 1979, has adopted six texts. The first three documents concerned the sacramental structure of the Church (Munich, 1982; Bari, 1987; and Valamo, 1988) and the fourth addressed the question of uniatism (Balamand, 1993). After a period of crisis, a new phase of dialogue began in 2006 focussing on the relationship between primacy and synodality and to date has adopted two documents (Ravenna 2007, and Chieti 2016).

Oriental Orthodox Churches

The Oriental Orthodox Churches, also known as “non-Chalcedonian” because they do not recognize the fourth Ecumenical Council, are distinguished between three main traditions: Coptic, Syriac and Armenian. An international joint commission was established in 2003 bringing together all the seven Churches that recognise the first three ecumenical councils: the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the

19. Before entering into ecumenical relations locally and nationally it is helpful first of all to establish that a particular Christian community is in a full communion relationship with one of the worldwide communions listed in this appendix. There are, for example, non-canonical Orthodox Churches, Anglican provinces or dioceses which are not in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and many Baptist communities are not members of the Baptist World Alliance. Furthermore, there are also communities that do not have a representative global structure. Discernment is required when entering into ecumenical relations with such groups. It may be helpful to seek advice from the ecumenical commission of the bishops' conference or synod, or from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin and Catholicosate of Cilicia), the Malankara Orthodox-Syrian Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church. A first phase of the dialogue culminated in 2009 with a document on the nature and mission of the Church. A new phase resulted in the adoption in 2015 of a document on the exercise of communion in the life of the early Church. The current dialogue is about the sacraments.

Parallel to this commission there is also a special dialogue with the Malankara Churches of South India. In 1989 and 1990, two parallel bilateral dialogues were established respectively with the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and with the Malankara (Jacobite) Syrian Orthodox Church, and these were maintained despite the foundation of the commission mentioned above. These dialogues focus on three main themes: Church history, common witness and ecclesiology.

Assyrian Church of the East

The dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East has produced many fruitful results. As a result of a first phase of dialogue on Christological issues Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV signed a *Joint Christological Declaration* in 1994, which opened new horizons for both theological dialogue and pastoral collaboration. Subsequently, the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East planned two further phases of work: one on sacramental theology and the other on the constitution of the Church. The second phase of dialogue concluded with a wide consensus on sacramental issues allowing the publication by the PCPCU of the “Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East”, and an agreement on the final document entitled *Common Statement on Sacramental Life*, adopted in 2017. The third phase of the dialogue on the nature and constitution of the Church started in 2018.

Old Catholic Church of the Union of Utrecht

The Union of Utrecht comprises six national churches that belong to the International Old Catholic Bishops’ Conference. Listed in the order of entry into the Union (1889 onwards) they are the Old Catholic Churches in the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Poland. The International Roman Catholic–Old Catholic Dialogue Commission was established in 2004. Its recent publication *The Church and Ecclesial Communion* incorporates the two reports of 2009 and 2016. It concludes that the shared understanding of the Church as a multilayered communion of local churches may open up common vistas and enable a common vision of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome within a universal synodal perspective.

Anglican Communion

The Anglican Communion has 39 Provinces and more than 85 million members. Although others claim the name Anglican, the communion is defined as being those dioceses whose bishop is in communion with the ancient See of Canterbury. Ecumenical dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church began after the historic meeting between Saint Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey in 1966. The first Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC I) met between 1970 and 1981. It produced a high level of agreement on the topics of Eucharist and

Ministry. ARCIC II took up the work of its predecessor on authority in an important document entitled *The Gift of Authority* (1999). It also produced agreed statements on salvation, Mary, ecclesiology, ethics and grace. Most recently ARCIC III has published an agreed statement on ecclesiology entitled *Walking Together on the Way*. The International Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) is a commission of paired Anglican and Catholic bishops who seek to further the reception of ARCIC's documents and to give greater witness to our common faith in service of those in need.

Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

The Lutheran World Federation is a global communion of 148 Lutheran churches which live in pulpit and altar fellowship. LWF member churches can be found in 99 countries and together they have over 75.5 million members. The LWF was founded in 1947 in Lund. The Lutheran–Catholic Commission on Unity began its work in 1967. The dialogue between Catholics and Lutherans has continued uninterrupted since then. In the five phases of the dialogue, the Commission has published study documents on the gospel and the Church, ministry, Eucharist, justification and the apostolicity of the Church. Its current working theme is Baptism and growth in communion. An important historical milestone in Lutheran–Catholic relations was achieved by *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999). The theology of justification was the central theological dispute between Martin Luther and the church authorities which led to the Reformation. The *Joint Declaration* proposes 44 common affirmations relating to the doctrine of justification. On the basis of the high degree of consensus reached it was agreed that the condemnations in Lutheran Confessions and in the Council of Trent no longer apply. The document *From Conflict to Communion* (2013) marked the Lutheran–Catholic Common Commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

The World Communion of Reformed Churches and its member churches trace their roots to the 16th century Reformation led by John Calvin, John Knox, and Ulrich Zwingli, and to the earlier reforming movements of Jan Hus and Peter Valdes. WCRC member churches are Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United/Uniting and Waldensian. In 2010, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) united to create the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The Reformed–Roman Catholic Commission officially began its work in Rome in 1970. A total of four phases of dialogue have been held by the Commission producing the following four dialogue reports: *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* (1970–1977); *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* (1984–1990); *The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God* (1998–2005); and *Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice* (2011–2015).

World Methodist Council (WMC)

The World Methodist Council is an association of 80 churches from across the world. Most of these have their roots in the teaching of the 18th century Anglican preacher, John Wesley. Methodists have a long history of ecumenical covenants and so in many countries such as Canada, Australia and India, Methodists have become part of United

or Uniting Churches. The Methodist–Roman Catholic International Commission began work in 1967. The Commission produces reports every five years to coincide with the meetings of the World Methodist Council. These reports have focussed on topics such as: the Holy Spirit, the Church, the sacraments, the apostolic tradition, revelation and faith, teaching authority in the Church, and holiness. The 2017–2021 phase of dialogue focusses on the theme of the Church as a reconciled and reconciling community.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC)

The Mennonite World Conference represents the majority of the global family of Christian churches that have their origins in the 16th century Radical Reformation in Europe, and particularly in the Anabaptist movement. MWC membership includes 107 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ national churches from 58 countries, with around 1.5 million baptized believers. International conversations between the Roman Catholic Church and the MWC started in 1998 and produced one dialogue report, *Called Together to Be Peacemakers* (1998–2003).

More recently (2012–2017) the PCPCU has participated in a tripartite dialogue called the International Trilateral Dialogue Commission with the MWC and the LWF which finalised a report in 2017 entitled “Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church”.

Baptist World Alliance (BWA)

The Alliance is a worldwide fellowship of Baptist believers formed in London in 1905. Currently there are about 240 member churches totalling approximately 46 million members. The Baptist movement began in 17th century England as a separatist movement breaking from the Puritans and advocating the radical separation of church and state. Early leaders of the movement (John Smyth and Thomas Helwys) became convinced that infant baptism was contrary to Scripture. Along with the Mennonites (Anabaptists), who influenced Baptist theology in Holland and beyond, Baptists do not practise infant baptism but advocate what they term “believers’ baptism”. The Baptist–Roman Catholic international conversations began in 1984. Two phases of international dialogues have produced two reports: *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today’s World* (1984–1988) and *The Word of God in the Life of the Church* (2006–2010). Currently, a third phase of dialogue is reflecting on the theme of common Christian witness in the contemporary world.

Disciples of Christ

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was born in the early 19th century in the USA, out of a search for both catholicity and unity. Christian unity is foremost in the Disciples’ doctrine of the church and in their witness to the kingdom of God. They refer to themselves as a “Protestant Eucharistic community” and frequently repeat that “our reconciling journey begins, and ends, at the [Eucharistic] Table”. The dialogue with the Catholic Church started in 1977 and has published four documents: *Apostolicity and Catholicity* (1982); *The Church as Communion in Christ* (1992); *Handing on the Faith* (2002); and *The Presence of Christ in the Church with particular reference to the Eucharist* (2009).

Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements

The Los Angeles Azusa Street Revival Movement in 1906 is usually considered as the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement. Classical Pentecostalism has its origins in this Revival that soon formed into denominations in the protestant sense and have since become international networks such as the Assemblies of God, Four Square Gospel, and the Church of God. The Denominational Pentecostals which sprang from revivals in the 1950s within different Christian traditions while remaining within these confessional boundaries are normally called Charismatics (the Catholic Charismatic Renewal born in 1968 is part of this movement while remaining an ecclesial movement within the Catholic Church). Lastly Non-Denominational Pentecostals or New Charismatic Churches appeared in late 1980s and 1990s. At present Pentecostals and Charismatics are estimated to number about 500 million globally. The Pentecostal–Catholic dialogue began in 1972 and has produced six reports the most recent of which, *Do Not Quench the Spirit*, addresses charisms in the life and mission of the Church.

A series of preliminary conversations between a group of leaders of the New Charismatic Churches (NCC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity took place in the Vatican (2008–12). At the end of this preliminary phase, it was agreed to have a round of conversations to explore their identity and self-understanding (2014–18). A document entitled “The Characteristics of the New Charismatic Churches” resulted from the NCC’s reflections on these conversations. It is not an ecumenical document, but represents the NCC’s attempt to describe themselves in a dialogical context and is intended to help and encourage relations between Catholics and New-Charismatic leaders around the world.

World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)

Evangelicals are one of the first ecumenical movements in modern church history. Originally, the Evangelical Alliance, founded in 1846 in London, brought together Christians of Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist traditions. In the founding of the Evangelical Alliance (now World Evangelical Alliance), a personal relationship to Christ was considered the fundamental uniting value, that is the sense of conversion (repentance) and spiritual rebirth (born-again Christians). Even though the Evangelicals agree on the four so-called exclusive articles of the Reformation (“*solas*”), at present issues around mission and evangelism are the core concern for Evangelicals, who belong to very many different ecclesial traditions from Anglicanism to Pentecostalism. The World Evangelical Alliance, an association of National Evangelical Alliances with a visible infrastructure, and the Lausanne Movement, which for the most part is an association of individual Evangelicals, represent the concerns of Evangelicalism today. Three rounds of international consultations have been undertaken between representatives of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the WEA and have produced three reports: *Evangelicals and Catholics on Mission* (ERCDOM, 1976–1984); *Church, Evangelisation and the Bonds of Koinonia* (1997–2002); *Scripture and Tradition* and *The Church in Salvation* – *Catholics and Evangelicals Explore Challenges and Opportunities* (2009–2016).

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army has its roots in mid-19th century England, as a mission movement for the poor and marginalized. The founder, William Booth, was a Methodist minister.

The Salvation Army operates in 124 countries. Its membership includes more than 17,000 active and more than 8,700 retired officers, over 1 million soldiers, around 100,000 other employees and more than 4.5 million volunteers. Salvationists can be classified as Evangelical Christians who do not practise any sacraments. A series of informal ecumenical conversations between Salvationists and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity began in 2007 in Middlesex, United Kingdom. There were a total of five meetings ending in 2012. A summary of the international dialogue was published by the Salvation Army in 2014 under the title *Conversations with the Catholic Church*.

Multilateral dialogues

Through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity the Catholic Church also engages in multilateral dialogues.

World Council of Churches (WCC)

Founded in 1948, the World Council of Churches is “a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (*The Basis* adopted by the Third Assembly in New Delhi in 1961). The WCC is today the broadest and most inclusive organized expression of the ecumenical movement. It brings together 350 member churches including Orthodox, Lutherans, Reformed, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists as well as Evangelicals, Pentecostals and United and Independent churches. All together they represent over 500 million Christians from all continents and more than 110 countries.

Although the Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC, there has been growing collaboration on issues of common concern since the Second Vatican Council. The most important collaboration for the pursuit of the goal of full visible unity is undertaken through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU). This includes the Joint Working Group (established in 1965), collaboration in the field of ecumenical formation and education, and the common preparation of the material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Catholic experts are also members of various commissions of the WCC such as the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, the Commission on Ecumenical Education and Formation, as well as various *ad hoc* working groups related to specific projects. Particularly important for resolving doctrinal, moral and structural divergences among the Churches is the Commission on Faith and Order, 10% of whose membership is Catholic. Since its establishment in 1948, the Commission has undertaken many studies on important ecumenical topics including Holy Scripture and Tradition, apostolic faith, anthropology, hermeneutics, reconciliation, violence and peace, preservation of creation, and visible unity. In 1982 it published *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry* (BEM, also known as *The Lima Statement*), the first multilateral convergence statement on the issues at the heart of the ecumenical debate. The official Catholic response (1987) expressed the conviction that the study of ecclesiology should take a central place in ecumenical dialogue in order to resolve remaining issues. In 2013, the Commission published a second convergence statement *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (TCTCV). A result of three decades of intense theological dialogue involving hundreds of theologians and church leaders, TCTCV demonstrates “how far Christian communities have come in their common understanding of the church, showing the

progress that has been made and indicating work that still needs to be done” (Introduction). The official Catholic response (2019) makes it clear that without pretending to having achieved full agreement, *TCTCV* shows growing consensus on controversial issues regarding the Church’s nature, mission and unity.

Global Christian Forum (GCF)

The Global Christian Forum is a recent ecumenical initiative that emerged at the end of the last century within the context of the WCC. It intends to create an open space – a forum – where representatives of the so-called “historic churches” (Catholic, Orthodox and post-Reformation Protestant churches) and those identified as “recent churches” (Pentecostal, Evangelical and Independent) could join together on an equal basis to foster mutual respect, to share faith stories, and to address together common challenges. The aim of the GCF is to gather around one table representatives of almost all Christian traditions, including African Instituted Churches, mega churches, migrant churches, and new ecumenical movements and communities. Represented in the GCF are many Christian world communions and world Christian organisations, including the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the World Evangelical Alliance and the World Council of Churches. Without formal membership, the GCF provides space for networking and for church leaders to explore issues of common interest in the fast changing context of global Christianity today.

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)

The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) is a fellowship of over 90 Protestant churches which have signed the Leuenberg Agreement. Its aim is to implement church fellowship through common witness and service. Membership consists of most of the Lutheran and Reformed churches in Europe, the United churches originating from mergers of those churches, the Waldensian Church, and the European Methodist churches. Some European churches have remained outside the fellowship, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Church of Sweden. In a worship service in Basel on 16 September 2018, the CPCE and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity committed to begin an official dialogue on the theme of church and church communion.

**DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME:
CHRISTIANS FORMED AND
TRANSFORMED BY THE EUCHARIST**

REPORT OF THE FIFTH PHASE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE
BETWEEN THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST AND THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH
(2014-2018)

STATUS OF THE REPORT

The Report published here is the work of the International Commission for Dialogue between the Disciples of Christ and the Catholic Church. Commission members for the Disciples of Christ were appointed by the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council and for the Catholic Church by the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.¹ The authorities who appointed the participants have allowed the report to be published as a study document produced by the Dialogue members so that it may be widely discussed. It is not an authoritative declaration of either the Catholic Church or of the Disciples of Christ, who will both review and evaluate the document.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. "Christians Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist" was the topic chosen for the fifth phase of dialogue. This phase was co-chaired by the Most Reverend David Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, WI, USA, and the Rev. Dr. Newell Williams, President of Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, USA. This is the first time in which exclusive attention was given to the two churches' common emphasis on the Lord's Table. The theme of formation and transformation by the Eucharist has enabled the Commission to deepen its shared understandings, as well as highlighting some of the different ways in which Catholics and Disciples² have characteristically expressed them.

2. Disciples and Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the highest moment of their spiritual journey as Christians. At the Eucharist, they encounter Jesus Christ, hear the Gospel proclaimed, deepen their communion with God and with one another, and are prepared and strengthened for carrying out the mission of the Church in the world. Each Sunday ("the Lord's Day"), Disciples and Catholics are invited to renew and deepen the implications of the Eucharist for their daily lives, especially, to be formed and transformed in the likeness of Christ. In this phase of our dialogue we have sought to give more substance to the conviction expressed by our predecessors in the second phase that our affirmations may be "the expression of a very profound communion in some of the most fundamental gifts of grace of God."³

1. The Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC) is a council of 19 national member churches from around the world, known as Disciples of Christ or Churches of Christ, which also includes United and Uniting Churches where Disciples have been part of the unions. Though not a legislative body, the DECC works to enable its member churches to consult with each other about issues of faith, witness and unity. The PCPCU, a department of the Roman Curia, has the competence and the task of promoting full communion with other Churches.

2. Throughout this text we use the first person plural "we" to refer to the Commission, and "Disciples and Catholics," or variants of that, to refer to statements about our two Churches.

3. "*The Church as Communion in Christ*" (1982-1992), Report of the Second Phase of the International Disciples of Christ/Roman Catholic Dialogue, in: *IS 84* (1993/III-IV) pp. 162-169; *Call to Unity*, pp. 8-17, para. 8.

3. Catholics and Disciples agree that “the Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist.”⁴ Catholics believe that “the Church draws her life from the Eucharist.”⁵ Disciples maintain the centrality of the Eucharist as the origin of their movement which began in the early 19th century: Disciples recognize that “the Lord’s Supper is a means by which we (Christians) are nourished by the love of God in Jesus Christ and through that love are made one with one another and with the Church Universal.”⁶ Since the emergence of the Disciples as a distinctive church in the early 19th century, and for most of the 20th century, Disciples and Catholics had been essentially isolated from each other; indeed, many Catholics have had no knowledge of or experience with the Disciples prior to our international dialogue that began in 1977. From its beginning, the goal identified for the dialogue is the full visible unity of our churches expressed in the common celebration of the Eucharist.

4. It is important to remember that there was never a point at which Disciples separated from the Catholic Church, nor are there any mutual condemnations between them that need to be revoked. Nevertheless, the Churches out of which the Disciples movement grew (a variety of Presbyterians and, to a lesser extent, varieties of Baptists) were already separated from the Catholic Church. There is still a journey of reconciliation to be made to achieve full communion.

5. The participants in the Dialogue hope that by exploring the respective celebrations of the eucharistic liturgy as the essential point of reference in each tradition, their joint reflections on such a fundamental theme such as “the Eucharist forming and transforming Christians” will help Disciples and Catholics to know one another better as brothers and sisters in Christ. We believe that this growing mutual understanding will also be helped by a joint study of Scripture, by theological reflection, and by exploring the ways in which each church prepares its people for participation in the Eucharist and its implications for living out the Eucharist in daily life. The experience of praying together and participating in each other’s liturgy (as much as possible) heightened the awareness of how much is shared in common, and also the pain of not yet being able to celebrate together the Eucharist.

II. DIALOGUE AS A JOURNEY AND PILGRIMAGE

6. “Unity will not come about as a miracle at the very end. Rather, unity comes about in journeying; the Holy Spirit does this on the journey. If we do not walk together, if we do not pray for one another, if we do not collaborate in the many ways that we can in this world for the People of God, then unity will not come about!”⁷ This statement of Pope Francis, at the conclusion of the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Uni-

4. Cf. Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 134.

5. John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 6.

6. *The Church for Disciples of Christ: Seeking to be Truly Church Today*, ed. Paul A. Crow, Jr. and James O. Duke, (1988) new edn, ed. Robert K. Welsh, Commission on Theology, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Lucas Park Books, St. Louis, MO (2008), p. 133.

7. Francis, Homily, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, Rome, 25 January 2014.

ty, occurring at the same time as the first session of this phase of dialogue, has been inspirational for the Commission: “Walking together” may well be a metaphor for our dialogue, since our Risen Lord always walks with us in the journey of life.

7. What the crucified and risen Christ once did for the disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24), he now does for us: Jesus himself opens the Scriptures and breaks the bread during each Eucharist. In this biblical passage, Disciples and Catholics have recognized the basic pattern of their eucharistic liturgies that include Christ opening his Word and breaking the bread, and thereby sharing himself in sacrament. By recognizing Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, it is expected that all of us will “go back to Jerusalem” to witness to the Church the personal living encounter with Jesus Christ “in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35). The Eucharist is sign and seal of God’s merciful love despite our failings.

8. Disciples and Catholics have been together on the way for more than forty years, with one destination in mind: the one, holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic Church. In the meantime, on the way, by dialoguing and praying together, Catholics and Disciples are coming to know each other better by discovering and rediscovering “what the Spirit has sown in the other as a gift for them.”⁸ Each of us understands that by participating in the eucharistic liturgy, especially in the reception of Holy Communion, in eating the “bread from heaven” (John 6:30-31; cf. Exod 16:4), Christians receive a food that gives life, strengthens and fortifies them to the point that they can echo St. Paul and say: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

9. This phase of our Dialogue has been the continuation of a journey, a pilgrimage, in which the progression of meetings, conversations, and experiences have changed us. The trajectory from Nashville to Rome, to Bethany, to Calgary, to Bayamón, and to Green Bay can be seen as a series of “Emmaus” stops – not the final goal, but waystations where Christ breaks open his Word and breaks the bread in a series of moments of ongoing revelation of what gathers us, as well as a clearer understanding of what continues to keep us apart.

10. The methodological approach has been to examine carefully each other’s eucharistic liturgy and practice in a positive way (see Appendix 1). In each meeting, theological and biblical papers were presented by Commission members of both churches and discussed in depth (Appendix 3). Questions were formulated by each team for the other and responses were prepared expressing, as much as possible, each ecclesial tradition. Furthermore, the participants attended the eucharistic liturgies of both traditions in different geographical contexts, thus experiencing as closely as possible the eucharistic liturgy as celebrated locally by each of the two churches, within the bounds of ecclesial discipline. They also were enlightened by joint study of Scripture, and by exploring the

8. *Ibid.* See also: Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 244: “How many important things unite us! If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us.”

ways in which Catholics and Disciples prepare their members for participation in the Eucharist and daily life.

11. The members of the Dialogue have explored together how participation in the liturgy of the Eucharist forms and transforms Christians, precisely because it is Christ who is present and active in Word and Sacrament. Understanding the theology and the practical implementation of our two churches' eucharistic liturgies has thus served as the basic starting point for our work in this phase of dialogue; it has led us to new perspectives related both to common agreements and remaining differences in this pilgrimage toward unity in Christ.

III. CELEBRATING THE EUCHARIST⁹

12. The perspectives on the theology and liturgical eucharistic practices of our two churches serve as the foundation for identifying common agreements and divergences in our understanding of the Eucharist in the formation and transformation of Christians. A complete description of eucharistic liturgies according to the Catholic Church and the Disciples of Christ is found in Appendix 1.

A. INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

13. Both the Catholic Church and Disciples of Christ base their understanding and practice of the Eucharist on their interpretation of Scripture (especially the accounts of the Last Supper, our Lord's Passion, and Paul's teaching) and on their interpretation of Tradition. Furthermore, both churches insist on the importance of regular celebration of the Eucharist (on Sunday, the day of the Lord's resurrection) as the central event in the church's worship and life.

14. Disciples and Catholics share a similar structure in celebrating the Eucharist though with certain fundamental differences. One major difference is that Catholics have an order for the celebration, governed by several official documents, such as the General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM]. Disciples communities celebrate within traditional parameters, shaped and guided by worship materials provided at national and local levels, but the local pastor and community have broader freedom to adapt the celebration to local needs. Disciples have also stressed the importance of eucharistic hymns sung before communion, as part of their liturgy.

15. Our Scripture studies (cf. Isaiah 56 and Ezekiel 44) sharpened for us the issue of inclusion or exclusion. This issue reminded us that the Lord's own ministry reached out beyond the house of Israel to the nations of the Gentiles (cf. Psalm 22 and Mark's accounts of the multiplication of the loaves, one directed to a Jewish and the other to a Gentile context). Both Catholics and Disciples feel the pain of our separation and pray for the unity that Christ longs for in his priestly prayer (John 17:21). Our study was profoundly affected by encountering stories of the effects of broken communion expe-

9. Disciples commonly refer to the Eucharist as the Lord's Supper; Catholics commonly refer to the Eucharist as the Mass.

rienced by local members in the places where we met. Catholics and Disciples continue to work for full eucharistic sharing with each other as an outcome of this dialogue.

B. LITURGICAL PERSPECTIVES: THE ORDER OF THE EUCHARISTIC SERVICE

16. Disciples and Catholics see fundamental similarities in their celebration of the Eucharist. This section (III: B) identifies, in order, six fundamental stages of the eucharistic celebration as practiced by Catholics and Disciples of Christ, indicating distinctive perspectives of each church. Then the following section (III: C) provides a commentary on various liturgical and theological aspects of the eucharistic celebration, as practiced in each church.

1. Gathering as members of Christ's body in worship

17. Both Disciples and Catholics gather on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist as an expression of the Tradition of the church. Catholics identify this act of gathering also as an experience of the presence of Christ, who said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20). Disciples also believe that as they are gathered they do so in the presence of Christ, who makes all things one, welcoming to His table all believers from every place and time.

18. Catholics and Disciples recognize that they are members of Christ's Body, and that both are gathered by ordained ministers. Catholics require that the one presiding at the worship is an ordained bishop or priest, who oversees and coordinates the worship by the people. Disciples also place high value on the engagement of the whole people of God in the service and extend this to leadership roles at the Table itself.

19. For Catholics, this moment of gathering is a time also to recognize that sin divides the community. This is ritualized in a Penitential Act which for Catholics does not take the place of the sacrament of penance. Disciples also are aware of this need and provide an occasion within the celebration for confession of both personal and communal sin, with assurance of forgiveness.

2. Hearing the word of God

20. The gathered community listens to readings from the word of God and to a homily. Catholics use the Lectionary for Mass for Sundays, weekdays, and other celebrations that provide a structured engagement with God's word in the Bible and the Sunday eucharistic liturgy. Catholics understand that in the liturgy of the Word, "God himself speaks to his people and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel" (GIRM 29). Hence, the Liturgy of the Word, with its homily, is a moment of encounter between God and his people.

21. Disciples have sought from the beginning to shape their faith and practice upon the accounts of God's dealings with his people in the Hebrew scriptures and in the New Testament. The Revised Common Lectionary is recommended and widely used by Disciples. The sermon is a fundamental part of each Lord's Day worship. In the exposi-

tion of Scripture, its meaning is made clear for today, leading to an invitation to join at the Lord's Table and hence to lead lives committed to mission.

3. Bringing to the altar bread and wine as well as other offerings

22. The celebration of the Eucharist involves using the things of earth as found in the scriptural accounts of the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples. Catholics use bread and wine with added water. This is the moment at which gifts for the church and the poor are gathered. Members of the gathered assembly of the faithful bring these gifts to the celebrant who receives them and places the bread and wine on the altar. The bread and wine symbolize the offering of the whole community.

23. Disciples equally bring to the Lord's Table the things of the earth, the bounty of God's good creation, based upon the scriptural accounts of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. (For historical and cultural rather than theological or liturgical reasons, unfermented fruit of the vine is most often used.) Disciples are keenly aware that gifts for the concerns of the world, and especially for the poor and those in need, belong intrinsically to the things brought forward and consecrated to God (though they may be brought forward at another point in the service).

4. Praying over the offerings; a prayer of thanksgiving/consecration

24. Catholics pray a great prayer of thanksgiving, a eucharistic prayer, over the bread and wine offered by the people and placed on the altar table by the celebrant (priest or bishop). The prayer is of the whole community gathered, with the lay faithful and the priest celebrant having different roles in the prayer. The faithful and priest begin and end the prayer in dialogue, and the faithful punctuate the prayer with an acclamation of praise after the preface (Holy, holy, holy ...) and a memorial acclamation after the Lord's words of institution. The priest celebrant proclaims the body of the prayer on behalf of the assembly of the faithful, and always expresses that unity of communal participation by praying "we offer, we ask." Catholics believe that during the prayer, through the working of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. Ten eucharistic prayers are approved for use in the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church.

25. The Disciples' prayer of thanksgiving is shared among the ordained minister (who offers the words of institution from the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper) and the appointed elder(s) of the community. This reflects Disciples' stress on the importance of the participation of the whole people of God in the celebration. That all be done in order (cf. 1 Cor 14:40), texts embodying acceptable practice are provided by the church at regional and national levels.

26. Disciples affirm that Christ is actually present at his Table and that there is a real action of God, through the Holy Spirit, in transforming the elements. Unlike Roman Catholics, Disciples have not developed a single, normative explanation of the metaphysical manner in which this happens; but this does not lessen their lively and true sense of Christ's presence at his Table.

5. Receiving the blessed/consecrated gifts as communion in the body and blood of the Lord

27. After the bread and wine are placed on the altar and prayed over in the great prayer of thanksgiving, the members of the community receive the elements as holy communion. Catholics believe that they receive the very body and blood of Christ under the form of bread and wine. Whether in song or silence, this is a time for communal prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. Singing during the time of reception highlights that the members of the community are themselves one Body in Christ. Silent time after communion provides an opportunity for individuals to contemplate the Lord's presence in their lives.

28. Disciples testify that in the Eucharist the bread and wine become for them the body and blood of Jesus Christ, uniting them in Christ to one another: "...as we share in Christ's one body and blood at his one Table, he unites us in one another's sorrows and joys, in our lives most deeply, so that we become together 'citizens of heaven', 'partakers of the promise' (Eph 3:6) of life in communion with one another in Christ."¹⁰ The Disciples' prayer of thanksgiving is usually preceded by a hymn (or hymns) that calls the participants through contemplation, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving to share in the communion of Christ's body and blood.

6. Going forth to live Christ's life in the world "until He comes" (1 Cor 11:26)

29. Members of Christ's Body, the Church, do not stay in the church building. Rather, they believe that participation in the Eucharist makes them missionaries of Christ to the world. Strengthened by the word and the sacrament, they continue Christ's work of preaching and healing. Catholics, in light of Vatican II, embrace a more explicit connection between the Eucharist and mission, to witness and evangelize, and to renew hope both to those within the Church and beyond.

30. Disciples too have been recovering the intrinsic link between the Eucharist and mission and service in and to the world. Responding to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry they have acknowledged that, "Too often Disciples have seen the Lord's Supper either as only a personal act of worship (between the person and God) or as an internal activity of church life (worship separate from mission), and that they are being challenged to develop an understanding of church which is both sacramental and in mission."¹¹ Thus Disciples recognize anew that the world, in all its beauty and brokenness, lies painfully short of what God wills for God's creation; and that through the Lord's Supper they are empowered to work that God's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Matt 6:10).

10. Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, Bosworth, Chase & Hall, Publishers, 1871, reprint by ULAN Press, p. 273.

11. "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)," Official Response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, in *Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* text, ed. by Max Thurian, Vol.1, Faith and Order Paper No. 129, Geneva: World Council of Churches, pp. 110-121, see p. 117.

C. LITURGICAL/THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY

1. Centrality of the Eucharist

31. Disciples affirm the Lord's Supper as the central event in the church's worship and life. The service encompasses the whole of their faith: "...the whole service is intended to set forth the whole drama of God's redemptive work, including at least the birth, life, death, resurrection, exaltation and coming again of our Lord... the whole Gospel is preached in [liturgical] action."¹²

32. Catholics see the celebration as the central sacramental action of the life of the Church. All other sacraments lead to it or flow from it. The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium) says that the liturgy is the "source and summit of Christian life" (SC 10); the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) specifies that it is the Eucharist itself that is the "source and center" (LG 11).

2. Frequency of the celebration

33. Disciples celebrate the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day (Sunday). The Supper, celebrated weekly, is the foundation of their life as church. They gladly celebrate the Lord's Supper on special days in the Christian year other than Sundays and special occasions in the life of the church. It is the weekly Lord's Day celebration which is, from their beginning, normative for their identity and life.¹³ As one of their responses to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry notes, "...we strongly endorse the frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper...: 'as the eucharist celebrates the resurrection of Christ, it is appropriate that it should take place every Sunday.'"¹⁴

34. Catholics celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday since "the Lord's Day is the first holy day of all"(SC 106). Over the centuries Catholics began to celebrate other feast days and today the Eucharist is celebrated daily.¹⁵

3. Christ's presence in the celebration

35. Disciples believe that Christ is present at his Table. They proclaim that Christ is the host and is present at his meal, as stressed in one of their responses to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.¹⁶ They affirm that there is a real action of God, through the Holy Spirit, in transforming the elements so that in receiving them believers receive the communion of Christ's body and blood as he himself declared.¹⁷ This has deep roots in

12. William Robinson, *The Administration of the Lord's Supper*, The Berean Press, Birmingham, 1947, pp. 20, 23.

13. Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, p. 312.

14. "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)," Official Response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, pp. 116-117.

15. On Good Friday and Holy Saturday no Mass is celebrated.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

17. "Disciples tended to resist traditions about the eucharist that insisted on precision or detail in explaining Christ's presence. Disciples have continued to resist attempts to explain the mystery of Christ's presence in the eucharist too fully, not because they do not believe it, but because they

Disciples history; it has been shown that both Thomas and Alexander Campbell were strongly influenced by the Directory for Public Worship produced by the Westminster Assembly of Divines in 1644/45. This text, which may be regarded as a starting point for the development of Disciples worship, requires that the minister distributes the elements of bread and wine “having first... shewed that those elements, otherwise common, are now set apart and sanctified to this holy use, by the word of institution and prayer.”¹⁸ More recently, William Robinson, quoting an earlier British Disciples editor (David King), stressed that, “The believer receives the bread and the fruit of the vine as such, but at the same time constituted to him the body and blood of his now risen Lord, so associated that to look on them is to behold his Saviour’s death.”¹⁹ In more contemporary language, “...in reenacting the Lord’s Supper the line dividing past and present is erased. We become eyewitnesses of, indeed participants in, the event...we join the company of disciples, i.e. the followers of Christ of every time and place, who gather to share this meal with him.”²⁰ The assembled company thereby become the Body of Christ in the world.

36. Catholics believe that Christ is really present in the celebration of the Eucharist. The quintessential Catholic statement of this is from the Council of Trent, where the presence is strongly affirmed as “really, truly and substantially,” in Christ’s “body and blood, soul and divinity,” and that this presence is by means of transubstantiation.²¹ The teaching has been broadened during the twentieth century by Pius XII in his encyclical on the liturgy *Mediator Dei* and followed by Vatican II’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, where Christ’s presence is affirmed in the person of the minister, in the eucharistic species, in the proclamation of the word, and in the gathered assembly (SC 7). Paul VI in his encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (1965) nuanced this teaching by saying that each mode of Christ’s presence is “real,” but that the presence in the eucharistic species is preeminent, since it is substantial and permanent (MF 35-39).

4. The usual structure of the Sunday celebration

37. The Disciples’ service typically includes gathering as a community, receiving and responding to the Word, the use of the words of institution, receiving Bread and Wine at the Lord’s Table, and being sent into the world for mission and service. They stress that Word and Table belong together. They celebrate the fact that, broadly speaking,

have wished to avoid divisive controversies over a mystery where a variety of understandings has coexisted in the history of the Church” §36, section 3.2.1. of the Report from the Fourth Phase of Dialogue, *The Presence of Christ in the Church, with Special Reference to the Eucharist*, (2009).

18. Holy Communion, *Directory of Public Worship*, various editions since the 17th century. This one is from *Grove Liturgical Studies*, no 21 Grove Books, Bramcote, Notts, 1980, p. 22.

19. William Robinson, *The Administration of the Lord’s Supper*, p. 36.

20. *The Church for Disciples of Christ*, p. 144.

21. Council of Trent, Session XIII (1551), Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist, chapters 1 and 4, and canons 1 and 2, in *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 36th edition, edited by H. Denzinger and A. Schoenmetzer (Rome: Herder, 1976), nn. 1636-7, 1642, 1651-2.

the structure of our practice accords with that of the Church throughout the ages.²² Throughout their history Disciples have maintained a clear idea of the basic pattern necessary for the eucharistic service. Already the Directory for Public Worship, noted above, offers detailed guidance for what should be included in the prayers offered at the Table. At certain times and in particular national contexts, greater freedom has been allowed; but official guidance has always been given.²³

38. Catholics have a similar structure of celebration. In GIRM 28, “There are two parts to the Catholic Mass, the liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, so closely connected that they form but a single act of worship. The people of God are nourished both at the table of the God’s word and at the table of Christ’s body. In addition, there are certain introductory and concluding rites.”

5. The personal character of the Sunday celebration

39. Disciples believe that the Eucharist is deeply personal. Through their repeated experience at the Table, they are transformed towards the persons they are meant to be. Alexander Campbell wrote that because the Holy Spirit works upon the understanding and affections of saints and sinners, Christians perceive, realize, and appropriate the blood of Christ applied to our reason, our conscience, and our will.²⁴

40. Catholics would speak about this personal character in terms of the “fruits of the Eucharist.” The first fruit of communion is “intimate union with Christ Jesus” (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], n. 1391), and nourishment for a deeper and more committed life in Christ.

6. The social character of the Sunday celebration

41. Disciples believe that the Eucharist is profoundly communal/social, uniting believers one to another within the one Body of Christ. In the physical act of handing the elements to one another, of sharing them and partaking of them, they own and enact their common allegiance to God and to the Lord and, on that basis, their belonging to one another. In sharing together at the Lord’s Table they say, in effect, “You, my brother (sic), once an alien, are now a citizen of heaven...Under Jesus the Messiah we are one...thy sorrows shall be my sorrows, and thy joys my joys. Joint debtors to the favour of God and the love of Jesus, we shall jointly suffer with him, that we may jointly reign with him.”²⁵

22. Churches Respond to BEM, p.117; The Church for Disciples of Christ, p. 145; Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, pp. 330-331.

23. *The Church for Disciples of Christ*, pp. 148-149.

24. Cf. Alexander Campbell, *The Millennial Harbinger*, Extra, no 8, May 1855, p. 258; *The Millennial Harbinger*, October 1855, p. 508; and December 1855, p. 662. Compare also Directory of Public Worship, 1980 ed., p. 21: “How necessary it is that we come unto [this sacrament] with knowledge, faith, repentance, love and with hungering and thirsting souls after Christ and his benefits: how great the danger to eat and drink unworthily.”

25. Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, p. 273.

42. Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is the action of the Body of Christ, head and members, gathered under the presidency of the ordained celebrant. From the gathering, to the hearing of the word, the presenting of gifts for the church and the poor, the joining of their offering to Christ's in the eucharistic Prayer, the receiving of Christ's body and blood in communion, and going forth to minister to Christ in the hungry, sick, and imprisoned – all is an action of the community of believers acting as Christ's body for the life of the world.

7. The participatory character of the Sunday celebration

43. Disciples stress the importance of the participation of the whole people of God in the eucharistic celebration. Ultimately "...it is not presiding officers of the ceremony but the whole people of God who, in response to the sacrifice of Christ, offer up our own sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, a giving of ourselves to God who brings good news to sinners."²⁶ Thus in addition to duly ordained clergy, who typically preside at the service, duly commissioned elders and deacons also have appropriate roles.²⁷ Guidance for these offices is provided by materials published by the church.²⁸

44. For Catholics the Eucharist is a celebration of the whole Church. The celebrant (priest or bishop) leads the faithful in making their offering, proclaiming Christ's great deeds, and joining in his sacrifice. In addition, the Church is understood to include the whole Communion of Saints, who have gone before, marked with the sign of faith and whose voices are joined with those in the congregation in the prayer.²⁹

8. Participation at the Table

45. Disciples believe that the Table is the Lord's, and not our own, and that it is Christ who invites, and not ourselves. Therefore they stress that all Christians are welcome at the Lord's Table. This does not mean that the Eucharist is a "means" to unity, nor are they simply practicing "eucharistic hospitality." Rather, at the Lord's Table they are already one through Christ's invitation to partake together of his one Body and Blood. This does not necessarily imply full, formal recognition of the church from which a particular Christian comes. Disciples regard full, formal recognition among churches – as important as that is, and as deeply committed to it as they are – as a separate issue, and one which does not preempt the Lord's invitation for all Christians

26. *The Church for Disciples of Christ*, p 141.

27. *Ibid.*, p 149.

28. William Robinson, *A Companion to the Communion Service: A Devotional Manual*, The Berean Press, Birmingham, reprint from Oxford University Press, 1942; Gordon Robert Stirling, *Down to Preside*, Federal Literature Department of Churches of Christ, Melbourne: 1976; Keith Watkins, *Thankful Praise: A Resource for Christian Worship*, Christian Board of Publication, St. Louis, Missouri, 1987; Keith Watkins, *The Great Thanksgiving: The Eucharistic Norm of Christian Worship*, Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 1995; Douglas B. Skinner, *At the Lord's Table: Communion Prayers for All Seasons*, Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 2006; *Cáliz de Bendiciones. Hinnario Discípulos de Cristo*. St. Louis, MO, CBP, 1996.

29. See the Prefaces of the Eucharistic Prayer; *GIRM* 78; the celebration of the Eucharist led by the bishop surrounded by his presbyterate and the people of the diocese is the preeminent form of celebration: see *SC* 41; *CCC* n. 1369.

to gather at His One Table. They are and have always been most reluctant to treat any doctrine of the Lord's Supper "as justification for denying sincere and otherwise worthy Christians the right to partake of the sacrament or for barring the way to Christian unity."³⁰

46. Catholics approach the Eucharist as an ecclesial event. Every sacrament is an act of Christ and his Church through the power of the Spirit. Every Eucharist is a sign of the unity of the community's faith, its worship, and its mission and ministry. "... [T]he Eucharistic communion is inseparably linked to full ecclesial communion and its visible expression."³¹ For Catholics, where the communion is broken by its members, repentance is needed before inclusion again in the full participation in the Eucharist. Because of the principle of full visible unity, other Christians may not yet receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church, nor may Catholics yet receive Holy Communion in other churches, except in particular, specified circumstances.³² The division between Catholics and Disciples remains a painful reality for Catholics who pray that all may be one in Christ one day, and continue to work for full eucharistic participation with the Disciples as an outcome of this dialogue.

9. The missionary character of the Sunday celebration

47. Disciples believe that the Eucharist leads inexorably to mission and service in and to the world. "The Lord's Supper is an anticipation, and indeed a foretaste, of the joyful festal meal celebrating [Christ's coming again]... It directs us toward that age when we live together, as God would have us do, in justice, harmony, peace, and joy... the foretaste of joy which we experience at the Table is not only a comfort to us but also a challenge. It prepares us to undertake our mission of witness and service in the world."³³

48. Catholics share this mission orientation, though they speak of it in different terms. The Eucharist commits the faithful to the poor. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the collection includes "Gifts for the church and the poor" (GIRM 73). Pope Benedict spoke eloquently of this dimension of the Eucharist in his Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007): "We cannot approach the Eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the Eucharistic form of the Christian life" (Sac Car 84). Ultimately, every celebration of the Eucharist is a "pledge of the glory to come," as expressed by St. Thomas Aquinas in one of his antiphons for vespers for the feast of Corpus Christi, *O sacrum convivium*: "O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of his passion is renewed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. Alleluia."

30. *The Church for Disciples of Christ*, p. 138.

31. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism [Ecumenical Directory]*, March 25, 1993, 129.

32. *Ibid.*, 122-142.

33. *The Church for Disciples of Christ*, p. 142.

IV. WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT THIS PHASE OF DIALOGUE?

49. Among the international theological dialogues that the Catholic Church conducts with other Churches, there are several where there is a common emphasis on the primary importance of the Eucharist, especially weekly Eucharist. In the majority of these there is also a similar understanding of the essential connection between an episcopal ordering of the Church and the Eucharist. Given that the Disciples do not have such an episcopal ordering, the dialogue between the Catholic Church and Disciples of Christ is rather different. The particular emphasis by Disciples on the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper that is inclusive in practice has had a significant influence on their determined effort to work for Christian unity. Disciples do emphasize the preaching of the Word; but, unlike many other Protestants who give primacy to "pulpit fellowship," Disciples also emphasize "table fellowship."

50. This phase of the dialogue has achieved consensus that the weekly celebration of the Eucharist is fundamental to an understanding of the Christian life, especially with regard to the ways the Eucharist forms and transforms those who celebrate. Other areas of consensus in the dialogue include:

- i. The Eucharist is a weekly celebrating and recalling of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the Lord's Day – the day of resurrection. This is the heart of the Gospel the Church is commanded to proclaim (cf. Matt 28:16-20).
- ii. Participation in the Eucharist is a means of grace for all.
- iii. Regular participation in the eucharistic celebration is a central element in the formation of all Catholics and Disciples.
- iv. The Eucharist is a transforming action in each of our traditions.

51. In different ways we affirm that the Eucharist expresses the unity of the Church. For Catholics it is an expression of the full visible unity that is already present; thus where there is not yet full visible unity other Christians may not receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church except in particular, specified circumstances (cf. Ecumenical Directory 122-136). They may nevertheless share in the other liturgical rites. For Disciples the Eucharist is an expression of the unity given by God through our common baptism into Christ and into his one Body, the Church. It is the Lord who invites Christians to His Table, and therefore Disciples believe they have no warrant to exclude baptized believers from the Lord's feast.

52. During the meetings of this phase of dialogue, several further common affirmations were identified:

i. General Affirmations

Both Churches affirm that the whole universe reflects the glory of God (John 1:3); by the action of the Holy Spirit the ordinary things of earth may convey divine realities. From this sacramental principle specific liturgical rituals have developed, such as Baptism and Eucharist, where water, bread, and wine draw us into an encounter with God. Furthermore, the way in which water, bread, and wine are made significant in liturgical actions has its own integrity, which has its own "logic" and "language." This logic and language have to be learned alongside

the rational, propositional language of systematic theology. Secondly, both Disciples and Catholics understand themselves as eucharistic communities whose vision is a desire for complete unity of all Christ's followers at the Lord's Table. Thirdly, both Churches share an essential unity through our common baptism into Christ and his one body, the Church. Both Churches recognize each other's baptism, when conducted in the name of the Trinity and with the pouring or immersion in water of the candidate. Fourthly, we both believe our understanding of the Eucharist is based on faithfulness to Scripture, respect for the Church's history and tradition, concern for the vitality of its corporate worship and spirituality, and commitment to the cause of Christian unity. Finally, celebrations of the Eucharist are formative for both our Churches.

ii. The Eucharist and Baptism

Both Churches affirm there is an intimate relationship between the Eucharist and Baptism. Baptism, performed once for all, signifies a person's incorporation into Christ's one body, the Church, thereby beginning life-long growth into Christ. Participation in the Eucharist, celebrated at least every week, signifies our continuing growth into Christ and into his one body, the Church. Secondly, the power of the Holy Spirit acts in both Baptism and the Eucharist to effect what is signified in each action in response to the prayers of the faithful. The same Spirit accompanies each Christian in living out what they celebrate in worship. Thirdly, there are processes in both Churches to form and nurture faith – itself a gift of the Holy Spirit – prior to the reception of Baptism and the Eucharist, using authorized catechetical material.

iii. The Eucharist Defines our Lives as Churches

Celebrating the Eucharist on the Lord's Day is the core and highlight of the life for members of both Churches. Both Churches have experienced renewal in their eucharistic practice through the Liturgical Renewal Movement, the Ecumenical Movement and, especially for the Catholic Church, the Patristic Movement.

iv. Liturgical Aspects of the Eucharist

Catholics and Disciples both have a communal emphasis in their worship. Each Church seeks, in diverse ways, to include the participation of all the faithful in the service of the Eucharist, as for example by singing hymns and responses, reading from Scripture, and taking part in leading the intercessions. Both Churches face the issues of inculturation, that is, the relation between the timeless truth of the Gospel and the faithful expression of that at different points in local cultures and contexts. This includes the celebration of the Eucharist.

53. We have also discovered several convergences in our understanding of the Eucharist itself:

i. Ecclesiology and Theology

First, we affirm that Christ is present at his Table. Secondly, we understand the Eucharist as an act of remembrance (*anamnesis*),³⁴ and a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The communion of the faithful is a manifestation of unity, in which we look forward to the end of all things in hope. Thirdly, the Eucharist has the distinctive grace of nourishing, strengthening, and hence perfecting the faith and unity of baptized believers gathered in worship. Fourthly, we agree that the effects of the Eucharist include: intimate communion with Christ and with one another, and strength to resist sin in our lives. Especially in the celebration of the eucharistic liturgy, the People of God together celebrate, express, and grow in holiness through the liturgical-sacramental life of the Church.

ii. Christian Formation and Transformation

For both Churches regular participation in the eucharistic celebration is integral to Christian formation;³⁵ thereby Christians are transformed into members of God's kingdom in this world now and in the world to come. Christian formation and transformation are interrelated elements in a process of growth into Christ (Eph 4:15). The frequent experience of the Eucharist transcends all powers of rational argument and persuasion, because it is ultimately caught up in the saving mystery of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Active participation in the Eucharist should be preceded by preparation and accompanied by an expectant faith in the action of the Triune God.

iii. Mission and Service in Relation to Formation and Transformation

The Eucharist carries both personal and social implications. By bringing believers into intimate communion with Christ and with one another, it forms them for service in and to the world. The reception of the body of Christ in the Eucharist draws them into the self-giving of Jesus on the cross, and thus calls its recipients to a self-giving to others within and beyond the gathered community. Participation in the Eucharist transforms them to undertake their mission of witness and service in the world as missionary disciples. Eucharistic celebrations intentionally conclude with a sending out "to live what we celebrate." However, the effects of the Eucharist are not automatic; God's grace has to be inwardly received. Reception of communion becomes the missionary impulse to live out the reign of God both in the "now" and the "not yet" of God's time.

34. The word "remembrance" is preferred here to the more traditional English word "memorial," because "memorial" is often used to describe an understanding in which the Eucharist is only an obedient act of memory, with no implications of (and sometimes a specific denial of) the affirmation that Christ is really present in the celebration.

35. Catholics restored an official catechumenate with the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in 1972, and Disciples offer Preparation for Church Membership before Baptism.

iv. “Until He Comes:” the Eucharist and the Future

Each of the four New Testament accounts of the institution of the Eucharist includes a reference to a future time when Jesus will eat and drink bread and wine with his disciples in the Kingdom of God (Luke 22:16; Matt 26:29; Mark 14:12-25; 1 Cor 11:11-34). The Eucharist is therefore understood as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in the Kingdom of God. Both Churches see a link between this notion of fulfillment in a future time and the transformative effect of the Eucharist.

54. Along the path of a pilgrimage, through dialogue the participants learn about one another – and sometimes unlearn stereotypical views falsely ascribed to the other. In this context, Disciples welcomed the Catholic clarification that the Mass is a liturgical re-presentation of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ in a sacramental manner. Catholics also welcomed the Disciples’ clarification that their Communion Services followed a definite pattern, which might be described as “ordered liberty.”

IV. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE OF THE DIALOGUE

55. We, the members of the Commission, recognize with gratitude all the gifts we have received through our mutual sharing, reflections, discussions, and prayers during this fifth phase of Dialogue. We are confident that, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we are walking together towards the restoration of the unity that our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for on the eve of his passion (cf. John 17:21): we look for the day of our full visible unity. “Precisely because the celebration of the Eucharist is the climax of the church’s life, disunity among Christians is felt most keenly at the Eucharist; and their inability to celebrate the Lord’s supper together makes them less able to manifest the full catholicity of the church.”³⁶ During this phase, our attendance at one another’s liturgies, and our receiving a blessing when appropriate, has taught us much and drawn us closer together. That has also been a joy. Needless to say, our inability to partake together at the Lord’s Table has taught us sorrow as well, and moved us to redouble our efforts to overcome our divisions.

56. For Catholics and Disciples alike, the Eucharist plays a central role in the life of the Church. Both also maintain a strongly sacramental view of the world. The topic chosen for this phase, “Christians Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist” represents a common conviction and an urgent pastoral challenge for the two communions today. The reflections offered are the result of a distinctive process marked by seeking to share, as far as possible, an “inside experience” of one another’s eucharistic liturgies, practice, and understanding. The attempt was to enter into the “eucharistic world of each church” by rediscovering the profound sense of the eucharistic liturgy in itself, especially in its formative and transformative components. The Commission is convinced that by rediscovering the inner power of the liturgy, a growing awareness of one another’s faith and practice could be achieved, especially in our common commitment to and particular experience of the weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

36. *The Church as Communion in Christ*, para. 53(b).

57. By focusing on their eucharistic liturgies, Catholics and Disciples alike have learned much from the other, and much about themselves. Not only have some misconceptions been clarified, but we have begun to understand the inner logic of the eucharistic celebration of each tradition and how much the two traditions share, even though it is expressed in different ways. Our experience is that this dialogue has shown the value of taking into account a liturgical approach to the Eucharist when addressing divisive doctrinal and theological topics. We believe that our experience could be shared by our respective communions if the liturgical approach were made an intentional goal on the part of each church. Undoubtedly, when Catholics and Disciples are celebrating the Sunday Eucharist, they all are expecting to have a living encounter with Jesus Christ.

58. Possible practical outcomes of our journey of dialogue might include several kinds of shared action. We encourage such action on the local and regional/diocesan level in ways that are appropriate.

- Catholics and Disciples are encouraged to meet with each other, perhaps sponsored and hosted in local communities, to get to know each other and share common understandings about Christian life.
- Disciples and Catholics are encouraged to worship together on occasion in ways that are possible to come to a deeper appreciation of the commonalities of their sacramental and eucharistic view of the world.
- Catholics and Disciples are expected to work together to extend the reality of the Eucharist with the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and imprisoned (Matt 25:31-46) where they encounter the Christ whom they met in the Eucharist and also in those who are poor and marginalized.
- Disciples and Catholics are encouraged to provide spiritual support to those in mixed marriages and to recognize the gifts these families may offer.

59. We also are aware that Catholics and Disciples share pain at the reality of their separation, especially at the eucharistic celebration. This awareness may move these communities to mutual repentance and forgiveness. Our dialogue has made us aware that acknowledging the pain can open paths of healing and eventual reconciliation.

60. The Commission is convinced that for both Catholics and Disciples of Christ, the Holy Spirit has an essential role in the sacramental life of the Church. Exploring the work of the Holy Spirit, especially in baptism and the Eucharist, may provide us with a promising framework to further the positive work we have done during this phase of the dialogue, and to explore those areas where we have not yet reached agreement.

61. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the Disciples of Christ – Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue. The members of the fifth phase wish to acknowledge with gratitude the effort made by our churches, numerous theologians, and biblical and liturgical scholars who, as an expression of their love for the church, have offered their expertise, helping Catholics and Disciples around the world to overcome mutual ignorance, clarify misunderstandings, and grow in communion as brothers and sisters in Christ. In this sense, we acknowledge with gratitude, the dedication, relevant contribution, and tireless efforts of Professor Margaret O’Gara,

who was a Catholic member of the Commission from 1982 until the end of her life in 2012. We also wish to recognize the efforts made by those who read, study, and evaluate our texts. We affirm that every step on our pilgrimage has been important, every effort has been necessary, even as we reaffirm the ultimate goal and destination of our dialogue: nothing less than the full visible unity of our two communions, expressed in the common celebration of the Eucharist.

APPENDIX 1

The Eucharistic Liturgy According to the Catholic Church and the Disciples of Christ: Descriptions of Each Service, Comparative and Interpretative Comments

A. Catholic Celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy

This description of the Catholic celebration of the Eucharist flows from the exploration of the variety of modes of presence of Christ in the liturgical celebration and beyond. Engagement with Christ in whatever way he is present at a given moment of the liturgy is a source of formation and an impetus of transformation for those celebrating.

1. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist provides us with a framework for thinking about moments of formation and transformation for Christians.
 - a. This reflection is based on the Vatican II liturgical constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [SC] 7 on the manifold ways that Christ is present in the liturgy: “To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister, ‘the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,’ but especially under the Eucharistic elements.... He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. He is presently, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’” (Matt 18:20).
 - b. Paul VI’s encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* [1965], nn. 34-39, takes this teaching and expands it: “Christ is present in his Church when it prays ... He is present in his Church as it performs works of mercy ... He is present in his pilgrim Church longing to reach the harbor of eternal life ... In yet a different but most real way, he is present in the Church as it preaches ... He is present in his Church as it shepherds and guides the people of God ... In a manner even more sublime, Christ also is present in his Church when it offers the sacrifice of the Mass in his name ... These ways in which Christ is present fill the mind with wonder and present the mystery of the Church for contemplation. But there is another, indeed most remarkable way, in which Christ is present in his Church in the sacrament of the eucharist... This presence is called the *real presence* not to exclude the other kinds as though they were not real, but because it is real par excellence, since it is substantial, in the sense that Christ whole and entire, God and man, becomes present ...”
 - c. These understandings are summarized in the *GIRM* (2002), the normative description of the celebration of the Mass, in n. 27: “At Mass or the Lord’s Supper the People of God is called together with a Priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord or Eucharistic Sacrifice. In an outstanding way there applies to such a gathering of the holy Church the promise of Christ: ‘Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst’ (Matt 18:20). For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very assembly gathered in

his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and uninterruptedly under the Eucharistic species.”

2. This is a description of a Sunday celebration. A weekday celebration would be simpler.

3. The members of Body of Christ, the faithful, come together from their various lives and responsibilities, from their various experiences of grace and sin, of growth and challenge.

- a. This group of people forms the Body of Christ for this celebration of the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper.
- b. Those assembling include the priest celebrant, other ministers, and the faithful.
- c. SC 47 describes this celebration by using a number of different names: “memorial of Christ’s death and resurrection, a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet ‘in which Christ is eaten, the heart is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory given to us’ (quoting the antiphon for the Canticle of Mary at Evening Prayer II of Corpus Christi).
- d. This group of people is gathered by the Holy Spirit as Christ’s Body to “do this in memory of” Christ.
- e. The celebration begins with song which forms the community as they express with one voice musical texts that present the mysteries of the liturgy and the season (*GIRM* 47).
- f. The procession can be interpreted broadly and more narrowly: all the people process to the church from home; the minister of the celebration processes formally through the gathered faithful to the altar.
- g. The sign of the cross situates the gathering in Christ in his paschal mystery of dying and rising.
- h. A penitential act reminds those gathered of their need for God’s mercy.
- i. On Sundays outside Advent and Lent, the “Glory to God” is sung to praise the Triune God.
- j. An opening prayer led by the priest concludes the introductory rites and gives a context for the celebration. The prayer includes an invitation to pray, a moment of silent prayer for all, the text of the prayer, and the “Amen” of the assembly of believers who thereby make the prayer their own. The Holy Spirit acts in the silence to help shape the prayer of the people.

4. The gathered assembly of believers listens to the word of God proclaimed (God speaks to his people, *SC* 7). *Dei Verbum* 21 (1965) speaks about this presence: “The Church has always revered sacred Scripture even as it has revered the body of the Lord, because, above all in the liturgy, it never ceases to receive the bread of life from the table both of God’s word and of Christ’s body and to offer it to the faithful.” In this way, the exploration of biblical texts such as Exodus 16 and John 6 has led us to an awareness of how the hungers of the human heart are filled both by the bread of life, once as manna, now as the flesh and blood of Christ, the “bread of life.”

- a. The proclamation of God’s powerful acts situates this gathering within God’s plan of salvation, first articulated for the Chosen People and now proclaimed anew to this gathering of the Church
- b. The readings are usually proclaimed by readers, the Gospel by a deacon, the homily given by the priest celebrant
- c. On Sundays there are three readings (organized in a three year cycle, year A = Matthew, year B = Mark, year C = Luke)
 - i. Old Testament (in Easter season, Acts of the Apostles)
 - ii. Responsorial Psalm
 - iii. New Testament letters
 - iv. Gospel
- d. The People spend a moment in silence after the first and second readings in which the Holy Spirit communicates the word to the hearts of believers
- e. The faithful then respond to the word in a series of ways (which expand beyond the confines of the Liturgy of the Word):
 - i. The initial response is through a psalm (said or sung)
 - ii. In the homily the priest offers a word to relate the proclaimed Word of God to the lives of those present
 - iii. In the Creed, the faithful align themselves with the inherited faith of the early Church embodied in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith (or the Apostles Creed)
 - iv. In the Universal Prayer, the word is transformed into petitions for the needs of the Church, the world, the needy, ourselves, and those who have died
 - v. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is a sacramental response to the word
 - vi. At the dismissal, the faithful go forth to respond to the word in the lives they live, now shaped by hearing, listening, meditating, professing faith, praying, engaging in the sacrament of bread and cup become Christ’s body and blood, according to the promise.

5. The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows the same sequence of actions that Jesus followed at the Last Supper: He **TOOK** the bread and wine, he **BLESSED** them, he **BROKE** the bread, and he **GAVE** them to his disciples while he reinterpreted (and changed) them by his words (*GIRM* 72).

- a. The faithful bring forward gifts of bread, wine, and gifts for the poor.
 - i. They represent all the people, and all that they bring with them to the celebration: hopes and dreams, livelihood, aspirations, and failures
 - ii. The priest accepts these offerings and places the bread and wine on the altar with prayer – the gifts for the church and the poor are placed elsewhere (sometimes on a table nearby)
 - (1) The prayer blesses God for his creative goodness
 - (2) “Fruit of the vine/fruit of the earth, work of human hands” natural things transformed by human intervention (manufacture) to represent those who offer
 - (3) They will become bread of life and spiritual drink

- b. The Eucharistic Prayer
 - i. The prayer is the center and summit of the entire celebration, led by the priest celebrant on behalf of all the people, whose prayer and offering it is (*GIRM* 78)
 - ii. *GIRM* 79 describes eight elements
 - (1) Thanksgiving (by remembering God’s great acts on our behalf in salvation history)
 - (2) Acclamation (four moments: initial dialogue, Sanctus, memorial acclamation after the words of institution, final Amen)
 - (3) Epiclesis (in two parts, before the words of institution asking that the Spirit change the bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood; after the words of institution asking that the Spirit changes those who receive communion into Christ’s body)
 - (4) Words of Institution and consecration
 - (5) Anamnesis (remembering Christ’s death and resurrection)
 - (6) Offering (we offer the bread and cup)
 - (7) Intercessions (we pray for the church, with the saints, for the dead)
 - (8) Doxology (ending as we began by remembering God’s wonderful acts on our behalf and acknowledging God’s greatness)
 - iii. Two particularly transformative moments, flank the words of institution and consecration:
 - (1) First invocation of the Holy Spirit: change the bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood
 - (2) Second invocation of the Holy Spirit: change those who share communion into “one body, one spirit in Christ”
 - iv. The prayer is dialogical: the prayer requires interpersonal communication, and involves several relationships: between priest and people and between God and the Church
 - v. The prayer flows from salvation history, especially Christ’s fulfillment of the Father’s will. The structure of the prayer, as it moves from *anamnesis* to invocation, reminds us that the God who acted in history acts now in our presence.
 - vi. The prayer includes a memorial (*anamnesis*) and an offering: each prayer contains a variation of the thought: “Remembering his death and resurrection, we offer this living bread and saving cup.”
 - vii. The prayer is an ecclesial action that includes those in the Church today, those who have died, and those whom we call “the saints,” who still constitute membership in the church. This ecclesial reality is referred to as the “communion of saints.”
- c. The Communion
 - i. Communion is prepared for by three moments that express both our need for reconciliation and the unity of which communion is the pledge and sign. This tension of the need for reconciliation and the call to unity becomes a way of “discerning the body” as explored in the biblical papers on Isaiah 56 and Mark 6-8:
 - (1) Common recitation of the Lord’s Prayer (voices joined in common prayer)

- (2) Sharing of the peace (recognizing the unity of the body of Christ that we are with one another)
 - (3) Breaking of the Eucharistic bread (fraction) (“we though many are one body,” 1 Cor 10:17)
 - ii. The faithful return to the altar in procession to receive the now transformed bread and wine which have become the body and blood of Christ
 - iii. Ideally, communion is under both kinds, consecrated during the Mass (*GIRM* 85).
 - iv. Singing during the reception to express our unity vocally (*GIRM* 39).
 - v. Silence is recommended after communion (*GIRM* 45, 88)
 - vi. Communion transforms the baptized more deeply into Christ’s body.
- 6. The Dismissal
 - a. Announcements made at this moment remind us that our lives are practical and in the world.
 - b. The final blessing reminds the community of who they are and what they have become: those blessed in the life of the Lord
 - c. The dismissal is not a “throw-away” moment – see the comments under the Liturgy of the Word above. We proclaim the gospel by our lives. Pope Benedict XVI added two new formulas of dismissal that emphasize the mission character of going forth.
 - d. The community has gathered precisely in order to be sent, now conformed more closely to Christ’s body by this act of participation in God’s saving plan.

B. Disciples of Christ Celebration of the Lord’s Supper

1. Fundamental Components of the Lord’s Supper

Throughout the world, the Disciples of Christ celebration of the Lord’s Supper, almost always and most typically, includes the following components (with some variation in their ordering). Disciples understand the service of Word and the service of the Table to be one integrated whole.

- Invocation prayer/the gathering of the community
for praise, for receiving the gifts of God, and as preparation for service to the world;
- Confession of sin and assurance of pardon
so that we are reconciled to God, and to one another, as we approach the Table of the Lord;
- Readings from Scripture
Scripture being the Word of life, and the basis of our faith and life as a community;
- A sermon proclaiming the Word
the Word being the basis of our faith and life. Directly or indirectly, the sermon should prepare the community for its meal together at the Table of the Lord;
- Pastoral prayer / Intercession
typically for those in need, and for cares of the day;
- The Lord’s Prayer
as ordained by Christ, and uniting us with all Christians around the world;

- The singing of hymns
 - at several points in the service (for example (a) a gathering hymn of praise, (b) a communion hymn stressing Christ’s offering of himself for us and for our world, (c) a “hymn of invitation” aimed at those considering making the confession that “Jesus is the Christ, Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16) and desiring further instruction in faith leading to baptism, or becoming a member of that particular congregation, and, (d) a “sending” hymn stressing our mission and service to the world). Hymns are expected to give theological as well as devotional content to the service: we sing our faith! Notably, the communion hymn is a moment of special solemnity and theological import as we gather at the Table of the Lord;
- Receiving an Offering in support of the church’s mission and ministry reflecting our commitment to the church, and to its mission and ministry in the world;
- Call to Communion
 - marking the transition from the service of the Word to the service of the Table, and helping the faithful to focus on the events to come;
- Bringing forward (and/or uncovering) the elements of bread and cup
 - a formal presentation of the gifts of God for the people of God, and underscoring the significance and solemnity of the event;
- The words of institution
 - read by the duly-appointed Presiding Minister from the Gospels (Mark 14:22-25, Matt 26:26-28, Luke 22:17-20) or from St. Paul (I Cor 11:23-26);
- Prayer(s) for the loaf and cup
 - offered by duly-appointed Elders from the congregation, these should stress the link among (a) Christ’s gift of his own Body and Blood, (b) our belonging together within the One Body of Christ, His Church, (c) our concern for the needs of the world, and, (d) the invocation of the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the body of Christ and to transform the gathered community to become Christ’s body offered in service to the world. (See the next section and its reference to the invocation of the Holy Spirit);
- The distribution and partaking of both elements
 - the elements of bread and wine are most often distributed by duly-appointed Deacons, and then passed from person to person where they are seated. On other occasions of worship, the congregation will come forward to receive the elements of bread and wine;
- Post-communion prayer
 - recalling God’s gracious gifts, and reminding us of our calling to mission and service;
- We are sent forth to mission and service in the world
 - a moment festive, but solemn: the service is ended, but continues as we are sent forth for mission and service to the world.

1. As Experienced in Practice: A More Detailed Order of Service for the Lord’s Supper (cf. suggested Lord’s Day services in *Chalice Worship*)

The following order of service reflects widespread practice in North America.

a. The Community Comes Together

- Opening Music
- Call to Worship/Invocation of God/the Spirit's Presence
- Hymn of Praise
- Prayer of Invocation, including of the Holy Spirit
- Confession of Sin and Assurance of Pardon

b. The Community Proclaims the Word of God

- Many Sunday services now include a children's sermon
- Brief Prayer for Illumination
- Readings from Scripture, typically including one from the Old Testament and one from Acts or an Epistle
- Response
- Reading from the Gospels
- Sermon

c. The Community Responds to the Word of God

- Hymn
- Pastoral Prayer: Praise to God, prayers for the churches and the church, and for their unity, prayers for the world, concerns of the congregation
- Musical Offering

d. The Community Comes Together around the Lord's Table

- Invitation to Communion, including the welcome extended to all Christians to partake of the bread and the cup
- Communion Hymn
- The Lord's Prayer
- The Peace
- The Offering: brought forward and placed on the Table as the Doxology is sung
- The Elements of Communion are brought forward or are unveiled on the Table
- The Words of Institution, accompanied by the breaking of the Bread (leavened or unleavened) and pouring of the Wine
- Prayers over the Elements, including an invocation of the Holy Spirit on the Elements and recipients
- The Sharing of the Elements
- Prayer following Communion

e. The Community Goes Forth to Serve God in Mission

- Invitation to Discipleship/Confession of Faith, or Transfer of Membership
- Hymn of Thanksgiving/Invitation
- Benediction and Sending Forth to Service in the World
- Closing Music

APPENDIX 2

Members of the Commission

Catholic members

Most Reverend David L. Ricken,* Bishop of Green Bay, WI, USA, Co-Chair, (2014-2018)

Rev. Msgr. Juan Usma Gómez,* Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City/Colombia, Co-Secretary, (2014-2018)**

Msgr. Dr. Michael Clay, School of Theology and Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., USA, (2014-2018)

Dr. Mary Coloe, pbvm, University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia, (2014-2015, 2017-2018)

Dr. Julien Hammond, Ecumenical Officer, Archdiocese of Edmonton, Canada, (2014-2018)

Rev. Dr. Joseph T. Shenosky, Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, USA, (2014-2018)

Rev. Dr. Michael G. Witzak, School of Theology and Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., USA, (2014-2018)**

Disciples members:

Rev. Dr. Newell Williams,* Brite Divinity School, TCU, Ft. Worth, TX, USA, Co-Chair, (2014-2018)

Rev. Dr. Robert Welsh,* Council on Christian Unity, Indianapolis, IN, USA, Co-Secretary, (2014-2016, 2018)**

Rev. Dr. Thomas F. Best, Boston, MA, USA, (2014-2018)**

Rev. Dr. Merryl Blair, Stirling Theological College, University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia, (2014-2018)

Rev. Dr. James O. Duke, Brite Divinity School, TCU Ft. Worth, TX, USA, (2014-2016)

Rev. Angel Luis Rivera, Latin America and Caribbean Executive, Global Ministries, Puerto Rico/Indianapolis, IN, USA, (2014-2015, 2018)

Rev. Dr. David M. Thompson, University of Cambridge, England, (2014-2018)**

Rev. Paul Tche,* Council on Christian Unity, Indianapolis, IN, USA, (2017)

** Members of Steering Committee*

*** Members of Drafting Committee*

APPENDIX 3

Meetings and Papers

Nashville, USA (8-12 January 2014): “Introduction”

Thomas Best, “Citizens of Heaven: the Eucharist and the Disciples of Christ”
Merryl Blair, “Discerning the Body: the Lord’s Supper in Community”
Joseph Shenosky, “The Place of the Eucharist in the Life of the Catholic Church”
David Thompson, “Overview of the Previous Work of the International Dialogue”
Newell Williams, “The Disciples of Christ in One Sentence”
Robert Welsh, “Ecumenical Developments of the Disciples of Christ”

Rome, Italy (14-20 June 2014): “Formed by the Eucharist: The Structure of Liturgies among the Catholics and Disciples”

Merryl Blair, “Psalm 22 and the Formation of the Eucharistic Community”
Mary Coloe, “The Meaning of the Cross in the Gospel of John”
David Thompson, “Formed by the Eucharist: The Weekly Experience of the Disciples of Christ”
Michael Witzcak, “The Roman Catholic Experience of the Eucharist”

Bethany, WV, USA (20-24 June 2015): “Formed by the Eucharist: The Significance of Eucharistic Catechesis – Knowing by Doing”

Merryl Blair, “Bread of Heaven, Food for Formation: Exodus 16 in its Literary Setting”
Michael Clay, “The Significance of Eucharistic Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church”
Mary Coloe, “The Bread of Life Discourse: John 6”
James Duke, “Formed by the Eucharist: Knowing by Doing”

Calgary, Canada (17-22 June 2016): “Transformed by the Eucharist: The Eucharist and Relationships within the Church”

Thomas Best, “Disciples of Christ: Citizens of Heaven, Transformed by the Eucharist”
Merryl Blair, “Isaiah 56:1-8: A Community Transformed”
Michael Clay, “Transformed by the Eucharist: The Eucharist and Relationships within the Catholic Church”

Bayamón, Puerto Rico (23-28 June 2017): “Transformed by the Eucharist: Living the Sacraments”

Mary Coloe, “Breaking the Rules: Jesus Transformed by His Experience (Mark 6-8)”
Bishop David Ricken, “Transformed by the Eucharist: Living Encounter with Jesus Christ”
Newell Williams, “Transformed by the Eucharist: Coming Face to Face with the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ”

Green Bay, WI, USA (23-27 June 2018): “Producing the Final Report”

Mary Coloe, “John 17:1-26: The Missionary Prayer of Jesus”

APPENDIX 4

Reports from Previous Phases of Dialogue (1977-2009)

“Catholicity and Apostolicity” (1977-1982), Report of the International Commission for Dialogue between Disciples of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church, in: Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service [IS]* 49 (1982/II-III) pp. 65-73; Council on Christian Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), *Call to Unity: Resourcing the Church for Ecumenical Ministry [Call to Unity]*, vol. 3, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2003, pp.1-7. See also: *Growth in Agreement I: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level. 1972-1982*, Faith and Order Paper no. 108, Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, eds., Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984/2007, pp.153-166.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ/docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19820601_disciples-christ-report-1977-1981_en.html

<http://councilonchristianunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Issue-1.pdf>

“The Church as Communion in Christ” (1982-1992), Report of the Second Phase of the International Disciples of Christ/Roman Catholic Dialogue, in: *IS* 84 (1993/III-IV) pp. 162-169; *Call to Unity*, pp. 8-17. See also: *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, Faith and Order Paper no. 187, Jeffrey Gross, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, eds., Geneva: WCC Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1994, pp.386-398.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ/docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19921207_disciples-christ-report-1983-1992_en.html

<http://councilonchristianunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Issue-1.pdf>

“Receiving and Handing on the Faith: the Mission and Responsibility of the Church” (1993-2002), Report of the Third phase of International Dialogue between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Catholic Church, in: *IS* 111 (2002/IV) pp. 241-251; *Call to Unity*, pp.19-31. See also *Growth in Agreement III*, Jeffrey Gross, FSC, Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, eds., Geneva: WCC Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2007, pp.121-137.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ/docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20020522_disciples-christ-report-1993-2002_en.html

<http://councilonchristianunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Issue-1.pdf>

“The Presence of Christ in the Church, with special reference to the Eucharist” (2003-2009), Fourth Agreed Statement of the Disciples of Christ-Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue, in: *IS* 141 (2013/I) pp. 27-43. See also *Growth in*

Agreement IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements 2004-2014, Faith and Order Paper no. 219, T. Best, L. Fuchs, J. Gibaut, J. Gross, D. Prassas, eds., Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2017, Book 1, pp. 149-167.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20090630_disciples-christ-report-2003-2009_en.html

<http://councilonchristianunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Fourth-Agreed-Statement-Final-June-2012.pdf>

BAPTISM AND INCORPORATION INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST, THE CHURCH

LUTHERAN-MENNONITE-ROMAN CATHOLIC TRILATERAL CONVERSATIONS 2012–2017

PREFACE

It was with the twin goals of increasing mutual understanding and helping one another grow in faithfulness to Jesus Christ that a trilateral dialogue took place between Lutherans, Mennonites and Roman Catholics, from 2012 to 2017. Over the course of the five year period, the dialogue followed the well-established interchurch conversation method of annual one week meetings hosted successively by the communions. At each meeting papers were presented by delegation members as the trilateral commission explored the respective understandings of key theological and pastoral themes related to baptism and incorporation into the body of Christ.

The trilateral dialogue was a result of efforts in recent decades for reconciliation and greater cooperation between Mennonites, Lutherans and Catholics. Those steps toward overcoming historical conflicts generated the desire to take up theological and pastoral issues surrounding baptism, which continues to be a source of tension between the communions. The decision to enter into deeper theological conversation was grounded in the mutual conviction that Jesus Christ calls his disciples to be one and that therefore Christians have a solemn responsibility to never acquiesce to division in the Body of Christ.

Three chapters follow the introduction in this report. The first of these, “Baptism with Respect to Sin and Grace,” presents differences and similarities in understanding the relationship of baptism to sin and grace, while also explaining briefly the history that has shaped the distinctive interpretations. Chapter two, “Baptism: Communicating Grace and Faith,” looks at the various aspects of the celebration of baptism in each community, considering it both as the means of incorporation into the Church and as one important moment within the life-long process of being a Christian. Chapter three, “Living Out Baptism in Discipleship,” considers how baptism should and can be lived out during the entire course of one’s life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. The conclusion summarizes convictions held, gifts received, and challenges accepted by each delegation during the course of the dialogue. Recommendations for future work in follow-up trilateral dialogues are also presented.

It should be noted that a trilateral dialogue is rare. Most international dialogues are bilateral and a few multilateral. The trilateral format created a uniquely enriching dynamic that nudged each communion to reflect on its own theology and practice of baptism in the light of the two other’s theology and practice. This fruitful process brought into sharper focus many convictions and practices regarding baptism as well as greater clarity in understanding the theology underlying those convictions and

practices. The unique dynamic of the trilateral dialogue led also to a healthy exchange of gifts and challenges in multiple directions.

With this report, we believe that Mennonites, Lutherans, and Roman Catholics not only can take a significant step towards increased mutual understanding, but also make an important contribution to the wider ecumenical conversation on baptism as it relates to the justification and sanctification of the sinner. Given the challenges of our times it is our hope that common perspectives on baptism, as communication of saving grace and faith in Jesus Christ, will serve to advance not only oneness in the body of Christ but also the evangelizing mission of the Church.

+ Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga
Prof. Dr Friederike Nüssel
Prof. Dr Alfred Neufeld

Roman Catholic delegation members:

Archbishop Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga, IMC (co-chair, Colombia)
Revd Prof. William Henn, OFM Cap (USA/Italy)
Revd Prof. Luis Melo, SM (Canada)
Sister Prof. Dr Marie-Hélène Robert, NDA (France)
Revd Gregory J. Fairbanks (co-secretary, USA/Vatican, 2012-2015)
Revd Avelino Gonzalez (co-secretary, USA/Vatican, 2016-2018)

Lutheran delegation members:

Prof. Dr Friederike Nüssel (co-chair, Germany)
Bishop Emeritus Dr. Musawenkosi Biyela (South Africa)
Revd Prof. Peter Li (Hong Kong/China)
Prof. Dr Theodor Dieter (Germany/France) Revd Raj Bharath Patta (India/UK)
Revd Dr Kaisamari Hintikka (co-secretary, Finland/Switzerland).

Mennonite delegation members:

Prof. Dr Alfred Neufeld † (co-chair, Paraguay) Prof. Dr Fernando Enns (Germany)
Revd Rebecca Osiro (Kenya) Prof. Dr John Rempel (Canada)
Revd Dr Larry Miller (co-secretary, France/USA)

THE STATUS OF THIS REPORT

This report conveys the work and perspectives of the international commission composed of Lutherans, Mennonites, and Roman Catholics. The communions who appointed the commission members publish it as a study document in the hope that, through wide discussion both within the three communions and beyond, it will contribute to better mutual understanding and greater faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13).¹

1. One of the most widely distributed and positively received ecumenical agreements in history – the Faith and Order convergence statement *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) of 1982² – affirmed that, “Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other, and with the church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity. The union with Christ which we share through baptism has important implications for Christian unity.”³ Nevertheless, baptism has been a source of disagreement and division between our three traditions.

2. The trilateral conversations between Mennonites, Lutherans and Catholics on baptism,⁴ about which the following pages will report, trace their origin to the positive outcome of earlier international bilateral dialogues between our communities. The Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) engaged in a round of international conversations from 1998 to 2003 which resulted in the report entitled *Called Together to be Peacemakers*.⁵ Its report noted that,

1. The English translation of the Bible used in this document is the *New Revised Standard Version*, (NRSV), (Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, copyright 1989, 1995).

2. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, (BEM), Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982); text available at <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/baptism-eucharist-and-ministry-faith-and-order-paper-no-111-the-lima-text> [accessed 1 December, 2018].

3. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 2, D6.

4. The word “baptism” is written in lower case in the body of this report, except when quoting from documents which use capitals.

5. *Called Together to Be Peacemakers: Report of the International between The Catholic Church and the Mennonite World Conference, 1998-2003*. Text available in Jeffrey Gros, Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs (eds), *Growth in Agreement III*, Faith and Order Paper 207 (Geneva: World Council of Churches 2007), 206-267; text available at https://mwc-cmm.org/sites/default/files/report_

Mennonites and Catholics are agreed on the basic meaning and importance of baptism as a dying and rising with Christ, so that ‘just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life’ (Rom 6:4). We both also emphasize that baptism signifies the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the promised presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and the church.⁶

The MWC also engaged in international dialogue with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) from 2005-2008, resulting in a common document entitled *Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ*,⁷ which led to a ceremony of request for and bestowal of forgiveness for events of the past, culminating in the celebration of reconciliation between the two churches at the LWF assembly at Stuttgart in July, 2010. The report noted that “Both Mennonites and Lutherans agree that baptism cannot be seen as an isolated event. Thus, how baptisms are recognized must be understood within a larger framework that explores how the practice of baptism is related to a larger set of theological doctrines”.⁸

3. Precisely because of such agreements and because of the importance of baptism for the life of our churches, both dialogues identified as a high priority for future work that it be given further and more sustained exploration. The Mennonite-Catholic text stated:

Discussion is needed concerning our divergent views on the role of the faith of the church as it bears on the status of infants and children. This would include a comparative study of the theology of sin and salvation, of the spiritual status of children, and of baptism. The question of recognizing or not recognizing one another’s baptism requires further study. It is necessary to study, together, the history of the origin and development of the theology and practice of baptism for the purpose of ascertaining the origin of infant baptism, assessing the changes brought about with the Constantinian shift, the development of the doctrine of original sin, and other matters”.⁹

For its part, the Mennonite-Lutheran report noted:

... Lutherans feel misunderstood by Mennonites when Mennonites assess the Lutheran practice of baptism according to their own framework. Conversely, Mennonites feel misunderstood by Lutherans when Lutherans assess the Mennonite practice according to their own framework. Clearly, both sides experience great anguish in this conflict since the deepest convictions of their faith seem to be at

cathomenno_final_eng.pdf and at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/mennonite-conference-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20110324_mennonite_en.html [accessed 1 December, 2018].

6. *Called Together to be Peacemakers*, § 129.

7. *Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ. Report of the Lutheran–Mennonite International Study Commission* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation and Mennonite World Conference, 2010); text available at: <https://mwc-cmm.org/sites/default/files/oca-lutheran-mennonites-web-en.pdf> and at: <https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/OEA-Lutheran-Mennonites-EN-full.pdf> [accessed 1 December, 2018].

8. *Healing Memories*, 89.

9. *Called Together to be Peacemakers* §§ 141-143.

stake and each side can easily feel misunderstood by the other. The members of this study commission hope that neither the Anabaptism-Mennonite rejection of infant baptism nor the condemnation of Anabaptists in Article IX [of the *Augsburg Confession*] will remain a church-dividing issue. Nevertheless, we have not yet found a way to bridge the divide between the two churches regarding their teaching and practice of baptism. Further conversations are needed, perhaps especially among our MWC and LWF member churches. Among other topics, those conversations will have to address our mutual understandings of the relationship between divine action and human (re)action in baptism. Engaging these questions will require deeper biblical accounts of our understanding of baptism and will require that these understandings be considered within a broad theological framework.¹⁰

These quotations from our previous reports explain why a meeting of representatives of the MWC, the LWF and the PCPCU in Strasbourg, France, March 21-23, 2011, recommended that their respective church bodies form an international trilateral dialogue to consider the subject of baptism.

4. At that meeting of 2011 in Strasbourg, the purpose of the dialogue was described in the following terms: “To continue on the paths of increased mutual understanding and cooperation on which these communions have advanced in recent years by focusing on foundational matters concerning the understanding and practice of baptism” and “to help one another grow in faithfulness to Jesus Christ as we face the pastoral and missional challenge to the practice and understanding of baptism in our time.”¹¹ It was intended that the trilateral form would allow each communion to reflect on its own theology and practice of baptism under the eyes of the others’ theology, especially as related to the overcoming of sin and entrance into the Church and into a life of discipleship. The commonalities and differences thereby uncovered, first of all, helped each church to bring into sharper focus some of its most cherished convictions regarding baptism. This would further allow for an exchange of gifts and challenges so as to assist all three communions in mutual understanding and in greater fidelity to their calling and mission as churches. Naturally such a conversation would also consider the contrast between the Mennonite practice of admitting to baptism only those who are capable of personally professing their faith and the Lutheran and Catholic practice of admitting also infants to baptism. The theological rationale undergirding such diverse practices would need to be considered.

The Itinerary of These Trilateral Conversations

5. After looking at the steps leading up to the trilateral conversation, we first considered two primary issues: a review of the previous experiences of each of our churches in dialogue about baptism at an international level, and an initial presentation of how each of our communities understands baptism. Three fundamental themes emerged as demanding our attention: 1) the relation of baptism to sin and salvation; 2) the celebra-

10. *Healing Memories*, 89-90.

11. Quotations taken from the unpublished minutes of the meeting of the MWC, the LWF and the PCPCU in Strasbourg, France, March 21-23, 2011.

tion of baptism and its relation to faith and to membership in the Christian community; and 3) the living out of baptism in Christian discipleship. Each of these topics then became the focus of one of the successive week-long yearly sessions. In addition to the presentation and discussion of papers from one of the members of each community concerning the topic under discussion in a given year, another feature contributed to our conversations: our annual meetings included presentations by each of our communities of its liturgical celebration of baptism. This allowed the commission members to have a better “feel” for the way in which their partners’ understand and experience baptism. The structure of the report follows the threefold outline of topics which are listed above. Chapter one will consider how our three churches see baptism in relation to the overcoming of sin. Chapter two will look at the celebration of baptism as well as the relation of baptism to faith and to membership in the community. Chapter three will consider the role of baptism in the life-long process of discipleship. A concluding section will summarize our findings and allow each of our three churches’ delegations to list gifts that they have received through the experience of this trilateral conversation, gifts that they believe they can offer to the other two communities, challenges to their own understanding and practice of baptism uncovered by these discussions, and suggestions that they might offer to their respective communities from what they have learned.

A Word about the Report’s Use of the Bible

6. Bible study within the context of shared worship was a valued part of our yearly sessions. All three of our communities regard the revealed Word of God as normative for the life and teaching of the Church. Because of this, scripture will be used throughout the entire report. Each of our traditions employs various biblical passages in its understanding of baptism. At times, the interpretations by our respective traditions of such passages may differ considerably. For example, the passage about Jesus welcoming little children (Mark 10:13-16) has been understood by some as pertinent to the question of the baptism of infants, while others reject such an interpretation. Effort will be made to be attentive to such differences and not to presuppose that a given text is interpreted in the same way by all of our communities.

CHAPTER ONE

BAPTISM WITH RESPECT TO SIN AND GRACE

7. God’s original design in creation is recounted in the opening pages of the Scriptures, the first chapter of which concludes with the verse: “And God saw everything which he had made and it was very good” (Gen 1:3). Human beings were intended for communion with God, in whose image and likeness they were fashioned (see Gen 1:27). However, when sin entered human history through disobedience (see Gen 3:1-24), the original design of a loving relationship between God and human beings was overturned. Since that time, insofar as we contradict and become estranged from God, our basic human situation is one of misery and hopelessness. It is precisely in the knowledge of God, and of the relationship that we were designed to have with God, that the full evil of sin is revealed. But God overcame this situation by reconciling human beings with himself, liberating them from the powers of evil, healing them, and

giving them life in abundance (see Jn 10:10). It is Jesus Christ who is in the center of this encounter: God has become a human being (i.e., assumed human nature), who lived, and suffered and died for all of humankind. In Jesus Christ, God has demonstrated and brought about his design not to be a God unrelated to the human beings he created. It is only through this divine initiative that that human situation of perdition can be overcome, that is, by grace. God “desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2.4). Thus he intends to communicate his grace to each and every human person individually, in their families and communities. Baptism plays a central role in this communication that leads people into salvific communion with God. Our Catholic, Lutheran, and Mennonite communities have reflected theologically on this encounter between God and human beings in light of the biblical witness about it. Over the course of time, various understandings of the reality of sin and grace, of faith and discipleship have helped them to consider the human situation of estrangement from God and the ways to overcome it. They have also reflected on the place and role of baptism in this process. There are many common elements in their respective understandings, but also differences. For understanding baptism, reflection upon the experience of sin and grace is especially important. Differences in perceiving baptism may often correlate with differences in understanding sin and grace. This chapter aims at identifying both common features and differences in the relation of baptism to sin and grace. It presents briefly the positions of the three communities in a way that overcomes traditional misunderstandings and misrepresentations of each other’s perspectives.

Catholic Understanding of the Relation of Baptism to Sin and Grace

8. The Catholic understanding of how sin and grace relate to baptism are the product of many centuries of reflection, beginning with the testimony of the Scriptures, especially the New Testament teaching of St. Paul. They are also conditioned by various circumstances over the course of history which have occasioned deeper consideration of one or another aspect of this relation.

9. Across the centuries, the Catholic Church has held a constant teaching on the centrality of Jesus Christ in God’s salvific plan for restoring the world to himself. A particularly clear and succinct presentation of this salvific plan for restoration was articulated at the beginning of Pope John Paul II’s very first encyclical,¹² devoted to presenting Jesus Christ as the redeemer of all human beings:

Through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that he intended man to have from his first beginning; he has granted that dimension definitively – in the way that is peculiar to him alone, in keeping with his eternal love and mercy, with the full freedom of God – and he has granted it also with the bounty that enables us, in considering the original sin and the whole history of the sins of humanity, and in considering the errors of the human intellect, will and heart, to re-

12. Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, Encyclical, 4 March 1979 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979); text available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html [accessed 1 December, 2018].

peat with amazement the words of the Sacred Liturgy: “O happy fault... which gained us so great a Redeemer!”¹³

This Christological way of contextualizing Catholic belief about original sin finds an even stronger expression in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the “reverse side” of the Good News that Jesus is the Saviour of all men, that all need salvation and that salvation is offered to all through Christ. The Church, which has the mind of Christ [see 1 Cor 2:16], knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ.¹⁴

10. A few authoritative voices from early Christian tradition have interpreted the New Testament witness in a way that has had a lasting impact on how Catholics think of the relation of sin and grace to baptism today. An Eastern Father of the Church, John Chrysostom (347-407) explicitly relates both sin and grace to baptism. His testimony shows the authority enjoyed by the traditions of the East for the belief of the whole Catholic community. It also speaks to the practice of baptizing children as examined in Catholic, Mennonite and Lutheran conversations.

11. In his catechetical instructions of those preparing for baptism, John Chrysostom wrote that:

It is on this account that we baptize even infants, although they may not have sinned, that they may be given the further gifts of sanctification, justice, filial adoption, and inheritance, that they may be brothers and members of Christ, and may become dwelling-places of the Spirit.¹⁵

This text is from instructions obviously intended for those old enough to understand them. What it says about the relation of baptism to the forgiveness of sin (justice) and to positive transformation (filiation, inheritance, grace, indwelling) concerns not only the infants, who are the explicit subject of the comment, but also all who are to be baptized, including those to whom the catechesis was directed. Baptism freed all the baptized from sin and imparted to them new life.

12. At the same time that John Chrysostom was serving as bishop of the Eastern metropolis of Constantinople, Augustine (354-430) was the bishop of Hippo in Northern Africa. It would be difficult to overstate the profound impact of his understanding of grace over against the thought of Pelagius, who seemed to put into question the New Testament teaching of justification by faith and not by the works of the law. It certainly had an impact on the controversies at the time of the 16th century Reformation. It also played a decisive role much earlier, in the teachings of the (provincial) Council of Or-

13. *Redemptor hominis*, 1.

14. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, rev. ed. (London: Burns & Oates, 1999), § 389: text available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM [accessed 1 December, 2018].

15. St. John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, III, 6, transl. Paul W. Harkin (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1963), 57. (A critical edition of the original Greek text with French translation can be found in: *Huit catéchèses baptismales*, III, 6, *Sources chrétiennes*, no. 50, 1956, 154).

ange of 529, which rejected interpretations of the New Testament which present the earning of salvation by free human acts as compatible with the conviction that we are saved gratuitously through the death of Christ on the Cross.

13. The Council of Orange emphasized several important points, highlighting, in various ways, the unconditional initiative of God in bringing about human salvation. For example, it is the Holy Spirit who initiates the beginnings of any desire for cleansing from sin, for faith and its increase, for assent to the preaching of the Gospel.¹⁶ The free will of human beings “has been weakened through the sin of the first man,” in such a way that they no longer have “the ability to seek the mystery of eternal salvation by themselves without the revelation of God.”¹⁷ Grace is not preceded by merit and any good works performed by human beings are due to the grace that precedes them.¹⁸ Furthermore, “after grace has been received through baptism, all baptized persons have the ability and responsibility, if they desire to labor faithfully, to perform with the aid and cooperation of Christ what is of essential importance in regard to the salvation of their soul,” adding that

we also believe and confess to our benefit that in every good work it is not we who take the initiative and are then assisted through the mercy of God, but God himself first inspires in us both faith in him and love for him without any previous good works of our own that deserve reward, so that we may both faithfully seek the sacrament of baptism, and after baptism be able by his help to do what is pleasing to him.¹⁹

Most of the above-mentioned teachings explicitly include supporting citations of various New Testament passages. It seems fair to summarize the teaching of the Council of Orange in a few succinct points: 1) an emphasis upon the initiative of God, 2) grace inspires a response to God of faith and love, 3) grace calls for the performance of good deeds, and 4) that to deny such teachings amounts to contradicting the witness of the Bible.

14. The context of the 16th century Reformation provided the setting, vocabulary and tone of an official teaching dedicated explicitly to the Catholic understanding of original sin. The “Decree on Original Sin” of the Fifth Session of the Council of Trent (17 June 1546)²⁰ is based on the Apostle Paul’s argument in Rom 5:12, and thus begins with Adam’s transgression of the divine commandment in paradise. Through this act, Adam immediately lost holiness and justice and incurred the wrath and displeasure of God

16. See canons 4-7 of the Council of Orange, 529, in Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd ed., ed. Peter Hünermann et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 374-377. The canons referred to in this and subsequent footnotes are those of the Council of Orange in 529.

17. See canon 8; Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds*, 378.

18. See canon 18; Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds*, 388.

19. See Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds*, 397.

20. See Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds*, and Norman P. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2 (London/Washington DC: Sheed & Ward/Georgetown University Press, 1990), 665-667.

and consequently death.²¹ This had consequences for all of Adam's descendants, who also suffer the loss of that holiness and justice which God had bestowed in paradise. Being born under the power of evil, they do not live in paradise and do not receive that holiness and justice that had been the case for Adam. In addition, Adam transmitted to all of his descendants not only the consequences of his sin of disobedience, that is, death and bodily vulnerabilities – almost as one inherits certain conditions from one's parents – but also the guilt of Adam's sin is transmitted to all human beings. But such guilt is “the death of the soul,” that is, eternal death.

15. The Decree of Trent also addresses the question of how the sin of Adam has spread to all and how it can be removed. It is passed on by propagation and not through imitation.²² This sin is in every person as one's *own* sin. It can be overcome neither by the powers of human nature nor by any other remedy than that of the merit of the one mediator, Jesus Christ. He is described in Rom 5:9 (“we have now been justified by his blood”) and 1 Cor 1:30 as our “righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” After having said that Christ is the only remedy for original sin, the Council of Trent anathematizes those who deny that the merit of Christ cannot properly be conveyed to both adults and infants through the sacrament of baptism – with reference to Acts 4:12, John 1:29, and Gal 3:27.²³ The decree also speaks about the effects of bap-

21. Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals, 1511.

22. There has been an important advance in the interpretation of Rom. 5:12, which traditionally had been the source of thinking of the transmission of original sin by generation. Pope John Paul II alluded to this advance, when he pointed out: “In a modern translation, the Pauline text reads as follows: ‘Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men because one man sinned’ (Rom 5:12). In the original Greek we read: ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον, an expression which was translated in the old Latin Vulgate as: In quo omnes peccaverunt, ‘in whom (a single man) all sinned.’ But what the Vulgate translates as ‘in whom’ from the very beginning the Greeks clearly understood in the sense of ‘because’ or ‘inasmuch’. This sense is now generally accepted by modern translations. However, this diversity of interpretations of the expression ἐφ’ ᾧ does not change the basic truth in St. Paul’s text, namely, that Adam’s sin (the sin of our first parents) had consequences for all humanity. Moreover, in the same chapter of the Letter to the Romans (5:19), and in the preceding verse: ‘One man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men’ (Rom 5:18), St Paul connects the sinful situation of all humanity with the fault of Adam. [...] Therefore, original sin is transmitted by way of natural generation. This conviction of the Church is indicated also by the practice of infant baptism, to which the conciliar decree refers. New born infants are incapable of committing personal sin, yet in accordance with the Church’s centuries-old tradition, they are baptized shortly after birth for the remission of sin. The decree states: ‘They are truly baptized for the remission of sin, so that what they contracted in generation may be cleansed by regeneration’ (DS 1514).” This explanation is found in paragraphs 3 and 5 of the Audience given by the pope on October 1, 1986. The text is available in Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1986/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19861001.html [accessed 1 December, 2018].

23. See *Denzinger, Compendium of Creeds*, 1513. At the same time, this teaching does not reject any baptism administered with water and the Trinitarian formula (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), even if administered by those who, for their part, may reject the baptism of infants. Thus, when baptism is administered with water and the Trinitarian formula by Mennonite and Anabaptist communities, the Catholic Church recognizes its validity.

tism. The guilt of sin is remitted through the grace of Christ given in baptism. All that pertains to the very essence of sin is removed; not only is it not merely “imputed,” but, in the reborn, there is nothing that God hates, as suggested by Rom 8:1. There is nothing that prevents their entrance into heaven. However, concupiscence from original sin remains. It has sometimes been called “sin” because it comes from sin and inclines to sin, but in the Catholic view it is not sin in the proper sense and does not harm those who resist and do not consent to it.²⁴ Nevertheless, those who have been baptized do commit sins of greater or lesser magnitude and, among the means of receiving pardon for these offenses, the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation (or confession) plays a privileged role.

16. The understanding of the Council of Trent needs to be nuanced by comments made during the Lutheran and Catholic commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation. In his sermon in the Cathedral in Lund on October 31, 2016, Pope Francis expressed a way in which Catholics could appreciate and profit from some of the Reformation emphases on justification:

As we know, Luther encountered that propitious God in the good news of Jesus, incarnate, dead, and risen. With the concept ‘by grace alone,’ he reminds us that God always takes the initiative, prior to any human response, even as he seeks to awaken that response. The doctrine of justification expresses the essence of human existence before God.”²⁵

These words reflect something of the development in Catholic understanding of Luther which has resulted from fifty years of their bilateral dialogue with Lutherans.

17. Subsequent to Trent, new circumstances occasioned by European exploration of lands previously unknown to them, led to further Catholic reflection on the relation between baptism, sin and grace. The new awareness that Christians gained of vast populations in parts of the world that they had rarely, if ever, visited gave rise to questions about how the traditional Christian doctrines concerning sin, grace, and baptism applied to the great number of people who had never heard of Christ. Biblical teachings such as those that stated that there is no name other than that of Jesus by which human beings can be saved (see Acts 4:12) and, on the other hand, that God wills the salvation of all human beings (see 1 Tim 2:4) demanded reconciliation, since the practical inability of fulfilling the first seemed to contradict the fulfillment of the second. Various at-

24. See Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds*, 1515 and also *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)*, The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, signed 31 October 1999 (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 2000), § 30; text available at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-joint-declaration-doctrine-justification-20th-anniversary-edition> [accessed 1 December, 2018].

25. “Homily of Pope Francis,” Common Ecumenical Prayer at the Lutheran Cathedral of Lund, 31 October 2016, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Information Service 148 (2016), 19; text available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/information_service/pdf/information_service_148_en.pdf [accessed 1 December, 2018].

tempts to resolve this puzzle, especially in terms of rehabilitating the traditional themes of baptism by desire and baptism by martyrdom sought to address this apparent problem.²⁶

18. Although the Second Vatican Council did not devote a text focused precisely to this relation, reflecting on the situation of the many human beings who are not baptized, it did affirm that:

those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel. She knows that it is given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life. But often men, deceived by the Evil One, have become vain in their reasonings and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, serving the creature rather than the Creator.²⁷

19. Catholic reflection on the transmission of original sin has continued in more recent times:

How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam “as one body of one man” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *De malo* 4, 1). By this “unity of the human race” all men are implicated in Adam’s sin, as all are implicated in Christ’s justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state (see Council of Trent, DH 1511-1512). It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called “sin” only in an analogical sense: it is a sin “contracted” and not “committed” — a state and not an act.²⁸

20. The relation of baptism to sin and grace, with the necessary nuances that have been uncovered over the centuries, is well expressed in *Redemptor hominis*, the source with which this Catholic presentation began:

26. See the efforts by Francis A. Sullivan in: *Salvation Outside the Church? A History of Christian Thought about Salvation for Those “outside”*, (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992).

27. Lumen gentium, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, November 21, 1964, § 16. Text available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html [accessed 1 December, 2018].

28. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 404.

It was precisely this man in all the truth of his life, in his conscience, in his continual inclination to sin and at the same time in his continual aspiration to truth, the good, the beautiful, justice and love that the Second Vatican Council had before its eyes when, in outlining his situation in the modern world, it always passed from the external elements of this situation to the truth within humanity: “In man himself many elements wrestle with one another. Thus, on the one hand, as a creature he experiences his limitations in a multitude of ways. On the other, he feels himself to be boundless in his desires and summoned to a higher life. Pulled by manifold attractions, he is constantly forced to choose among them and to renounce some. Indeed, as a weak and sinful being, he often does what he would not, and fails to do what he would. Hence he suffers from internal divisions, and from these flow so many and such great discords in society.”²⁹

21. In their contemporary understanding of the relation of baptism, sin and grace, Catholics emphasize that their view of original sin could be misunderstood if it were to be interpreted in such a way as to imply that the universal extent of sin could be separated from the New Testament teaching about the universal extent of God’s will for salvation. A very considerable number of people have not been baptized in the past and most probably will not be in the future. It would be a misinterpretation and misunderstanding of Catholic belief to conclude that, while the extension of original sin is universal, the remedy of this situation is confined only to those baptized as Christians. God brings about his salvific action through the sacraments; but God’s salvific action is not confined by these special means entrusted to the Church. God’s universal salvific will can be effective beyond our ways of knowing precisely how it accomplishes its work. As the Second Vatican Council taught: “... since Christ died for all men (Romans 8:32), and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery”.³⁰

Lutheran Understanding of the Relation of Baptism to Sin and Grace

22. Lutheran understanding of sin is focused on the condition of the human heart or inner self or human “nature” which is the origin of acts of the will. Sinful acts are understood as fruits of the sin of the human person, which is sin in the proper sense. The *Augsburg Confession*, art.II says: “They teach that since the fall of Adam all human beings who are propagated according to nature are born with sin, that is, without fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence. And they teach that this disease or original fault is truly sin.”³¹ This makes clear that Lutherans have a strictly theological con-

29. *Redemptor hominis*, § 4b, quoting Vatican II’s *Gaudium et spes* On the Relation of the Church to the Modern World, § 10; text available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html [accessed 1 December, 2018].

30. *Gaudium et spes*, § 22.

31. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, trans. Charles P. Arand (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 37, 39.

cept of sin that is different from a moral concept of good and evil acts. For a moral understanding an act of the will is good if the respective judgment of practical reason including the goal is right, the circumstances of the act are taken into consideration, and the act is chosen because it is good. Moral reflection also asks for the final good to be happiness (for example, in Aristotle).

23. In contrast to this, a theological approach sees God as the final goal and the starting point of all our acting. Augustine demonstrated that the final goal of human action is either God or we ourselves, and argued that in a theological sense, only love for God for God's sake makes our acting right. Luther understands human love of God as the final goal with reference to Jesus' understanding of the fulfillment of God's law, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). While scholastic theologians understood this commandment to love God as requiring an act of *will*, Luther took it to demand the dedication of the *whole person*, not only of the *will*. The wholeness of the person includes one's desires, affections, emotions, and longings. They are all present in us before we make any decision of the will, and they manifest our estimation of and relation to things and people in the world in which we live. Luther has a place for deep psychological experience in his theology: we are spontaneously slow to do good works, and we feel a reluctance in us to fulfill God's law with our will and corresponding external acts, while we are quite quick to wish or even do the opposite. From Jesus' explanation of the commandment to love God Luther insists that God desires our wholehearted dedication to him and his will, but we realize in ourselves that we cannot offer this to God. We do not have complete power over our whole person including our affects, desires and longings. No scholastic theologian had claimed this. They had only required that we should not consent to the evil desires in us by moderating our affections and not letting them become acts of the will. Indeed, we are free not to kill a person whom we hate, but it is not so easy to overcome hatred.

24. There are two possibilities to deal with this situation: (a) Moral reflection is satisfied if the evil desire is not fulfilled by an act of the will; it will challenge the person to struggle against the evil desire by developing virtues, but the basic argument is: nobody is obliged to do anything that is beyond his capacities (*ultra posse nemo obligatur*). (b) Luther argues from the perspective of God: It is God's holy will that we dedicate our whole life to him, but God's will does *not* adapt to *our* capacities, rather his will reveals our situation before God: that we are unable to fulfil his will. "Through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). Therefore, we desperately need the gospel of God's grace. The law of God shows us our inability to fulfil his law. If the final goal of my life is either God or I myself, and I cannot devote my whole person to God, then it is I and not God who is the final goal of my life. Thus, I am a human being turned in upon myself (*homo incurvatus in se ipsum*). There may be many morally good acts done by such a human being, but this person attributes also these good acts to herself and thus seeks herself in everything, even in good works. Luther's definition of sin is: not trusting in God, instead looking for one's own benefit in everything (*in omnibus quaerere quae sua sunt*). This is different from egoism. Egoism can be overcome by acting in a just way (giving everyone their due), but according to Luther without grace this person will be proud of, and wish to be admired on account of their just works, seeking their own

benefit even in these good things. The notion of the total depravity of the sinful person is misleading, because it creates the impression that nothing good can be found in him or her. What Lutherans want to say is that a person cannot liberate themselves from this sinful situation by their own capacities since every act is an act of being turned in upon oneself. Thus, one has clearly to distinguish Luther's transmoral concept of sin from a moral understanding of good and evil to which the will in its freedom is related.

25. In light of this understanding of sin, it becomes clear why actual sin is not in the foreground for Luther. Of course, he is aware that what is confessed in the sacrament of confession are certain evil acts that burden people. Because of the radical character of sin, the overcoming of sin requires the dying and rising of the person; this happens in baptism. But as a matter of experience, even after baptism, the flesh plays an evil role in the faithful that hinders them from fully fulfilling the will of God and completely giving their heart to God (see Gal 5:17). Baptism obviously does not fully eradicate original sin. Therefore, Luther calls for returning again and again to baptism. The baptismal promise received in faith is justification. In justification one has to distinguish two aspects that cannot be separated: (a) Justification is forgiveness of sins for those who believe and trust in the promise of the gospel. Luther often describes this by using forensic terminology, as Paul does in the letter to the Romans, but he can also use other models, like that of the mystical marriage: faith is so to speak the ring between the soul, the bride, and Christ, the bridegroom. According to the laws of marriage the possession of the bride (sin) becomes the possession of the bridegroom, and the possession of the bridegroom (righteousness) becomes the possession of the bride. In this respect, sin is forgiven completely, a person is made totally righteous (*totus iustus*). (b) When the Holy Spirit uses the word of promise, spoken in proclamation or communicated through the sacrament, he also begins to transform the person. He does this by creating new desires, longings, and acts of the will, in her. But, as we all experience, this transformation is never completed, there is the continuing struggle between spirit and flesh in us. We cannot rely on our transformation, but we can absolutely rely on Christ's promise. Yet because this transformation is never completed as long as we live, we never get to the point of offering our person in fullness to God, and this precisely is sin. Therefore Luther says: The justified person is at the same time a sinner.

26. This does not mean that no transformation takes place; it means that Luther takes the holiness of God seriously. God's holiness requires our complete dedication. Therefore: with respect to the gospel the believer is righteous, with respect to the law she is sinner. Luther does not deny growth in holiness, but as long as we have not reached the final goal we remain sinners with respect to what God expects from us. Luther's understanding of sin has an enormous self-critical impulse while at the same time calling for going forward on the way of sanctification. Luther – one must emphasize this over and over again – also perceives justification as changing the person. Justification is not merely God's justifying judgment that remains external to a person and leaves a person unchanged; rather the relationship of the promise of forgiveness and communion and faith changes a person deeply. But since a person's transformation is never complete or perfect, even under the working of the Holy Spirit, Luther calls the faithful *sinner*s with respect to God's holy law, while with respect to the promise of the gospel those who believe in it, are righteous. This *simul iustus et peccator* ("at once justified and a sinner")

does *not* mean that the person who is justified, is not transformed, rather, Luther emphasizes: “The enslaving power of sin is broken on the basis of the merit of Christ. It is no longer sin that ‘rules’ the Christian, for sin is itself ‘ruled’ by Christ to whom the justified are bound in faith.”³² This means that the faithful are able to prevent the sin of the heart from manifesting itself in evil deeds. Christians can actually do good works. In his morning prayer, used daily by millions of Lutherans, Luther asks God: “that you would also protect me today from sin and all evil, so that my life and actions may please you completely. For into your hands I commend myself: my body, and my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.”³³

27. Baptism is understood by Luther as a sacrament in the sense of Augustine — that the word comes to the element and makes the sacrament. The word of baptism is a promise that (a) effects what it says, and that (b) requires faith. Promise and faith build a salvific relationship. Faith needs the promise because it does not rely on itself but on the external word of the promise. But a promise is given in vain if the person to whom it is given does not believe in it. Both parts of this relationship require each other. Thus Luther can say what at first glance seems to be paradoxical: “But we must so consider it [the promise] as to exercise our faith in it, and have no doubt whatever that, once we have been baptized, we are saved. For unless faith is present or is conferred in baptism, baptism will profit us nothing; indeed, it will become a hindrance to us, not only at the moment when it is received, but throughout the rest of our lives.”³⁴

28. Baptism happens at a certain place and at a certain time, but the promise of baptism lasts a lifetime. God promises the person who is baptized: “You are my child forever”. In faith we come back to this promise. When a sinner is received into communion with God, this is at the same time forgiveness of sins. Because the renewal of life begins in baptism, but endures for the whole lifetime of the faithful, asking for forgiveness and being received again into communion with God means: returning to the promise of baptism. Therefore, Luther holds the sacraments of baptism and confession closely together.

Just as the truth of this divine promise, once pronounced over us, continues until death, so our faith in it ought never to cease, but to be nourished and strengthened until death by the continual remembrance of this promise made to us in baptism. Therefore, when we rise from our sins or repent, we are merely returning to the power and the faith of baptism from which we fell, and finding our way back to the promise then made to us, which we deserted when we sinned. For the truth of the promise once made remains steadfast, always ready to receive us back with open arms when we return.³⁵

32. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, § 29.

33. *The Book of Concord*, Minneapolis 2000, 363.

34. Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” in *Word and Sacrament II: Luther’s Works* (LW) vol. 36, ed. Abdel Ross Wentz and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 36:59.

35. *Luther’s Works*, 36:59.

29. The Christian life is a life of faith in one's baptism to which the believer always returns. In baptism, God does not only promise to give *something*, forgiveness of sins, rather he gives *himself* to the baptized. This self-giving of God is repeated over and over again in the proclamation of God's word and in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Since baptism is seen as *God's* promise, it is valid even if human beings do not trust in it, according to the rule: "If we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim 2:13). In this perspective, there is no basic difference whether a person is baptized as infant or adult, both are called to continue to trust in their baptism's promise as long as they live.

Mennonite Understanding of the Relation of Baptism to Sin and Grace

30. "Sin" was most often talked about in Anabaptism and later Mennonitism³⁶ in relation to the victory of God's grace over sin and evil in Christ on the cross.³⁷ The fallen nature of humanity was confessed without reservation but most often in the context of God's freeing, sanctifying grace. Although it was confessed as true,³⁸ "original sin" did not have the priority it was given in other 16th century churches, where it was indispensable to their understanding of baptism. More often Anabaptists addressed the subject when pressed to do so in debate with other confessions. Nevertheless, one can distinguish four different understandings of what original sin is:

It is described as an inborn incurable sickness, as the loss of power to distinguish between good and evil, as a poison which has wrought a corruption within nature originally good, and as the natural reason of the mature man which over-extends itself into the realm of the supernatural. Original sin was not denied by any of the Radical Reformers, but none of them saw it as it was seen within the Magisterial Reformation, primarily in its Augustinian light, as the bondage of the will.³⁹

36. A historical note: In the 16th century, the ancestors of Mennonites mostly referred to themselves as "brothers and sisters" or "baptism-minded". They were called "Anabaptists" mostly by their detractors. Gradually, the term "Mennonite" became their name in most countries in honor of one of their founders, Menno Simons. Beginning after World War II the term "Anabaptist" was reclaimed in a positive sense as a broader way of designating the movement, to include communities that arose over the centuries from the original impulse, such as Hutterites, Amish, Brethren in Christ, and the Brethren communities of the turn of the 18th century. Since the beginning of the 21st century some non-European Mennonite communities that arose out of North Atlantic Mennonite missions have begun to describe themselves as 'Anabaptist' according to the same logic that arose after World War II. This is also the case for some North American congregations.

37. Pilgram Marpeck, *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*, ed. William Klassen and Walter Klassen (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, 1999) 112-124; [note: Pilgrim Marpeck is sometimes written Marbeck]; Simon Menno, *Complete Works of Menno Simon* (Elkhart, Ind.: J.F. Funk and Brothers, 1871) 108-116.

38. Balthasar Hubmaier, *Complete Writings*, ed. H. Wayne Pipkin and John Howard Yoder (Harrisburg, Va.: Herald Press, 1989), 86.

39. Alvin J. Beachy, *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation*, (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1977), 38.

31. Whether or not they used the term “original sin” Anabaptist theologians taught that without Christ the human condition was hopeless. Menno Simons had a strong sense of the sinful state of humanity and did not shy away from the term. He writes,

“The Scriptures as I see it speak of different kinds of sin. The first kind is the corrupt, sinful nature, namely, the lust or desire of our flesh contrary to God’s Law and contrary to the original righteousness; sin which is inherited at birth by all the descendants and children of a corrupt, sinful Adam, and is not inaptly called original sin... The second kind of sins are the fruits of this first sin and are not inaptly called actual sin by theologians.⁴⁰

32. Mennonite theology shares the interpretation of the Genesis creation narratives in the larger Christian tradition that humanity – as part of creation – is infected by sin. This infection by sin is a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. It leads to death in two ways: first, the physical death of Adam and his posterity; second, eternal death from which only Christ can redeem. The three most influential historic Mennonite confessions of faith reiterate these assertions. Yet the emphasis in their writings is on the declaration that it was God’s intention to offer reconciliation to all of humanity.⁴¹

33. One current Mennonite confession of faith describes this conviction in the following way: “We confess that, beginning with Adam and Eve, humanity has disobeyed God, given way to the tempter, and chosen to sin. Because of sin, all have fallen short of the Creator’s intent, marred the image of God in which they were created, disrupted order in the world, and limited their love for others.”⁴² Further, it states, “Through sin, the powers of domination, division, destruction, and death have been unleashed in humanity and in all of creation. They have, in turn, further subjected human beings to the power of sin and evil, and have increased burdensome work and barren rest.”⁴³

34. Sin’s general infection of all of humanity and the created order affects the life of individuals, groups, social orders, structures and institutions.⁴⁴ Sin is part of the human

40. Menno Simons, *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons: 1496-1561*, ed. John C. Wenger, transl. Leonard Verduin (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1966) 563, cf. 130, 948.

41. Dordrecht (1632), Articles 2–6, 63–65; Ris (1766), Articles 8–11, 86–88; Mennonite Brethren (1902), Article 2, 164–166 in Howard J. Loewen, *One Lord, One Church, One Hope, and One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith in North America: An Introduction* (Elkhart, Ind: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985).

42. *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective: Summary Statement* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1995) Art. 7, “Sin,” 31–34, 31.

43. *Ibid.*

44. “... ‘powers,’ ‘principalities,’ ‘gods of the nations,’ and ‘elemental spirits of the universe,’ though not necessarily evil, are prone to distort God’s purposes for them. They can corrupt and enslave humanity (Isa. 42:17; 45:20; Gal. 4:9; Eph. 2:1–3; 6:12; Col. 2:15). Sin is thus not only an individual matter, but involves groups, nations, and structures. Such organizations have a “spirit” that can incite persons to do evil they would not have chosen on their own. Governments, military forces, economic systems, educational or religious institutions, family systems, and structures determined by class, race, gender, or nationality are susceptible to demonic spirits. Human violence toward each other, enmity between peoples, the domi-

condition, and it affects the entire person. At the same time, “No one aspect of human beings, such as reason or sexuality or the physical body, should be singled out as the primary carrier of sinfulness.”⁴⁵ Not the flesh, not procreation, not any natural process as such is sinful; rather sin must be understood as being rooted in “knowledge”. We come to know ourselves and our transgressions (Ps 51, especially v.3) in the light of God’s revelation. Only conscious acts have the quality of obedience or disobedience, faith or sin, and it is only when we are sinning consciously and deliberately that this inborn tendency may be understood as “original sin”.⁴⁶ In most Anabaptist writings weight is placed on conscious acts of disobedience as sin. But there is also a concern for the disposition of the heart. Jesus’ warning in the Sermon on the Mount that someone who lusts after a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt 5:27-28) is often cited.

35. Two background assumptions are at work in Mennonite thinking in holding onto the tension between the fall and redemption. The first one is that we cannot escape from our responsibility before God; the second and related matter is that even after Adam’s fall God remained gracious and did not withdraw his breath from mortals. The image of God, though broken, remained in each human being. In God’s prevenient grace he used this vestige of awareness of himself to appeal to each human being to choose between a life remaining in sin and a new life in light of the forgiveness of sins in Christ.⁴⁷ It is clear from the texts referred to that the authors did not understand such awareness of God in a Pelagian sense. That is, “they did not deny the reality of sin nor did they even deny the inheritance of a tendency to sin from our first parents. But they did not accept this tendency toward sinning as inevitable fate.”⁴⁸

36. Through Christ’s resurrection and the consequent reign of the Spirit, human nature has been restored to the potential it had before the fall (2 Cor 5:16-17; Gal 6:15). The Spirit reveals Christ, who ever responds “become[s] a partaker of the divine character, the being of Jesus Christ and the power and character of the Holy Spirit, and conforms themselves to the image of Jesus Christ” (also 2 Pet 1:4).⁴⁹ That is, the image of God has been restored; the believer bears God’s image and continues to grow in the capacity to love rather than retaliate.⁵⁰ Although the inborn tendency to sin is never entirely overcome, the Christian has been set free to obey God (see Rom 8:10-13).

nation of men over women, and the adverse conditions of life and work in the world--these are all signs of sin in humanity and in all creation (Gen. 3:14-19; 4:3-16; 6:11-13; 11:1-9; Rom. 8:21).” *Confession of Faith*, “Sin,” Commentary No. 2, 32f.

45. *Confession of Faith*, “Sin,” Commentary No. 5, 33.

46. Robert Friedmann, 212f., referring to *Verantwortung*, by Pilgram Marpeck, 248ff. Marpeck’s emphasis on the power and universality of sin “saves him from any Pelagian optimism in his concept of man” in Torsten Bergsten, *Pilgram Marbeck: und seine Auseinandersetzung mit Caspar Schwenckfeld* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1958), 80.

47. One of the most succinct confessional statements on this matter is Ris, in Loewen, *One Lord, One Church, One Hope, and One God*, Articles 10-11, 87-88.

48. Richard Kauffman, “Sin” in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5, 824.

49. Dirk Philips, *The Writings of Dirk Philips: 1504-1568*, ed. Cornelius J. Dyck, William Echar. Keeney, and Alvin J. Beachy (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1992) 294.

50. Marpeck, *Writings*, 60-64, 122-127.

37. Thus, the heart of the Anabaptist understanding of salvation is that, by grace, transformation is possible, in which the “natural person” is transformed into a “spiritual person”. By that is meant that someone who is turned in upon themselves in self-love can turn outward and grow in love for God, neighbor, and enemy. Menno Simons “has the vision of a translocation from the realm of sin and evil into the kingdom of God.”⁵¹ The new birth, for Menno,

consists, verily, not in water nor in words; but it is the heavenly, living, and quickening power of God in our hearts which flows forth from God, and which by the preaching of the divine Word, if we accept it by faith, quickens, renews, pierces, and converts our hearts, so that we are changed [...] from the wicked nature of Adam to the good nature of Jesus Christ.⁵²

38. In the Anabaptist tradition the justification of the sinner changes a person’s standing before God in a forensic sense but also brings about a metamorphosis of the person in a moral sense (see Rom 7 and Rom 8; 2 Cor 3:17-18, 5:11-21; Eph 2:8-10). The promise of these passages, that the Spirit fashions us to become more and more Christ-like, appealed to the Anabaptists as well as to later generations of Mennonites seeking renewal of the church. As they understood it, true faith comes to expression in love; in fact, the goal of faith is love. The source of both faith and love is the Spirit, as portrayed in Romans 8. The church is made up of those who have come to faith (justified) and are growing in love toward God, neighbor, and enemy (being sanctified). The sanctified life is one in which believers surrender themselves to the promise of God’s provision for them. This surrender frees them to live the life Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere.⁵³ Mennonites know from their own experience that to try to live such a life in one’s own power inevitably leads to legalism. The founding leaders and later ones learned from Scripture and experience that on earth the Christian life is never perfected. We grapple with weakness and sin as long as we live. We can continue living in the spirit of Christ only by forgiveness. In that sense not only Romans 8 but also Romans 7 describes the path of discipleship.

39. Newer developments in theology have urged reflection on the dialectic framework of individual and structural sin. This shift has helped theologians to turn away from one-sided legalistic and individualistic interpretations of sin. “In sinning, we become unfaithful to the covenant with God and with God’s people, destroy right relationships, use power selfishly, do violence, and become separated from God.”⁵⁴ Violence can be expressed in direct acts as well as in unjust structures like economic or cultural discrimination. Violence is a conscious or unconscious human form of action that negates the

51. Richard E. Weingart, “The Meaning of Sin in the Theology of Menno Simons,” in *Essays in Anabaptist Theology*, ed. Wayne H. Pipkin (Elkhart, Ind.: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1994) 27.

52. *Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, 265, see also 87-113.

53. Matt 6:25-33, Phil 3:7-11. See also Berndt Hamm, “Das reformatorische Profil des täuferischen Rechtfertigungsverständnis,” in *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter*, 71 (2014), 148-160.

54. *Confession of Faith*, “Sin”, 31.

will of God. In Mennonite understanding nonviolence is a profound mark, a litmus test, of following the will of God in discipleship to Christ.

40. “Baptism,” states the earliest Anabaptist confession of faith, “shall be given to all those who have been taught repentance and the amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away, and to all who desire to walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”⁵⁵ Conversion and baptism are commonly described with language taken from the larger Christian tradition: dying and coming to life with Christ (Rom 6:1-4), incorporation into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13), receiving the Holy Spirit and the Spirit’s assurance that one is a beloved of God (Matt 3:16-17). All these elements of the believer’s conversion by the Holy Spirit are recapitulated in water baptism in the name of the Trinity. For Mennonites incorporation into Christ’s universal body happens by means of baptism into a local congregation where the covenant with Christ and fellow believers is lived out. Baptism represents both, “God’s action in delivering us from sin and death, and the action of the one who is baptized, who pledges to God to follow Christ within the context of Christ’s body, the church.”⁵⁶ It is an outward and public testimony to the inward baptism of the Spirit. Baptism enacts a believer’s renunciation of evil, repentance, forgiveness, and death to sin through grace. The church, as the agent of the Spirit, tests and affirms the candidate’s faith and brings him into the local covenant community.

41. One of the great challenges early Anabaptism faced was to explain how God’s grace embraces children. Some of them held that before the age of discernment children are not affected by Adam and Eve’s disobedience; they remain in innocence. Many Anabaptist theologians held that the Bible’s warnings against sin concerns people who have come of age. Other theologians held that Scripture insists all human beings – including children – are affected by the inherited tendency to sin, but cannot be held accountable until they have reached the age of discernment. Until that time the atoning work of Christ includes them as heirs of salvation.⁵⁷

42. To the question “Is baptism necessary for salvation?” Mennonite tradition has generally held that God’s grace begins its saving work inwardly, as described above. Salvation is a gift that begins its work in the individual as Spirit-to-spirit. In other words, people who receive God’s gift belong to him even if they are not baptized. But God’s saving work also has a corporate dimension; it takes us from the solidarity of sin to the solidarity of grace, which is the body of Christ, the church (Col 1:13). In the presence of grace and faith, inward and outward reality cannot be separated. Thus water baptism is both the testimony of the believer that God’s grace has come to her and the testimony of the Spirit through the church to the candidate that she belongs to Christ and his body. In 1 Corinthians 12 the universal body of Christ and its local expression are inseparable. The fullness of salvation is completed outwardly with the act of baptism in which the believer is initiated into the body of Christ and the local congregation.

55. Schleithem Confession of 1527, in Loewen, *One Lord, One Church, One Hope, and One God*, 79.

56. *Confession of Faith*, “Baptism,” Commentary No. 1, 47.

57. “To innocent and minor children sin is for Jesus’ sake not imputed”; *Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, 116.

At the same time God is not bound to sacramental acts like baptism in his quest for us. In the mystery of God's love there is a hidden work of Christ reaching beyond the church.

Common Perspectives and Differences

Romans 5:12 and the Issue of Original Sin

43. Recent exegetical work has helped to resolve a matter that contributed to stirring up conflict during the Reformation. At that time, the notion of "hereditary sin" was influential among Catholics and Lutherans and functioned as part of their rationale for the practice of baptizing infants. The Anabaptist movement rejected both that notion and such a practice. The concept of hereditary sin was based primarily on the inaccurate Vulgate translation of Romans 5:12: "As through one man sin has come into this world [...] in whom all have sinned (*in quo omnes peccaverunt*)."⁵⁸ The Latin phrase "in quo" is not correct. The Greek original, ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον, should be rendered "because" and not "in whom," such that in English this verse would read: "just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned."⁵⁸

44. It was incumbent upon Paul to explain how one can affirm that all human beings are sinners. He answers: Adam, in whom all are included as a corporate personality, sinned and so all humankind sinned when Adam sinned (Rom 5:16-19). But for the individual person, this sin would be only something coming from outside like a disease inherited from one's parents. To make clear that each of us is included in God's judgment, Paul adds: "because all have sinned." This is not a contradiction but it indicates that, while the power of sin is already present before one commits any sin, everybody realizes and manifests this power of sin in her own acting and behaving. Sin is a power before us, behind us, and around us. And at the same time it is what we all do in our own person over and over again.

45. In light of the correct translation of Romans 5:12, one has to give up the concept of "hereditary sin." Giving up that concept in no way weakens Paul's teaching about "original sin," but rather corrects a misunderstanding of it. Paul took great pains in Romans 2 and 3 to demonstrate that all human beings have sinned, and that the grace of Jesus' redemption is for all: "The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:22-23). Contemporary exegesis has changed our approach to the topic of original sin. Paul's teaching concerning the power of sin surrounding us concerns how this power affects the individual in his or her personal struggle with sin. Today, a way to help people understand this teaching about the pervasive power of evil is to make reference to social or structural evils, such as unjust economic systems or cultures of racial or nationalistic prejudice.

58. The *Nova Vulgata* (1979) has "eo quod" rather than "in quo." This change reinforces the reading taken up by the Trilateral Commission.

God's Reconciling Grace and Conversion

46. Catholics, Lutherans, and Mennonites agree that sin can only be overcome by grace, by the divine initiative, by the Holy Spirit. On their own, human beings do not have the ability to leave behind the hopelessness of life under the power of sin. The divine initiative has always been and remains a foundational aspect of our respective theologies of baptism. God, in his redemptive work in Christ, appeals to us to receive a new life in light of the forgiveness offered in Christ. Traditionally, regarding this saving activity, Catholics speak of human cooperation, while Lutherans speak of human passivity. Mennonites, for their part, are sensitive to the human role in coming to salvation. There has been long and seemingly endless debate on this topic with many misunderstandings. To overcome them, the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* has offered the following common affirmation concerning human dependence upon grace, with which Mennonites can also agree:

We [Catholics and Lutherans] confess together that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation. The freedom they possess in relation to persons and the things of this world is no freedom in relation to salvation, for as sinners they stand under God's judgment and are incapable of turning by themselves to God to seek deliverance, of meriting their justification before God, or of attaining salvation by their own abilities. Justification takes place solely by God's grace.⁵⁹

The *Joint Declaration* then acknowledges that different emphases in interpreting this relation of grace and its reception by human beings allow the two communities to claim a "differentiating consensus" in which the following nuances may be considered as compatible with the fundamental agreement achieved.

Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true to say: When Catholics say that persons "cooperate" in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God's justifying action, they see such personal consent as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities. According to Lutheran teaching, human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation, because as sinners they actively oppose God and his saving action. Lutherans do not deny that a person can reject the working of grace. When they emphasize that a person can only receive (*mere passive*) justification, they mean thereby to exclude any possibility of contributing to one's own justification, but do not deny that believers are fully involved personally in their faith, which is effected by God's Word.⁶⁰

Communicating Grace in Baptism

47. There is also agreement among us that the universal grace of God in Christ is communicated in the Holy Spirit to all human beings and that, among the various means of the communication of grace, baptism plays a decisive role. The Church has an important role in this. Christ instituted his community that it might preach the gospel,

59. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, § 19.

60. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, §§ 19-21.

baptize and make disciples of all nations (see Matthew 28:19-20). But we see differences in defining the role of baptism and in identifying the addressees to whom the grace of baptism should be offered. Catholics, Lutherans and Mennonites agree that the Holy Spirit acts through baptism, communicating grace to people. It is instituted by Jesus himself. Lutherans and Catholics, following Augustine, consider the sacrament a “visible word.” While Mennonites stress that the Holy Spirit acts internally, they also emphasize that the Holy Spirit uses the external proclamation of the Word of God and the celebration of baptism as necessary parts of that communication.

48. As Mennonites understand it, there are three actors in baptism: God the Holy Spirit, the church, and the candidate. Water baptism is the recapitulation and completion of Spirit baptism.⁶¹ The water set aside for baptism is a sign of the Spirit’s immediate presence and activity regenerating the person. This is one aspect of what Jesus means when he says, “No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit” (Jn 3:5). The second actor in baptism is the church, in the person of the minister and the gathered congregation. Moved by the Spirit their act of baptizing the candidate confirms that she is “beloved” of God (Mk 1:11), that she is a child of God (Rom 8:15-16). In the act of baptism the believer witnesses to the truth that God in Christ has come into his life and saved him. In submitting to baptism the believer enacts his unequivocal, public ‘yes’ to God’s gift of grace in Christ, somewhat like a bride and groom give each other their unreserved yes in a wedding. In a similar way the candidate pledges herself to Christ and the body of Christ. The pronouncement of the Trinitarian formula (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) seals this “yes” of the church and the believer. Since infants are not able to express these inner processes, they cannot be baptized, according to the Mennonite understanding.

49. Catholics and Lutherans have been convinced that God’s grace should be offered also to infants since they share in the sin of Adam. Anabaptists, too, think that infants need grace since they also suffer of the consequences of Adam’s sin, but they affirm that all infants participate in the reconciling grace of Christ even without baptism. Catholic and Lutheran doctrines call for the baptism of infants and even state that baptism is needed for their salvation, although they acknowledge the challenge of seeing how that teaching and practice relates to God’s will that all be saved (see 1 Tim 2:4). Humbly admitting that full comprehension of the inscrutable ways of the Lord cannot be fully grasped by us, one can simply entrust the unbaptized to the mercy of God. With respect to the necessity of infant baptism for salvation, the relationship between Catholics and Lutherans, on one hand, and Mennonites, on the other, has changed. None of them would confine salvation to those who are baptized. Since Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples of all nations and baptize them, one can be sure that that baptism actualizes the salvation intended by God. God may have other ways to bring infants to salvation than baptism, even though this is still seen as the most appropriate way for their children by faithful Catholics and Lutherans.

61. “Short Confession [1610]”, in *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist tradition, 1527-1660*, ed. Karl Koop, transl. Cornelius J. Dyck (Kitchener, Ont., Pandora Press, 2006), 135-156; “Confession of Jen Cents (1630)”, in *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition, 1527-1660*, 267-284.

Transformation and Continuing Need for Forgiveness

50. All three communions agree that baptism received in faith (or later appropriated in faith) enacts the forgiveness of sins and leads to a transformation of the baptized person (Acts 2:38; 22:16). For Catholics, in baptism the communion with God is restored through the gift of grace that brings with it faith, love for God, and hope; only remnants of original sin or the inclination to sin (concupiscence) remain. Thus the person is justified through baptism. Something similar occurs when, without losing the sacramental character of baptism, one loses justifying grace through mortal sin and through the sacrament of reconciliation (or confession) his or her communion with God is restored again.⁶² Sin ultimately finds its source in the heart, but Catholics would only attribute sinfulness to an activity (thought, word, deed) or omission that is freely chosen.

51. Mennonite teaching is similar to the Catholic understanding, emphasizing the deep change that comes through regeneration. Only a tendency to sin remains. A more common way for Mennonites to say this is that sanctification is never complete as long as we live. Because of this, the temptation to commit sin remains. There is growth in grace but the struggle between the spirit and the flesh in the faithful remains throughout their lives (Gal 5:16-26). In this sense one can say that sin has its roots in the heart. But identifying an action as sinful requires that the person freely choose that action; sin can be spoken of properly only when human freedom is engaged.

52. Faithful Lutherans live in precisely the same situation as described above in the perspective of Catholics and Mennonites, but they understand it differently. While Catholics and Mennonites focus their concept of sin on acts of sin, for Luther, sin has its central place in the hearts of the people.

53. In the *Joint Declaration*, Catholics and Lutherans have characterized the situation of the baptized person with respect to sin in the following way:

We confess together that in baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies and truly renews the person. But the justified must all through life constantly look to God's unconditional justifying grace. They also are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (see Rom 6:12-14) and are not exempt from a life-long struggle against the contradiction to God within the selfish desires of the old Adam (see Gal 5:16; Rom 7:7-10). The justified also must ask God daily for forgiveness as in the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:12; 1 Jn 1:9), are ever again called to conversion and penance, and are ever again granted forgiveness.⁶³

In order to describe the situation of the justified with respect to "concupiscence" or the tendency to sin which remains after justification, the *Joint Declaration* coined the phrase

62. See: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), § 1272, "Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (character) of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation. Given once for all, Baptism cannot be repeated." See also, CCC, § 1273-74.

63. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, § 28.

“contradiction to God within the selfish desires,” which allows for a common description and avoids the controversial use of the word “sin”. But the lifelong struggle with sin should be understood as the lifelong striving for holiness.

54. All three communities find something of this positive dimension reflected in Ephesians 2:8-10: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

CHAPTER TWO

BAPTISM: COMMUNICATING GRACE AND FAITH

55. The previous chapter of our report explored the convergences and divergences in our respective understandings of the relation between baptism, sin and salvation. Now we will look at the celebration of baptism. This requires, firstly, situating baptism within the life-long process of being a Christian, and secondly, describing the understanding and practice of baptism, its inseparability from saving faith, and its role in uniting the baptized with other Christians by incorporation into the Church. Finally, we address the tensions between our theology and our praxis of baptism.

The Place of Baptism in the Lifelong Process of Being a Christian

56. All three of our communities understand the celebration of baptism as one moment within a lifelong process that has various stages and dimensions. The bilateral report *Healing Memories* noted that “baptism is an event at a certain moment in a person’s life, but receiving baptism and living it is the lifelong task of a Christian. [...] Both Mennonites and Lutherans agree that baptism cannot be seen as an isolated event.”⁶⁴ Catholics too share this view. In *Called Together to be Peacemakers*, they state that baptism is the beginning and basis of the whole Christian life.⁶⁵

57. All three of our churches recognize the primacy of the loving initiative of God’s grace in this process. When the baptism of an adult is celebrated – which is possible in all three of our communities – a number of stages usually precede baptism. A person seeking baptism does so because he or she is attracted to divine love by grace and moved to conversion. This call to repentance is already seen in the ministry of Jesus’ precursor, John the Baptist (see Matt 3:2; Mk 1:4; Lk 3:2-3) and in the inauguration of the kingdom of God by Jesus himself (see Matt 4:17; Mk 1:15). When an adult requests baptism, he begins a process of formation and catechesis with the purpose of growing in faith and putting into practice the desire to follow Jesus and embrace a new identity. The community is involved in this formation and in discerning the candidate’s readiness for baptism. The actual event of baptism is celebrated in worship and begins a lifelong process of daily appropriation by repenting for sin, striving to live a holy life,

64. *Healing Memories*, 87-89; the first of these statements is from a Lutheran section of the report, while the second shows Mennonite agreement with it.

65. See *Called Together to be Peacemakers*, § 115.

participating actively in the life of the Church both internally and in the external mission of witnessing to the gospel and inviting others to see the joy of life in Christ and to embrace it by becoming Christians too. This lifelong process of Christian discipleship aims toward its ultimate fulfillment in the fullness of eternal life promised and accomplished by Jesus' victory over sin and death. All of these convictions are held in common by our three communities.

58. There are also differences in understanding the various stages and dimensions of discipleship by our respective communities. Mennonites, for example, hold that Jesus' own words clearly indicate that preaching and repentance precede baptism and that baptism with water is seen as an expression of the covenant relationship between God, the newly baptized individual and the Church. Their tradition has interpreted 1 Jn 5:6-12 as pointing to recognition, already in the early Christian community, of three distinct expressions of baptism: baptism of the Spirit, water baptism and baptism of blood. They write:

Water baptism is an outward sign of a prior transformation in the believer by which the Holy Spirit has moved the individual to repentance of sin and offered assurance of God's mercy and grace. The covenant of water baptism witnesses to this baptism of the Spirit and serves as a public affirmation that the believer is prepared to give and receive counsel and admonition within the community of believers. Water baptism also testifies publicly to a readiness to receive a baptism in blood.⁶⁶

These words suggest that baptism with water is seen by Mennonites as an "outward sign" which witnesses to baptism in the Spirit and which testifies to the willingness, in fidelity to the covenant, to undergo the shedding of one's blood.

59. For their part, Lutherans note that

Baptism is essentially an act of God, performed through human actions and words. [...] Faith does not create what a person believes, but in the process of hearing and seeing, perceiving and receiving, faith trusts in what is given to the person: God himself in his word of promise, visibly and audibly extended to the baptized in baptism. [...] ... since baptism is the visible word of God's promise to accept a person into communion with him as his child and to forgive all the sin of the baptized, trusting in this promise is the first and basic response to baptism.⁶⁷

Whatever appears to contradict this communion will become a reason for mourning and repentance.

60. In their dialogue with Mennonites, Catholics have summarized their vision of baptism as follows:

Baptism for Catholics is above all the sacrament of that faith by which, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we respond to the Gospel of Christ.

66. *Healing Memories*, 85.

67. *Healing Memories*, 87.

Through baptism one is incorporated into the Church and is built up in the Spirit into a house where God lives. [...] Catholic teaching regarding baptism may be put in six points: 1) baptism is the beginning of the Christian life and the door to other sacraments; 2) it is the basis of the whole Christian life; 3) the principle effects of baptism are purification and new birth; 4) through baptism we become Christ's members and are incorporated into his Church and made sharers in its mission; 5) confirmation that completes baptism deepens the baptismal identity and strengthens us for service; and 6) lastly, as true witnesses of Christ the confirmed are more strictly obligated to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.⁶⁸

61. Thus, there is much agreement between our three communities about the fact that the beginning and unfolding of Christian discipleship entails a process with various stages and dimensions. Our divergences concern the relationship of these various elements, especially in our contrasting views and practices regarding the baptism of infants. Deeply rooted in Mennonite origins, tradition and identity is the conviction that personal profession of faith by the recipient on the occasion of baptism is the dominant model witnessed to in the New Testament and even suggested by Jesus' own words when he commissions the disciples to baptize in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. Therefore, baptism is only possible for those who are capable of repenting and accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior in faith. In contrast, Lutherans and Catholics both believe that the baptism of infants is not only possible but required by what the New Testament says about the universal offer of grace to all, including infants, and the need for all human beings, because of their solidarity in the sin of Adam, to receive baptism, which places them in solidarity with the new Adam, Jesus Christ (see Rom 5: 12-18). The benefits associated with baptism – such as, new life in Christ (see Rom 6: 3-4; Col 2: 12-13), the gifts of the Holy Spirit (see Eph 4:4-7; 1 Cor 12:4-13) and the promise of eternal life (see John 3:5) – begin to have an immediate effect on the one who is baptized and should not be denied to children.⁶⁹

62. Nevertheless, all three churches embrace the teaching of the New Testament that human beings are sinners and stand in need of redemption. Through grace by faith in the saving action of Jesus Christ, human beings make the passage from the state of sinfulness to that of children of the Father, endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

68. *Called to be Peacemakers*, § 115.

69. The Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, in its report entitled *Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism*, paragraph 47, agreed that “biblical descriptions of the pattern of initiation normally refer to adults.” It went on to add: “For some churches the Scriptures only authorize the baptizing of those who make a personal act of conversion and a personal confession of faith. For others the Scriptures provide no compelling reason for refusing baptism to children not yet capable of such personal decisions, when they are presented by those who are responsible for them and are entrusted by them to the Church for their formation and instruction. Furthermore, descriptions in *Acts* of the baptism of whole households must be taken carefully into account.” *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Information Service* 117 (2004), 194; text available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/information_service/pdf/information_service_117_en.pdf [accessed 1 December, 2018].

All three communities forcefully affirm the gratuity and primacy of God's grace in initiating and fostering this change. All three also affirm the necessity of a human response of faith, made possible by grace, to this divine initiative. Mennonites are convinced that, according to Scripture, a personal response is a precondition for the reception of baptism. Infants are not yet capable of such a response, but with proper care and formation, there is good hope that the Holy Spirit will engender it when they have grown to a stage of human development that they do become capable. Both Lutherans and Catholics agree with Mennonites that the Holy Spirit makes possible a personal response of faith in individual human beings and that such a personal confession and commitment is absolutely necessary for genuine discipleship. Without it, baptism cannot bear the fruit it was instituted by Christ to produce. At the same time, they believe that the practice of infant baptism is in no way excluded by the words of Scripture and even that the absolute gratuity of God's saving action in Christ and the Spirit is more clearly expressed by the baptism of those who are too young to speak for themselves. The divine life of grace already begins to flow in the newly baptized which, with proper guidance and formation, will blossom into a full personal profession of faith and commitment to a life of discipleship. In their Christian understanding of divine-human relations, all three communities affirm both the primacy of the divine initiative of grace and the necessity of a personal response of faith. They also affirm that Christian discipleship is a life-long process of which baptism constitutes a fundamental and originating moment for the believer's relation to God and to the Church. A fundamental question with regard to this life-long process resides in the timing of the celebration of baptism. Agreement that Christian discipleship is a life-long process and that baptism is one of the important events within this process would seem to place the traditional controversy over the ordering of the various elements involved in becoming a Christian in a new framework.

The Celebration of Baptism

63. All three of our communities agree that Jesus Christ himself is at the origin of our celebration of baptism. He instituted and commanded the practice of baptizing new members of the community, saying "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19). The baptismal rite which developed in response to this command found a relatively stable format rather early in Christian history and included elements such as a proclamation of the Word of God, the renunciation of sin, and the public profession of faith and baptism with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each year a valuable component of our trilateral conversation was the presentation by one of our communities of its way of celebrating baptism.⁷⁰ In what follows, some of the distinctive emphases of each community are presented.

70. A publication including various rites of baptism with commentaries and including examples from the Catholic, Mennonite and Lutheran traditions: *Baptism Today. Understanding, Practice and Ecumenical Implications*, ed. Thomas Best, Faith and Order 207 (Geneva/Collegeville Minn.: WCC Publications/Liturgical Press) 2008; text available at <https://archive.org/details/wccfops2.214>.

64. The Catholic presentation of the celebration of baptism listed the following elements⁷¹: tracing the sign of the cross on the forehead of the person to be baptized; the proclamation of the Word of God enlightening the candidate and the assembly and eliciting the response of faith; exorcisms signifying the liberation of the person from sin and the power of evil; anointing with oil and explicit renunciation of evil; a prayer invoking the Holy Spirit over the water to be used in the rite; the dialogical profession of the articles of faith as contained in the creed; the triple immersion or pouring of water three times over the head of the person to be baptized with the pronouncement of the Trinitarian formula during this immersion or pouring; the anointing with chrism to reflect that the newly baptized is a member of the priestly, prophetic and royal people of God; the clothing with a white garment to symbolize putting on Christ; the bestowal of a candle lit from the candle used during the Easter Vigil to symbolize being enlightened by Christ who is the light of the world; touching the ears and mouth during the “*Ephphetha*” prayer⁷² asking for the grace to hear and proclaim the word of God, the prayer of the Our Father and the conclusion with a solemn blessing.

65. Not all of these elements are of equal importance; profession of faith and baptism with water in the Trinitarian formula enjoy pride of place. When the newly baptized is an adult, the conferral of the sacrament of confirmation and the reception of the Eucharist also form essential parts of the celebration. This reflects the Catholic understanding of baptism as only one of the three “sacraments of initiation,” along with confirmation and the Eucharist. The godparents, with the aid of the entire Christian community, accompany the newly baptized on the path of discipleship. In the baptism of an infant, the role of the parents and godparents has the importance of helping the child personally, under the influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit, to reject evil, confess faith in Christ and commit him- or herself to a life of active Christian discipleship in the Church. In the Latin rite of the Catholic Church, the postponement of reception of the Eucharist and of confirmation serves the function of acknowledging the gradual appropriation of the faith and of the effects of Christian initiation begun with baptism as an infant. Every Sunday Catholics renew their profession of faith with the recitation of the Creed and every year during the celebration of Easter, they liturgically renew their baptismal faith commitment.

66. The explanation of the Lutheran rite of baptism points out that Luther himself preserved various elements of the celebration of baptism inherited from the tradition.

71. It should be noted that there are two separate (but similar) groups of rites for the Sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic Church: the Rite of Baptism for one Child [or children], and the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). The term “child” refers to an infant or young child of before age of reason (usually seven). What follows is a list of the elements similar to both rites even though some differences may not be specified. For example, in the case of a child under the age of reason, the “explicit renunciation of evil” is pronounced by parents and godparents.

72. The following words constitute the “*Ephphetha*” prayer (also known as *the Prayer Over Ears and Mouth*): “The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the mute speak. May He soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth, to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father. Amen.”

Distinctive modifications included removing some details, such as the blessing of the font, and over time, the addition of Luther's *Flood Prayer*. This prayer related baptism to the cleansing of the world in the flood at the time of Noah and to the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery by means of the exodus through the Red Sea. The vows spoken by the godparents and the reading of Mark 10:13-16 (where Jesus tells the disciples to let the little children come to him) clearly witnessed to the Lutheran acceptance of infant baptism. The essential elements of Lutheran baptismal liturgies were and continue to be: a prayer modeled on Luther's *Flood Prayer*, a reading from the Gospels (usually Mark 10 and/or Matthew 28), the Lord's Prayer, the renunciation of the devil and/or evil, an emphasis on the forgiveness of sin, the Creed (often in question-and-answer form), the vows of parents and/or godparents, the use of water, and the triune name. These elements show the Lutheran conviction that by baptism the baptized person is introduced into the body of Christ, while the local parish in which baptism takes place is called to support and strengthen the baptized in their lives of faith. Lutherans especially emphasize the agency of God in the celebration of baptism. It is not the water which saves but the Word of God which, when in addition to the water, creates the sacrament.⁷³ Faith is the trusting response to God's promise to save. Thus Luther can write: "[it] is not baptism that justifies or benefits anyone, but it is faith in the word of promise to which baptism is added. This faith justifies, and fulfills that which baptism signifies. For faith is the submersion of the old man and the emerging of the new (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10)."⁷⁴

67. Mennonite members of the dialogue noted that there are common themes but no single form of baptism in their tradition. A variety of models and liturgical elements of baptism can be found, but a common element to all of them is the exclusive practice of "believers' baptism." A baptismal service might be preceded by a believer's request to be baptized or upon the pastor's announcement of a baptismal service, after which baptismal classes are arranged, during which instruction in the faith is provided by the congregation. The names of those requesting baptism are made known to the whole congregation or to the church council, providing an opportunity for church members to approve the desire of the candidate or ask the person to postpone baptism for the time being. A recent Mennonite minister's manual points out that

The request for baptism must arise out of a personal confession of sin, the experience of grace and forgiveness (which sometimes comes in a crisis event and sometimes gradually) and a commitment to Jesus Christ and the congregation. It is of utmost importance that the nature of God's initiative and our response be made clear to baptismal candidates.⁷⁵

Prior to baptism, the individual candidate composes and presents to the congregation or church council a personal profession of faith, including elements such as the repentance of sin, a confession of faith in Christ and commitment to follow him as a respon-

73. In Luther's *Large Catechism*, concerning baptism, as printed in Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 458, and quoting Augustine, *Tractate* 80 on John 15:3.

74. *Luther's Works*, 36:66.

75. *Minister's Manual, Mennonite Church USA/Canada*, ed. John D. Rempel (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1998), 40.

sible member of the baptizing congregation. The congregation is seen as the manifestation of the Church universal, the body of Christ. The worship service in which a candidate is baptized is celebrated by the whole congregation and includes readings from the Bible, typical readings being Matthew 28 (the great commission), Romans 6 (being buried and resurrected with Christ), 1 Peter 3 (the response of a good conscience toward God) or 2 Corinthians 5 (being a new creation, reconciled with God and with one another). The proclamation of the Word is followed by a sermon expounding the meaning of baptism. The person is baptized with water, usually by the pastor or by another member of the congregation mandated for this role, who pronounces the Trinitarian formula “in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” A blessing, often with the laying on of hands, the presentation of a verse from the Bible and a baptismal certificate and the response of the congregation, usually including the praying of the “Our Father,” concludes the celebration. Sometimes the service continues with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, as a welcoming and incorporating act of the new members into the table-fellowship.

68. All three churches agree that baptism cannot be repeated. Catholics consider baptism, together with confirmation and ordination, as a sacrament which imparts a permanent “character” on its recipient. However, in Catholic teaching there is a provision for when there is reasonable doubt about the validity of a particular baptism, a person may be baptized “conditionally.” For Catholics, it is Christ who baptizes (see CCC 59); a human being cannot nullify the action of Christ by “re-baptizing” another. Thus, from a theological perspective, re-baptism has no reality but stands in opposition to the action of Christ. For Lutherans, to “re-baptize” would amount to distrust in God’s promise that he has accepted the baptized into communion with him which would make God a liar and not trustworthy. This dialogue has helped Mennonites understand the profound reality that is at stake for Catholics and Lutherans when Mennonites and other credo-baptists baptize someone already baptized by the other churches. From their own vantage point Mennonites also see baptism as a definitive step of handing over one’s life to God, a definitive response to God’s grace which is therefore not to be repeated. If a Mennonite congregation does administer baptism to those who wish to join their community but who had received baptism as infants in another community, they do not consider it to be a “re-baptism,” since they understand baptism as being possible only on the personal profession of faith.⁷⁶

Sacrament and/or Ordinance

69. The question of the non-repeatability of baptism provides occasion to address the fact that, for all three communities, it is correct to say that “something happens” in the celebration of the rite of baptism. Lutherans, Mennonites and Catholics agree that there are three actors engaged in the liturgy of baptism – God, the individual and the community – and that the action of God has priority in the celebration. At the same time, different nuances can be detected in how each church understands what happens. Lu-

76. On this practice, *Healing Memories*, 86, noted that “...member congregations in the Mennonite World Conference are not all of one mind regarding the baptism of new members who were previously baptized as infants in other traditions.”

therans stress the efficacy of baptism as based upon God's promise, given through the sacrament. They write: "Baptism is essentially an act of God performed through human actions and words. [...] [It] is not a work that we offer to God, but one in which God, through a minister who functions in his place, baptizes us, and offers and presents the forgiveness of sins according to the promise [Mark 16:16], «The one who believes and is baptized will be saved»."⁷⁷ For their part, Mennonites have stated that "baptism is understood not only as a sign that points beyond the baptismal ritual to its historic and spiritual significance, but that in and through baptism the individual and the community of faith undergo effectual change." Concerning this change, they add: "While there is the recognition in Mennonite theology and in Mennonite confessions that 'something happens' in the very act of baptism, baptismal transformation in and through the ritual is conceivable only if and when it is verified in the faith and life of the individual undergoing baptism and of the baptizing community."⁷⁸ Catholics understand baptism, along with the other sacraments as actions of Christ himself:

By His power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes (see Augustine, *In Ioannem* VI,1,7). [...] In the liturgy, the sanctification of the man is signified by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which corresponds with each of these signs; in the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members.⁷⁹

All three thus emphasize the activity of God in speaking of what might be called the "objective" occurrence which takes place in baptism, though Mennonites explicitly mention that the verification of this occurrence is to be sought in the evidence which can be seen in the faith and life of the baptized.

70. A further paragraph from *Called Together to be Peacemakers* provides a succinct description of the convergence and the divergence between the Mennonite and Catholic understandings of the efficacy of baptism:

Both Mennonites and Catholics view sacraments and ordinances as outward signs instituted by Christ, but we have differing understandings of the power of signs. For Mennonites, ordinances as signs point to the salvific work of Christ and invite participation in the life of Christ. For Catholics, in addition to participating in the life of Christ, signs also communicate to those who receive them, the grace proper to each sacrament.⁸⁰

77. *Healing Memories*, 87, quoting from Melancthon's *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Art. XXIV, 18.

78. *Called Together to be Peacemakers*, § 123.

79. *Sacrosanctum concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, December 4, 1963, § 7; text available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html [accessed 1 December, 2018].

80. *Called Together to be Peacemakers*, § 135.

Here one notices three verbs used to describe what happens in “sacraments or ordinances” which are signs instituted by Christ: they “point to” Christ’s salvific work, they “invite” participation in the life of Christ and they “communicate” grace.⁸¹

71. The appearance of the words “sacrament” and “ordinance” in the previous quotation invites the following common reflections. While over time some have claimed that these two terms suggest two different conceptions of the special rites of the church, in our discussions it has become clear that significant points of agreement are in no way weakened by the fact that Mennonites commonly refer to baptism as an ordinance, while Lutherans and Catholics speak of it as a sacrament. We fully agree that baptism was instituted by Christ and that we celebrate it in obedience to his command. We further agree that something significant occurs during its celebration, although we understand that occurrence in different ways. Mennonites stress that baptism expresses the change which occurs in the person who has come to repentance, while Lutherans and Catholics stress the instrumental nature of the sacrament in that it achieves what the outward sign symbolizes. While this difference is important and should not be overlooked, nevertheless all three communities agree that a tremendous change in life occurs when, in baptism, the person baptized becomes a member of the church which is the body of Christ. We all acknowledge that grace is truly present, strengthened, and brought to greater completion in baptism.⁸²

Baptism and Faith

72. All three churches agree that baptism and faith are intimately and inseparably related. Jesus’ final message to the apostles in the Gospel of Mark – “he who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk 16:16) – link the two together and indicate that together they impart the gift of salvation. The faith of the individual believer is necessary for the reception of this gift of salvation and leads to a life of committed Christian discipleship, following the way that Jesus outlines in the gospel.

81. This quote suggests that Catholics but not Mennonites accept the third verb: “communicate.” Our discussions suggest that some within the Mennonite family could accept the notion that baptism communicates grace. Meanwhile, it would seem that Catholics and Lutherans share the same viewpoint on this issue.

82. On this issue, the Faith and Order study text, *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*, § 30, states: “Most traditions, whether they use the term ‘sacrament’ or ‘ordinance,’ affirm that these events are both *instrumental* (in that God uses them to bring about a new reality) and *expressive* (of an already existing reality). Some traditions emphasize the instrumental dimension ... Others emphasize the expressive dimension.” *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*, Faith and Order Paper 210 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2011); text available at <https://archive.org/details/wccfops2.217> [accessed 1 December, 2018]; Something similar is found in *Eccelesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism*, the report of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, § 24: “Most would affirm of ordinances / sacraments both that they are expressive of divine realities, representing that which is already true, and also that they are instrumental in that God uses them to bring about a new reality. The two approaches represent different starting points in considering the interdependence of faith as an ongoing process and faith as a decisive event.”

73. Nevertheless, perhaps the most obvious contrast between our communities concerning baptism is the way in which we conceive the relation of baptism to faith and the consequence that this has for determining who may be baptized. The first theme listed in the Mennonite understanding of baptism from their dialogue with Lutherans reads as follows: “Proclamation of the gospel, repentance, confession of faith in Jesus Christ, and a public commitment to a life of discipleship must precede water baptism.”⁸³ They conclude that, since small children do not sin and are not yet capable of that ability to understand which would allow them to profess an “owned faith,” they should not be baptized. In their view, no child is lost; they are saved without baptism. In the *Brotherly Union of Schleitheim* of 1527, the Anabaptist forebears of today’s Mennonites called infant baptism an “abomination.” At roughly the same time, Article IX of the Lutheran *Augsburg Confession* countered the Anabaptist view by stating that, since the grace of God is bestowed in baptism, baptism is necessary for salvation; therefore, children should be baptized.⁸⁴ “Infants can and should be baptized since the Great Commission sends Christians to ‘all’ people and Jesus’ blessing of the children includes the statement that children can participate in the kingdom of Heaven (Mark 10:13-16).”⁸⁵ The Catholic view is similar to that of the Lutherans: “Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God to which all men are called. [...] The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.”⁸⁶ This careful wording avoids drawing the conclusion that unbaptized children cannot be saved.

74. For Lutherans and Catholics, this does not mean that baptism is unrelated to faith.

Luther’s strong emphasis on what God does in baptism does not mean that faith is not also important. [...] ... faith itself is indispensable for baptism. “Faith alone makes the person worthy to receive the saving, divine water profitably. Because such blessings are offered and promised in the words that accompany the water, they cannot be received unless we believe them from the heart. Without faith baptism is of no use, although in itself it is an infinite, divine treasure.”⁸⁷

Regarding infants, Jesus’ statement that only those who receive it as little children inherit the kingdom of God (Mark 10:15),

[S]hows that infants can have faith, that is, experience God’s assurance (trust). When infants are baptized, they are not baptized simply with reference to the faith

83. *Healing Memories*, 85.

84. These two documents are quoted in *Healing Memories*, 84-85.

85. *Healing Memories*, 88.

86. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1250. In 1547, the Catholic bishops at the Council of Trent rejected the opinion that one should not be baptized before reaching the age of discernment and being capable of a personal act of faith; Heinrich Denzinger (ed.), *Enchiridion symbolorum*, ed. Adolf Schönmetzer (Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder, 1967) §1626.

87. *Healing Memories*, 87; the words within quotation marks are from the *Large Catechism*, “Baptism,” 29, Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 460.

of parents and godparents. Instead, parents and godparents pray to God to give and nurture the faith of the newly baptized. This faith must grow as they grow; it will need proclamation of the gospel, catechesis, and Christian life in community.⁸⁸

For their part, Catholics affirm that, “Baptism is the sacrament of faith, but faith needs the community of believers. It is only within the faith of the Church that each of the faithful can believe. The faith required for baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop.”⁸⁹ Baptism is the beginning of a new life in which the faith of each believer, whether baptized as an infant, child or adult, must grow, with the assistance of the whole community. As noted above, the fact that development after baptism is needed may be seen as the reason for delaying the other sacraments of initiation – confirmation and Eucharist – until one is old enough to embrace the further maturing of ecclesial membership which those sacraments make possible. Of course, the religious upbringing of children is very important to Mennonites and a significant portion of the membership of their churches is comprised of those who were raised in Mennonite families. The conviction which distinguishes their baptismal theology from that of Lutherans and Catholics on this question has been perhaps most succinctly described as follows, “In the Mennonite churches, the practice of making a profession of faith on behalf of a person being baptized who does not at the moment of baptism realize the basic meaning and implications of his or her baptism, is not acceptable.”⁹⁰

75. These differences need to be understood within the context of the fact that all three of our communities are convinced that the faith of the individual is a sharing in the faith of the whole Church. All acknowledge that the faith which is shared at the moment of baptism must be nurtured and matured with the help of the community through catechesis, bible study, fraternal correction and encouragement. All hold that the ecclesial communion of the Body of Christ into which one is incorporated at baptism provides the principal environment for life-long growth, nourished by the proclamation of and reflection upon the Word of God, by the celebration of the Lord’s Supper / Eucharist and other rites or sacraments, by the pastoral care provided within the community, and by the ongoing engagement of believers in the activities of worship, witness and service. The faith of the Church and of each individual believer impels those who are baptized to participate in Christ’s mission in and for the salvation of humankind. To these commonly held convictions about the relation of the faith of the individual to the faith of the community as a whole must be added our confidence that those who, through no fault of their own, remain unbaptized are not to be considered as excluded from the inscrutable ways of the loving mercy of God (see Rom 11:33),

88. *Healing Memories*, 88. This verse provides a good example, pertinent to the theme of our report, about how a particular Scriptural passage may lead to different and even conflicting interpretations. Mark 10:15 – “whoever will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it” – especially when linked to the previous verse Mark 10:14 – “let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” – while for Lutherans encourage the baptism of infants, for Mennonites provide clear evidence that they do not need to be baptized.

89. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 1253. See also *Called Together to be Peacemakers*, § 115.

90. *Called Together to be Peacemakers*, § 137.

who desires all to be saved (see 1 Tim 2:4). Together these shared views place our inherited differences concerning the relation between baptism and faith into a new framework. They invite reflection about the relation between baptism and membership in the community of the Church, which is the theme of the next section of this chapter.

Baptism and Community

76. For all of our churches, baptism is intimately related to entering the Christian community and, therefore, also to our understanding of the Church. The Mennonite summary of basic convictions about baptism in *Healing Memories* includes the following ecclesiological affirmations:

Baptism marks the incorporation of the believer into the Church of Christ through integration into a local church (i.e., a congregation). Even though the faith of the believer cannot ultimately be judged by another person, the congregation must affirm the request of a person who desires to be baptized by discerning signs of conversion, faith, and commitment to a life in discipleship. Baptism upon confession of faith allows baptism to be voluntary instead of involuntary; it safeguards the freedom of the individual conscience.⁹¹

Such an understanding of baptism emphasizes the nature of the Church as a voluntary community. It reflects the way that baptism is often presented in the Acts of the Apostles, in such passages, for example, as the baptism of the three thousand on Pentecost (Acts 2:37-41) or of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-38). This attention to the freedom of requesting baptism and of entering the Church of Christ is not intended to obscure the primacy of the divine activity in the work of salvation. When the individual is mature enough to understand her need for repentance and is moved to profess faith in Jesus and commit herself to a life of discipleship, it is always the grace of God that makes such actions by the individual possible. Lutherans and Catholics, while not denying the importance of a personal confession of faith which is freely embraced, nevertheless express their understanding of the relation of baptism to the Church in ways that emphasize the fact that the newly baptized belongs to the communion which is the Church, “Baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit leads us into communion with the triune God and into sharing in his blessings and thus also knits believers together into a communion.”⁹² One of the principal obligations and responsibilities of the members of the community is to offer formation in Christian life and teaching,

91. *Healing Memories*, 86. It is important to add here that the apparent identification of the “local church” with “a congregation” in this passage presenting the Mennonite vision of baptism should not be understood as if the strong emphasis upon the congregation within Mennonite thought and structure does not allow them to see baptism as entrance into that larger reality which Scripture speaks of as the Body of Christ. Furthermore, for other Christians “local church” may have a meaning other than that of a congregation. For example, within Catholic Church, the “local church” is most often correlated with what its canon law calls a “particular church,” which is a diocese under the guidance of a bishop.

92. *Church and Justification*, Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, (1993), § 68. Text in Jeffrey Gros FSC, Harding Meyer, William G. Rusch (eds), *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations at World Level 1982-1998*, Faith and Order Paper 187 (Geneva: WCC Publications/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 484–565; text available at <https://archive.org/details/wccfops2.194/page/484> [accessed 1 December, 2018].

not only to its younger or more recent members, but in a way that continues throughout life. Furthermore, Catholic teaching has applied this relation between baptism and communion in Christ to the recognition of a degree of unity already existing between members of our currently divided Christian communities: “Baptism, therefore, constitutes a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been reborn by means of it.”⁹³

77. These passages place emphasis upon the fact that baptism establishes a relationship of communion with the Triune God and with all those who make up the Christian community, which would include the entire communion of saints that is mentioned in the Apostles’ Creed. All three traditions understand the Church as the people of God, the body of Christ and the temple or community of the Holy Spirit. The Lutheran-Catholic statement *Church and Justification* formulates this Trinitarian identity of the church precisely in relation to baptism:

Baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19) leads us into communion with the triune God and into sharing in his blessings and thus also knits believers together into a communion. Baptism is calling and election by God and makes us God’s possession: thus also creating the community of those who are called and chosen, “God’s own people” (1 Pet 2:9). In baptism we are baptized into Christ’s body, partaking of his death and resurrection, and putting on Christ: consequently the baptized also constitute “one body ... one with another” (Rom 12:4f.) and are one communion in which creaturely and social divisions no longer count for anything (see Gal 3:26-28). The baptized receive the Holy Spirit: they are thus also bound together into one communion “in the one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:21f; Eph 4:3f.).⁹⁴

Mennonites expressed their understanding of the ecclesial dimension of baptism in the report *Called to be Peacemakers*:

The baptismal commitment to faith and faithfulness is not an individualistic action, as baptism and church membership are inseparable. The person is “baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13), the body of Christ, the church. The baptismal candidate’s affirmation of faith is an affirmation of the faith of the church, and an affirmation made in the context of the community of believers to which the baptized person is joined as a responsible member. The new church member declares a willingness to give and receive care and counsel and to participate in the church’s life and mission. The individual relates to the trinitarian God in a deeply personal way, and also together in and with the community of believers where grace is experienced and faith is affirmed in and with the people of God.⁹⁵

Thus, all three churches relate baptism to the Church: it is a public witness to the faith of the Church and the occasion for the incorporation of new believers into Christ and into the Church. The fundamental difference seems to be succinctly expressed in the Mennonite insistence that “church membership entails a free and voluntary act.”⁹⁶ Lu-

93. *Unitatis redintegratio*, § 22.

94. *Church and Justification*, § 68.

95. *Called to be Peacemakers*, § 122.

96. *Called to be Peacemakers*, § 90.

therans and Catholics do not deny the need for personal response and commitment on the part of the baptized but, in light of their conviction that the church is a communion, they believe that such response and commitment may, in the case of infants, be subsequent to the moment of baptism and be an effect of the grace of that sacrament.

78. There are many other aspects of the overall ecclesiology of each of our churches. Our current trilateral conversation has focused on baptism and, therefore, it has considered only the question of the relation of baptism to the specific ecclesiological issue of entrance into the body of Christ, the Church. We all agree both that those who are baptized are called to committed participation in the life of the Church and that the faith of the individual is formed and matured within the Church as a communion of believers. The special concern of Mennonites to committed participation prompts them to admit to baptism only those who have devoted themselves to repentance and who have made a public profession of faith. The concern of Lutherans and Catholics about the primacy of God's grace and the call to a lifelong response and participation in the life of the Christian community has prompted them to affirm not only the possibility but the appropriateness of baptizing infants. Might not Lutherans and Catholics acknowledge the decision of parents to foster a mature faith in their children prior to the request for baptism that has determined Mennonite practice as an authentic approach to Christian initiation? Might not Mennonites acknowledge that, given an assurance of familial and congregational commitment to provide formation in faith and discipleship, the choice of parents to request baptism for their young children, as practiced by Lutherans and Catholics, is an authentic approach to Christian initiation? Can we acknowledge that the different concerns do not contradict each other, and are grounded in basic aspects of the Gospel? By the term "authentic approach," we mean that it is based on mutually recognizable biblical concepts of grace, faith and church as they have been interpreted by each of the three communions.

Tension Between our Theology and our Praxis

79. All three of our churches see repentance, faith and committed discipleship as necessarily related to Christian life within the body of Christ, the Church, which has as one of its essential starting points the celebration and reception of baptism. In this sense, some Catholic theologians have commented that their church's *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*⁹⁷ can be considered as the "normative" expression of initiation, since, even though most Catholics are baptized as infants, it is the form that fully expresses the meaning of baptism. The baptized, under the irreplaceable assistance of the grace of the

97. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, or *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adulorum (OICA)* was promulgated in 1972 as part of the *Rituale Romanum* post Vatican II. It has subsequently been developed as process for prospective catechumens who are above the age of infant baptism. Up until 1969, there was a single baptismal rite for all, in which the priest spoke to the baby as if to an adult and the Godparents replied on the child's behalf. Vatican II sought to address this in *Sacrosanctum concilium*, "The rite for the baptism of infants is to be revised, and it should be adapted to the circumstance that those to be baptized are, in fact, infants." § 67. The Vatican published a rite for the baptism of infants in 1969. However, history clearly shows that it is the rite for adults that is the model of the baptismal process. The rite for children is simply a pastoral adaptation of the rite for adults.

Holy Spirit, are meant freely to convert from sin, have faith in Jesus Christ and embrace full, conscious and faithful participation in the life of the Christian community.

80. This fact accounts for the cogency of the Mennonite practice of baptizing only those capable of making a personal profession of faith. A possible question about this practice, however, is whether it sufficiently coheres with what the New Testament seems to teach about the relation between baptism and salvation. While it is true that God's saving action is not limited to ecclesial means, the benefits which Scripture associates with baptism make it seem to Lutherans and Catholics not only reasonable but even incumbent upon Christian parents to want to see that such benefits are shared with their children. Moreover, the practice of baptizing only those who make a prior confession of faith leads at least some Mennonites to question whether the baptism which a vast number of Christians have received as infants is authentic. Mennonites would acknowledge that many of those baptized as infants, over the course of their lives, have in fact repented, professed faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, committed themselves to a life of discipleship within the Church, and shared in the mission of evangelization and service in the world. Nor would they deny that many who have been baptized as infants have professed their faith even to the point of martyrdom, a witness which Mennonites particularly value, in light of the historic persecutions that have been a tragic, yet noble, part of their history. If one follows the logic of the Mennonite practice of baptism, the "baptism" of these Christians was not truly baptism. The recognition of true faith and discipleship among those baptized as infants has led many Mennonite congregations not to "re-baptize" individuals who wish to join their community but who were baptized as infants in another community. Finally, Mennonite churches have not been immune to the major difficulty which faces Lutherans and Catholics on this matter. It is the breaking of the link between baptism and committed Christian living – that those who have been baptized no longer practice the faith.

81. Both Catholics and Lutherans see baptism as a sacrament by means of which God's powerful grace washes the recipient of sin, inaugurates new life and incorporates him or her into the communion which is the Church. It calls forth a serious, committed response of repentance, faith and life-long discipleship, which is made possible under the powerful action of the Holy Spirit. When an infant is baptized, the parents, godparents and congregation are expected to fulfill the important role of formation so that such a commitment can be personally made as the child grows. How then can one explain the fact that so many individuals baptized as infants do not seem to have made such a committed response? Part of the reason for this lack of response is that, when baptism is requested for an infant, the pastor takes the request as a sign of willingness to raise the child as a Christian and is perhaps not sufficiently attentive to whether there is credible evidence that this will take place. The sincerity of those making the request is presumed and hope is placed in the Holy Spirit's power to assist the whole community, not only the family, so that the church's proclamation of the Word and its pastoral ministry may fulfill its duty of Christian formation. Lutherans and Catholics do not condone infant baptism where there is no reasonable hope of subsequent formation. Pastors need to act upon this challenge with greater consistency, which can require much courage; there should be no "indiscriminate baptism." In some parts of the world, bap-

tism of infants is part of the cultural tradition. This can be a beneficial situation if the culture tends to support the further Christian formation of its members. If, on the other hand, the culture does not foster Christian values and the baptism of an infant is no more than a familial celebration without any intention of leading to a life of faithful discipleship within the Christian community, it would be better that baptism be postponed.⁹⁸ Great pastoral care and discernment must be exercised when children are brought forth for baptism.

82. There was substantial agreement between our three communities that strengthening the link between baptism and committed Christian living presents a significant challenge for Christian families today. There are two aspects to this challenge. The first is the challenge of continuing trends in society towards materialism and consumerism, which make living a committed Christian life increasingly counter-cultural and difficult for the newly baptized. The second is the challenge that many church formation programs for young people and adults, are ineffective in forming active and committed Christian disciples. Consequently, there was agreement that struggling to overcome the tension between theology and praxis will require, in part, a renewal of Christian faith formation for children, youth, and adults that includes a proper discernment of the signs of the times. This is no easy task, but nevertheless understood to be essential for our three communities.

83. During the 16th century, Mennonites unequivocally rejected the practice of infant baptism, while Lutherans and Catholics unequivocally affirmed its necessity. Given the significant convergences reflected in this chapter concerning the place of baptism within the life-long process of being a Christian, the principal elements in the celebration of baptism and the relation of baptism to faith and to membership in the church, it seems justified to claim a rather substantial agreement between our three communities about many of the aspects of the theology of baptism. In light of this, our communities may wish to review the opposing positions regarding its celebration which were at the root of their divisions concerning baptism. Ecumenical dialogue can, on occasion, produce the unexpected fruit of revealing that seemingly contradictory positions – such as those concerning whether or not infants may or should be baptized – actually turn out to be different but compatible ways of looking at the same reality. It is our hope that this report may assist our communities in discerning whether our differences in the practice of baptism could be an acceptable diversity that does not, in and of itself, constitute an insuperable obstacle to greater unity among us.

98. See, for example, the words of the Catholic document *Pastoralis actio* of 20 October 1980: “Assurances must be given that the gift thus granted [of the blessings of God’s prevenient love which frees from original sin and communicates a share in divine life] can grow by an authentic education in the faith and Christian life, in order to fulfill the true meaning of the sacrament. [...] But if these assurances are not really serious there can be grounds for delaying the sacrament; and if they are certainly non-existent the sacrament should even be refused.” This text can be found in Denzinger/Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, § 4672.

CHAPTER THREE

LIVING OUT BAPTISM IN DISCIPLESHIP

84. The first chapter of this report presented how each of our three communities understands the relation between baptism and sin, highlighting common perspectives and differing emphases. It concluded with reflections concerning Paul's teaching about sin in Romans 5. It concerns the necessary initiative of the Holy Spirit in bestowing reconciling grace for overcoming sin and bringing about conversion, the communication of grace in baptism, and the recurrent need for forgiveness even after baptism. Chapter two considered various aspects of the celebration of baptism: how it needs to be seen as an important moment in the life-long process of being and becoming a Christian, how each of our churches celebrates the rite of baptism, how baptism relates to the faith of the individual and of the community, how baptism relates to membership in the church, and how tensions appear between our theology and practice of baptism. Differences among us were not overlooked, but commonly held convictions concerning these issues provided better mutual understanding and a more adequate framework for reflecting on a fundamental disagreement between us, that is, differing convictions about whether a personal profession of faith by the one to be baptized is or is not a precondition for the celebration of baptism. At the outset of this third chapter an important and substantial agreement can be recognized. In contrast with the earlier chapters where some differences still seem rather difficult to reconcile, all three of our communions wholeheartedly agree that baptism is intended not as an isolated, self-enclosed event, but as an important moment that is to be lived out throughout the course of one's life. It is intended by God to enable and to unfold into a life of discipleship.

85. The New Testament provides a wealth of teaching concerning the new way of life made possible by Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Several passages explicitly relate baptism to a sharing in Christ's death and resurrection leading to forgiveness and freedom from slavery to sin and the regeneration to a new life of righteousness. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into his death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:3-4). Paul goes on to write: "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:11). The relation between baptism, Christ's death and resurrection, and the new life of the baptized finds expression in other places in the Pauline corpus. "You were buried with him [Christ] in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him..." (Col 2:12-13). To the Galatians, Paul writes: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ Jesus have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). The First Letter of Peter gives the following comment on the fact that in Noah's ark a few were saved through water: "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 3:20-21). All of these passages explicitly emphasize that baptism is to be followed by a transformation in life of the person who is baptized.

86. This transformation is also described in many verses that do not explicitly refer to baptism. Several passages speak of this change as a “new birth” or a “new creation”: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3). “You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pet 1:23). “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:17-18). The new life is life in the Spirit, who transforms one into a child of God: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:14-17; see Gal 3:26). The Letter to the Ephesians expresses the way of life of God’s children with the language of “imitation” and of “walking”: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:1-2). “For once you were in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph 5: 8-10). The Letter to the Philippians urges its readers “let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27) and exhorts them to have the mind of Christ (see 2:5). Indeed Paul states: “For me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21).

87. Another very important New Testament passage about baptism contains the words of Jesus as he takes leave of the eleven disciples at the close of the gospel of Matthew. These words were to have a decisive influence on the form in which baptism is celebrated by all three of our churches: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt 28:18-20). Here baptism is linked explicitly with discipleship, which refers to following Jesus as many did who came to believe in him during his earthly ministry. Such imitation of Christ is conveyed in a New Testament writing which is particularly devoted to describing the meaning of baptism: “... Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps” (1 Pet 2:21). Believers seek to live out their baptism by obeying the will of the Father as conveyed in the message and life of Jesus. The apostle Paul states that no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor 12:3); it follows that every believer is a disciple. The faith of believers needs to mature (see Eph 4:12-13, which speaks of maturation and attaining unity of faith, or Luke 17:5, where the apostles ask the Lord to increase their faith). The disciple has a personal relation to Christ, is a follower of Jesus, and like Jesus seeks to do the Father’s will. This union finds a powerful expression in John’s gospel: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, and you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:4-5).

88. All of these positive statements about baptism, transformation of life, and discipleship should not be allowed to obscure the New Testament message of the need to continually struggle against sin. Notwithstanding his glowing descriptions of the new life that occurs for the believer, Paul, looking back over his own shortcomings, is keenly aware of the need to rely continually on the power of grace for ongoing conversion.

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. [...] For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Rom 7:14-15; 22-25).

In another place we read, “For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want” (Gal 5:17).

89. The biblical witness presented in the previous paragraphs provides a basis for much agreement among us regarding the fact that every baptized person needs to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ as the way of living out his or her baptism. But this only takes place together with the other members of the Christian community and, moreover, impels disciples to witness their faith to the wider world outside the visible borders of the church. Thus Catholics, Lutherans, and Mennonites can fully agree that the life-long living out of the gift of faith which is celebrated in baptism has not only personal but also ecclesial and public dimensions. These dimensions are interwoven in such a way that they cannot be completely separated. For clarity of presentation, they will provide a structure for the following paragraphs, because the personal, ecclesial, and public dimensions of discipleship are so interrelated. Thus, some degree of repetition in what follows is unavoidable.

Personal Dimension of Living out Baptism in Christian Discipleship

90. We hold much in common concerning the personal aspect of discipleship. It entails the joy and gratitude for the gift of saving grace and communion with God received in baptism (see Phil 4:4 – “Rejoice in the Lord always”). The regeneration under power of the Holy Spirit can and hopefully will mature over the course of life. Believers in our churches have opportunities to recall their baptism and to renew their baptismal commitment on various occasions. Discipleship entails a spirituality that grounds the believer’s conduct and interaction with others in the light of teachings based on the scripture and their ecclesial tradition. It involves a life-long process of repentance, conversion, and transformation. Alongside these shared convictions, the following paragraphs intend to shine light on some of the distinctive emphases of each of our traditions with regard to the personal dimension of living out one’s baptism.

91. Catholics consider it misleading to separate the personal lives of those who have been baptized from their ecclesial community and to their vocation to witness to Christian faith in everyday life. One can nevertheless indicate, from a Catholic perspective, several aspects of discipleship which pertain in a special way to the individual. Baptism is the beginning and basis of a person’s entire Christian life. It is the gateway to life in

the Spirit, incorporation into the Church, the doorway opening access to the other sacraments, and the call to share in the mission of the Christian community in the world. The Catholic emphasis upon the sacraments is particularly strong. Baptism is grouped together with confirmation and Eucharist as the three “sacraments of initiation.” A person would hardly be understood as living out their baptism while refraining from receiving those other sacraments. In recognition that discipleship requires continual efforts of repentance and conversion, Catholics believe that two additional sacraments find their roots and ultimate institution in the healing ministry Jesus – the sacraments of reconciliation (or confession) and of anointing of the sick. In the course of life, a Christian needs healing and these sacraments were given by the Lord, whose ministry was characterized by forgiving the sinner and healing the sick. Furthermore, the important roles of pastoring and of faithful and fruitful married love are understood as being blessed and aided sacramentally through the sacraments of ordination and marriage. For a Catholic, one lives out discipleship by preparing oneself, with the help of God’s grace, to receive the sacraments in such a way that one is open to be transformed by their divinely promised effectiveness. Sacraments are precious means that Christ has entrusted to the Church to assist her members in living out their baptism. In addition to the sacraments, initial and ongoing formation is of great importance. For those who are capable, some of this formation precedes baptism, but for all – including those baptized as adults – formation in faith is a life-long endeavor. This formation can take various forms: weekly participation in the liturgy where the Scripture is proclaimed and preached and the Eucharist celebrated, catechesis, Bible study or seminars, conferences, parish missions, days of recollection, prayer groups, and pilgrimages to shrines honoring Christ or the saints, to name only some of its principal forms. Sanctity is woven into how Catholics view discipleship. Vatican II devoted one of the eight chapters of its Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*, Chapter Five) to the “universal call to holiness.” Furthermore, the attention given to the “theology of the laity” by theologians and bishops in recent decades pointed out that, by initiating a person into Christian life – the very word “Christ” meaning “one who is anointed” – baptism associated the baptized person with the *tria munera* or threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest, and king. Living out baptism means, therefore, witnessing to the word of God (prophet), offering one’s life as a spiritual sacrifice (priest), and promoting in society the reign of God (king). All of these functions point to another dimension of discipleship: the mission of evangelization. Of course, baptism is of decisive importance for the individual who receives it. But one who is concerned only with saving one’s own soul has not yet understood or fully benefitted from the grace of baptism. Mission is directed both internally to the Christian community – building up the body of Christ, the Church – and externally – at times seeking to remedy the social ills that plague humanity and at other times sharing explicitly the joy of the Gospel and inviting others to faith in Jesus Christ.

92. The opening article of *The Schleithem Confession* of 1527 is one of the earliest Anabaptist explanations of how that tradition viewed baptism.

Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ, and to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with

Him in death, so that they may be resurrected with Him and to all those who with this significance request it (baptism) of us and demand it for themselves.⁹⁹

This walking in newness of life becomes visible not only in individual terms but also in relation to the brothers and sisters of the believing community. God's grace aims at and effects a "new creation" to which baptism witnesses. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the baptized commit themselves to lead a life that corresponds to this new reality, made possible by the Christ event. It is not that, in baptism, one becomes wholly Christ-like, but that one truly hands oneself over to Christ and surrenders to live according to His Word, will, and rule. Mennonites often refer to Jesus' interpretation of God's commandments in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6) in order to explain in practical terms, what a life participating in that new reality of the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God might entail. Discipleship is understood as learning from and walking in the way of Christ.

93. The *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* puts it this way,

Baptism is done in obedience to Jesus' command and as a public commitment to identify with Jesus Christ, not only in his baptism by water, but in his life in the Spirit and in his death in suffering love. [...] Those who accept water baptism commit themselves to follow Jesus in giving their lives for others, in loving their enemies, and in renouncing violence, even when it means their own suffering or death. [...] who commit themselves to follow Christ in obedience as members of his body, both giving and receiving care and counsel in the church."¹⁰⁰

The goal of post-baptismal discipleship, rooted in ethical and doctrinal teaching, is for believers to take the call of Christ so seriously that they would be willing to face torture and death. Given their strong emphasis on discipleship and sanctification, Mennonites seek to offer preparation for baptism so that it provides instruction in the gift of salvation as well as the whole biblical story and that of their own tradition. Also of great importance is reflection on the experience of conversion and what it means to be a follower of Christ in the world. Many congregations ask candidates for baptism to tell the story of their personal journey of faith. Jesus' teaching about fraternal correction in Matthew 18:15-20 has been a guiding text concerning church discipline and how to deal with sins within the community. Individuals must be prepared to bear responsibility with and for each other and to promote the welfare of all. Nurturing them on this path are corporate worship, including the Lord's Supper and other forms of community life and celebration.

94. In a Lutheran understanding baptism is the source of a new life in which the personal and the communal dimensions are mutually dependent and cannot be separated.

99. *The Schleithem Confession*, 1527; text available at <http://www.anabaptists.org/history/the-schleithem-confession.html> [accessed 1 December 2018].

100. *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, (General Board of the General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Church General Board, USA, 1995), art. 11; text available at [http://www.anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Confession_of_Faith_in_a_Mennonite_Perspective_\(Mennonite_Church_USA,_Mennonite_Church_Canada,_1995\)](http://www.anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Confession_of_Faith_in_a_Mennonite_Perspective_(Mennonite_Church_USA,_Mennonite_Church_Canada,_1995)) [accessed 1 December, 2018].

Baptism is the promise of God's grace alone (*sola gratia*), so that living out baptism means to continue to listen to God's word in proclamation, Bible study, catechesis, and so forth, and to receive God's grace – his self-giving – over and over again in the Lord's Supper. While grace cannot be earned by human works, it is the source of good works by which the believer responds to the love of God and serves God and the neighbor without the self-centered intention of earning grace and righteousness. Lutheran theology has often been accused of preventing or neglecting good works. But this is not an accurate assessment when one takes into account Lutheran Christian education that strongly emphasizes the role of the Ten Commandments and their explanation in Luther's two Catechisms. To follow God's law in the Ten Commandments is the fruit of faith. In light of the revelation of God's merciful justice and unconditional grace in Jesus Christ, the commandments not only order human behavior in a just and merciful way, but also provide direction in living out the twofold commandment to love God and neighbor. Understood this way, the Ten Commandments foster a realistic self-perception of believers, because those who seriously attempt to follow the Ten Commandments, will also experience shortcomings and failure. This is why believers need to return to their baptism time and again. Being baptized and believing in the Triune God implies participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The priesthood of all the baptized means that they are called to bring the good news of God (the gospel) to other human beings, and that they bring the concerns of others to God in prayer. It also may include the sacrifice of time and life for others. By fulfilling these tasks, baptized people live out their baptism.

Ecclesial Dimensions of Living out Baptism

95. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:12-13). These verses relate baptism to being united in the one body of Christ, enlivened by the one Spirit. The Letter to the Ephesians states that Christ bestowed various gifts upon the Church “for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:11-13). All three traditions appreciate and affirm the fact that living out one's baptism is rooted in the communion of the Christian community. It is there that the Word of God is proclaimed and the sacraments/ordinances are celebrated, including especially the Eucharist / Lord's Supper. Various other ecclesial moments, for one or more of our communities, are related to discipleship, such as the rite of confirmation, the celebration of marriage, the ordination of ministers, or the rite of foot-washing. The community of love which is the church is the setting for mutual accountability, fraternal correction, and a variety of forms of ongoing Christian formation. All three churches provide special programs of formation for young people, yet it must be admitted that there is for all of us often a gap between the aim of such formation and its effective realization in lives of those to whom it is offered. Active and committed participation in the life of the community is the *ambience* in which discipleship can grow and flourish. This communal context also invites believers to have humility in acknowledging failures within the church and to work for repentance, one aspect of which is also the ecumenical imperative to work for the reconciliation and unity of the churches. What distinctive

aspects of this “ecclesial dimension” of living out baptism may be pointed out? To that we now turn.

96. Anabaptist and Mennonite groups share the view that baptism is to be followed by a life of Christian discipleship. Not only that, they also teach that such a life is sustained and encouraged by the community of believers. Mutual support, as exemplified in the Lord’s Supper, and mutual accountability, as expressed in the rule of Christ (Matt 18), correspond with the voluntary character of believers’ baptism in response to the divine initiative of grace. This, in turn, is based upon an ecclesiology of the visible church. The church witnesses that there is a new creation in Christ by the quality of communion among brothers and sisters. Baptism initiates believers into a new people in which prior identities of nationality, ethnicity, gender, social status, and so forth, are transcended.

97. For Anabaptists and Mennonites there is no private salvation; it happens in the fellowship of believers. The vertical and the horizontal dimensions of salvation do not exist independently from each other. There is no peace with God without peace with sisters and brothers, no fellowship with God without sharing of possessions, no divine forgiveness without willingness to forgive human offenders. Fraternal admonition and church discipline presupposes growth in grace but also the continuing lack of wholeness in each believer and in the body. The church as a new humanity already anticipates the fulfillment of God’s promise in the coming kingdom. One recent confession of faith characterizes accountability in the following way:

The church interprets God’s will, discerning what is right and what is wrong. All believers hold each other accountable for a Christ-like walk of faith. The purpose of accountability is to heal and restore through repentance and not punish or condemn. The church excludes those who consistently disregard discipline.¹⁰¹

98. For Lutheran understanding, the promise of the Triune God conveyed in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper calls for trusting in the One who gives himself to human beings in that promise. Thus it is important for them to know in whom they trust and what they can expect from him. This is the reason why Lutheran churches have felt the need not only to rely on the religious education offered in the respective homes through fathers and mothers using the *Small Catechism* and to invite baptized children to worship services, but to offer a special and regular catechesis to them. After not being widely practiced at the beginning of the Reformation, the rite of confirmation was introduced as a regular practice in Lutheran churches during the 18th century. Confirmation includes a catechetical process in confirmation classes over a longer period of time. In some Lutheran churches this education is part of the church calendar and takes place over the course of at least an entire year; in some, the main part of the teaching takes place in confirmation camps where the youth live together with the teachers (clergy and lay). The catechetical process ends with a confirmation service in which the young

101. International Community of Mennonite Brethren, *What We Believe*, 2004; text available at <http://www.icomb.org/what-we-believe/> [accessed 1 December, 2018].

confirmed Christians confess their faith together with the congregation, are blessed and receive Holy Communion for the first time.

99. Through confirmation young Christians become eligible to serve as godparents and pass on their baptismal experience in helping others to grow into their baptism. They receive the right to be candidates in the *presbyterium* of their congregation and of synods of the church. In this way they live out the common priesthood, imparted to them through baptism and faith in God. They should seek continuous formation in their understanding of Christian faith. Then they become knowledgeable about right preaching and the administration of the sacraments, and about the right practice of *diakonia* and pastoral care in the church. So they are able to exercise their responsibility for the life of the church.

100. In times of social trauma, receiving confirmation can have serious consequences for those who have been confirmed. In Nazi-Germany, some young people drew the consequence that they could not join the *Hitler-Jugend* (“Hitler-Youth”) since they had promised fidelity to God in confirmation. In the German Democratic Republic, many young Christians who, instead of participating in the *Jugendweibe* (secular youth initiation) chose to be confirmed, were not allowed to attend high school or university. Thus living out their baptism had far-reaching consequences for them.

101. Catholics have a strong sense of being part of the world-wide Church founded by Christ and entrusted by him to the guidance of the successors of his chosen apostles, with Peter at their head. Living out one’s baptism means taking an active part in this “catholic” community, receiving nourishment and support from it and contributing to it. Much of what was listed above about the personal dimension of discipleship cannot be understood without reference to its ecclesial context. The sacraments which play such an important role in the life of the individual are celebrated within the community. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the life of the Church; from a Catholic perspective, regular participation in its celebration is absolutely essential to living out one’s baptism. One might add here the fundamental role of the liturgy in structuring and animating Catholic life. The liturgical year, especially with its seasons preparing for and celebrating the great feasts of Christmas and Easter, provides the setting for renewing the sentiments of expectation, conversion, and hope for the whole community. The sense of belonging to the communion of saints is fostered by the celebration of their memory throughout the year, inspiring believers with their example and teaching. Formation in discipleship is ecclesial, beginning in the family, which is considered to be the “domestic church.” Special emphasis, in light of the common Catholic practice of baptizing infants, is given to the formation of young people preparing to commit themselves to living out their faith with the special help of an additional outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Confirmation. In addition to these instances of formation, one might here add a word about the special regard which Catholics give to the official teaching of the bishops whose teaching is commonly referred to with the word “magisterium.” Much of this teaching pertains precisely to how one can authentically live out one’s baptism. Such teaching can extend to the world-wide community, such as in exhortations on the vocations of lay persons, priests, members of religious congregations and bishops or encyclical letters on family life or the environment, but it is also

adapted to local contexts by bishops' conferences, individual bishops, priests, catechists, and theologians. Synods at various levels of ecclesial life are intended to elicit the active participation of all the faithful under the guidance of their pastors. The *sensus fidei* or *supernatural instinct* that believers have concerning their faith is recognized as a gift of the Holy Spirit to be appreciated and valued as part of the community's discernment of the direction in which the Church is called to advance.¹⁰² Discipleship means active participation in both the internal life and external outreach of the Church, according to the various possibilities that are offered by the situation, talents, and role of each believer.

Public Dimensions of Living out Baptism

102. In the synagogue at his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus opened the book of the prophet Isaiah to chapter 61 and read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4:18-19), adding: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21). The social implications of the message and work of Jesus, so intimately tied to the inauguration of the reign of God, was understood by the first generation of Christians, as the apostle Paul wrote: "For the kingdom of God does not mean food or drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). Regarding the public dimension of discipleship, our three traditions agree that baptism impels one to participate in the mission of reconciliation, justice, and peace inaugurated by Jesus, inviting our contemporaries to come to know Jesus Christ and experience the joy of faith in him and in his message. It means witnessing, by word and action, to the truth and goodness of the Gospel in the public square, being guided by the principle "as Christ has done for me, so I must do for my neighbor." All of our communities continue to make efforts to engage in humanitarian work of various kinds in service to those in need. To live out one's baptism means participating in the mission which, through the anointing that each Christian has received in baptism, Christ has shared with the Church for its activity in the world. Recent global developments imply that this also includes sharing in efforts to care for and protect God's creation. Christian presence and activity in some societies has also demonstrated the truth of Jesus' teaching that his followers would be met with opposition and, at times, hatred and persecution (Matt 5:10-12). The baptism of blood endured by Christians of our still divided churches may be rightly seen as an "ecumenism of the martyrs", urging us to seek that greater unity that their noble witness inspires. What distinc-

102. This definition comes directly from Section 2 of the document *Sensus fidei in the life of the Church* (2014), published by the International Theological Commission of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is a "supernatural" instinct because it comes from the gift of faith (grace), so it is more than a collective or group "common sense" of believers. The subjects of the *sensus fidei* are individual members of the Church. Each member has this *sensus fidei* which together works for the edification of the Church. Commissio Theologica Internationalis, *Sensus Fidei: In the Life of the Church* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2014); text available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html [accessed 1 December, 2018].

tive emphases in this third category of the public dimension of discipleship can be discerned within our three traditions?

103. Discipleship in the public place has two distinct dimensions in a Lutheran perspective. It involves the question of how Christians can witness to their faith in society at large, and the related question about the relationship and sharing of responsibilities between church and state.

104. The first question needs to be addressed in light of the strong emphasis given by the Reformers to the priesthood of all believers. Baptized Christians live out their baptism in three estates of society: family, government, and church (*status oeconomicus*, *status politicus*, *status ecclesiasticus*). Those three estates complemented one another, and each was equally important in living out Christian vocation. In the age of confessionalization, but especially after the Enlightenment, the understanding of the church's societal role grew stronger in Lutheran churches. The aftermath of the Second World War was however the turning point which led to Lutheran churches taking wider responsibility through advocating human rights as well as living out their diaconal responsibility both on national and international level. The Lutheran World Federation was founded under these circumstances in 1947. Since its beginning it has kept proclamation of the gospel, diakonia, and advocating for such Christian values as justice and peace among its foundational responsibilities. One important reason for Lutheran churches to assemble in the LWF as a global communion is to be able to address together issues of discipleship in the public space. The vocation to live out baptism in discipleship in the public space was affirmed and renewed by the 12th LWF Assembly in the commitment to reconciliation, communion building and prophetic diakonia, amid many social and economic factors that "put 'freedom' to the test."¹⁰³

105. Since the churches' discipleship in the public space entails addressing offences against human rights, inhumanities, inequalities and injustices, this may require reflection and decision on how to relate to politics and governmental decisions. It is well known across denominations that Luther had defined the relationship between church and political sphere in his doctrine of the two kingdoms, recently better known as two realms. Luther's main motivation was to bring the church back to its primary role, i.e. preaching the gospel. In order to do that, church needed to be liberated from worldly power and politics. This did not mean however that the church would be isolated from the world. On the contrary, Luther wanted the church to serve the world through pure preaching of the gospel. According to the doctrine of the two realms both of them are instituted by God, and are instruments of God's love and providential will for human flourishing. But they have distinct responsibilities. While in the spiritual realm the church is responsible for preaching the gospel, in the secular realm the state is responsible for safeguarding order, peace and justice in the society. The two realms are not opposed, but complement one another. However, Luther insisted on the distinction

103. "Message," in The Lutheran World Federation (ed.), *Liberated by God's Grace: Assembly Report, LWF Twelfth Assembly, Windhoek, Namibia, 10–16 May 2017* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2017), 56; text available at <https://www.lwfassembly.org/sites/default/files/resources/12A-Assembly%20Message%20EN.pdf> [accessed 1 December, 2018].

between the two so that the state could not invade the spiritual realm and constrain consciences, and vice versa, the church could not interfere in secular government. For Luther, the doctrine of two realms meant that the Christian should obey political power because it, like the church, was instituted by God.¹⁰⁴

106. In the course of history, the doctrine of two realms has been often interpreted in a rigid way that led Lutherans to unconditional adoption of political and social circumstances,¹⁰⁵ without criticizing or contradicting the misuse of political power or inhumane action. Lutherans have to admit especially with regard to 20th century European history, that too often “they regarded the political and social structures of this world as God-given, not asking whether they should engage in contradicting them and contribute to changing them according to the will of God.”¹⁰⁶ Only later, however, did Lutheran theologians underline that the confessional writings also define circumstances under which Christians should be critical towards political power. While *The Augsburg Confession* XVI states, “Christians are necessarily bound to obey their own magistrates and laws”, the article continues with reference to Acts 5:29 that this does not apply when magistrates and laws “commanded to sin; for then they ought to obey God rather than man”.¹⁰⁷

107. The Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church (1962 to 1965), opened its *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)* with the words: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts”.¹⁰⁸ After positing the principle that Christ is the key to an authentic understanding of human dignity, community, and activity, the text presents Catholic teaching about marriage and the family, culture, the economy, political activity, and peace, always with the presupposition that those who live out their baptism as disciples of Jesus Christ must be concerned for their fellow human beings. That treatment of specific issues amounts to a harvest of teachings about social questions that began in the late 19th century and has continued up until the present time, with contributions on general principles of Christian social responsibility, on the economy, and on the protec-

104. *Confession Augustana*, XXVIII:18, in Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 93.

105. See *Healing Memories. Implications of the Reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites*, LWF Studies 2016/2 (Leipzig: Evangelischer Verlagsanstalt/Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2016); text available at https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/dtpw-studies-201602-healing_memories-en-full.pdf [accessed 1 December]; Bernd Oberdorfer, “Law and Gospel and Two Realms. Lutheran Distinctions Revisited,” *Global Perspectives on the Reformation: Interactions between Theology, Politics and Economics*, ed. Anne Burghardt and Simone Sinn, LWF Documentation 61/2016 (Leipzig: Evangelischer Verlagsanstalt/Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2016), 39; text available at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-global-perspectives-reformation> [accessed 1 December, 2018].

106. *Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ*. Report of the Lutheran–Mennonite International Study Commission 83, see footnote 6.

107. Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 51.

108. *Gaudium et spes*, § 1.

tion of the environment.¹⁰⁹ In 2005, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* was published exploring God's plan of love for human beings, the social mission of the Church, the dignity of the human person as made in the image of God, and principles of the Church's social doctrine. Basing these principles on the dignity of each person, they emphasize the importance of fostering the common good and the universal destination of goods which have been bestowed upon all of humanity by the creator. They insist upon subsidiarity, which fosters the participation of all as opposed to a system of social organization in which everything is determined from above, and instead prefers a system where contributions of more local initiatives are given their due respect. Especially the principle of solidarity is encouraged, by which human beings share their gifts and talents with one another, assisting and supporting those who are in particular need.¹¹⁰ This substantial body of doctrine, of course, is meant to be put into practice. There have been and continue to be many examples of this taking place. At times this occurs by means of Catholic groups and movements, both at a local level and globally, dedicated to addressing a particular issue, such as the promotion of economic justice or the care for those who are most vulnerable. Other responses to human need are more of a structural nature, such as the establishment of schools and hospitals. Care for the poor and response to those suffering from epidemics or natural disasters have taken many forms. Recalling these positive activities should not lead one to forget the failures to live up to this social teaching, not only in the past but today as well. A particular emphasis of Pope Francis has been to call the Christian community to make an effort to be a church of the poor which is itself poor and which reaches out to those on the periphery. He urges Christians to understand the church less as a powerful institution and more along the analogy of a "field hospital," caring for God's wounded children.

108. A recent Mennonite confession of faith states: "We believe that the church [...] is the new community of disciples sent into the world to proclaim the reign of God and to provide a foretaste of the church's glorious hope."¹¹¹ God's design for a new humanity, already initiated but not yet fully realized, reaches beyond the boundaries of the church. The church is not an end in itself, but a reality that God has brought into being to serve all humankind. Membership is not based on ethical performance, but is the gift of belonging given in baptism in the name of God the creator of all, Christ the reconciler of all, and the Holy Spirit the healer of all. The missionary function of the church is to extend forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing beyond itself. In this way it participates in the *missio Dei* for the renewal of the world. At the heart of the divine mission is peacemaking. The pursuit of peace is an eschatological anticipation of the kingdom. Believers are baptized into this mission and sustained by God's promise.

109. For contributions on these three themes see, respectively, the encyclical letters *Centesimus annus* (1991) of John Paul II, *Caritas in veritate* (2009) of Benedict XVI, and *Laudato si'* (2015) of Francis.

110. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 29 June, 2004; text available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html [accessed 1 December, 2018].

111. *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Article 9: The Church of Jesus Christ).

Nonresistance is not simply a matter of refusing to bear arms in wartime, although that is certainly included. Rather it is a totally new life orientation in which all human relationships are governed by patience, understanding, love, forgiveness, and a desire for the redemption even of the enemy. It is part of the new way of ordering human relationships under the new covenant.¹¹²

As the International Community of Mennonite Brethren has professed,

We believe that peace with God includes a commitment to the way of reconciliation modeled by the Prince of Peace. [...] The church belongs to the in-breaking Kingdom of God. The citizens of the Kingdom model an alternative community, challenging godless values of this world's cultures. The people of God join in the struggle for justice, yet are prepared to suffer persecution knowing that sin, guilt and death will not prevail.¹¹³

Differing and Diverging Emphases

109. The previous paragraphs have sought to be attentive not only to commonly held convictions but also to the distinctive emphases of our three communities concerning the personal, ecclesial, and public dimensions of discipleship. While all three churches are agreed that baptism is intended to be lived out throughout one's life and while all agree about many of the ways of acting which either express or contradict discipleship, it must be frankly admitted that we do not always agree about what counts for Christian authenticity in some specific issues. There is not complete consensus about what authentic discipleship means. Each of our traditions appeals to the guidance of Scripture, but the biblical message must be applied to the questions and circumstances of today and the processes involved within each of our churches for making such applications have distinctive characteristics. Clearly the discernment of what counts for an authentic following of Jesus leads to a consideration of our different understandings of how the church is meant to function. Some communities place particular emphasis on deliberations by the local congregation, others on teaching directed to the worldwide communion, others to some instance in between. All three of our churches acknowledge the importance of conscience in living out one's baptism with integrity, yet it should also be emphasized that a person's conscience must be formed in fidelity to the Gospel.

110. Even when a church takes a particular stance concerning what can be considered an authentic following of Christ, often there can be a significant discrepancy between that position and the feelings, convictions, and actions of some, even a substantial proportion, of its membership. Under the influence of contemporary media, legislation, and popular culture, many traditional Christian values have been abandoned, a situation that has affected many believers.

111. From an ecumenical perspective, we need to consider what to do when the ecclesial discernment of our churches about the authentic way of living out baptism results

112. Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources*. (Kitchener, Ont: Herald Press, 1984), 264.

113. International Community of Mennonite Brethren, *What We Believe*.

in incompatible conclusions. An example which brought this point home during our conversations occurred when one of our annual meetings took place at a venue which was hosting, during the same period, a meeting of military chaplains. For Lutherans and Catholics, such ministry to their adherents serving in the armed forces seems appropriate; for Mennonites such ministry could appear to support people whose line of work includes the willingness to use lethal force in a way that is not compatible with the teachings and spirit of the New Testament. We are not in agreement that the Christian community is called to be a peace church, in the strict sense of embracing pacifism under any and every circumstance. However, when such disagreement occurs, the result should not be that each church goes its separate way. Rather, whatever collaboration remains possible can still unite us. Even without agreement about the requirement of being a peace church, Christian communities can nevertheless work together to promote peace and defuse violence by seeking to overcome its causes. Or, to use another example, churches or individuals within churches, even if they disagree on specific issues such as same-sex unions, can still work together to promote respect for the dignity of every human being. Even if we do not agree with the discernment of other Christians, we can nevertheless acknowledge their attempt to seriously live out their baptism in discipleship. While all three traditions strongly affirm that baptism and discipleship have serious implications for how one lives, discernment of what counts for authentic discipleship regarding particular issues and the weight that such discernment has for ecclesial unity were not the specific mandate for our conversations. These issues have urgent ecclesiological implications and suggest themes for dialogue in the future.

112. Even though some understandings seem incompatible, many are complementary. The distinctive theological traditions of our communities and the way in which those traditions influence the practice of discipleship, as expressed earlier in this chapter, show quite naturally varying perspectives concerning how baptism is to be lived out, both in comparing traditions and within each one. Presuming that the diverse ways of living out baptism intend to be rooted in common faith in Jesus Christ – the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6) – and to live out the gospel, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, it is reasonable to hope that many differences would be both complementary and even mutually enriching. Many of them can be seen as expressive of the great variety that is part of God’s design for the church. In recent years the ecumenical movement has been characterized as an “exchange of gifts.” This approach will now also provide the inspiration and structure for the conclusion of our report.

CONCLUSION

113. “By one Spirit we were baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13). At the conclusion of this report, we thank God for the opportunity to have met for five years, within the context of shared worship and Bible study, for the purpose of engaging in conversations concerning a very important aspect of our lives as members of the body of Christ. We have explained to each other the theology and practice of our communities on several important aspects of baptism. Regarding this topic, our earlier bilateral dialogues called for further discussion about the theology of sin and salvation, about the baptism of infants, about the role of the living faith of the church as it has significance for the spiritual condition of infants and children and about the recognition of one another’s

baptism. We have also made further efforts to bridge, within a broad theological framework, the divide between us by looking more closely at our understandings of the relationship between divine action and human response in our readings of what the Bible reveals about baptism.¹¹⁴

114. The present report has attempted to respond to these tasks by exploring the relation of baptism to salvation from sin (chapter one), its celebration within the church (chapter two), and its opening the door to discipleship in Christ (chapter three). We are grateful for the opportunity to have listened to one another and to have learned from one another. Not content simply to repeat the oppositions that have been a cause of division in the past, we have tried to appreciate the truths embedded in each other's view and practice of baptism. This entailed sharing the convictions which one's own tradition has preserved but also receiving and benefiting from the gifts which the other two traditions brought to our dialogue. Such an experience has also been occasion to help one another grow in faithfulness to Jesus Christ, as we face the pastoral and missional challenge to the practice and understanding of baptism in our time. Only our churches themselves can determine whether and how their theology and practice of baptism may call for renewal and have an impact upon the ultimate goal of responding to the Lord's will for unity (see John 17:21). We hope this offers a more complete and less unilateral account of the theology and practice of baptism within our three traditions. As such, our report shows that some of the positions that have divided us in the past were really expressions of authentic insights that we all can share. We believe that this result can be a valuable contribution to further progress toward unity between our churches.

115. One aim of our conversations has been for each of us to look again at our own tradition through the eyes of our dialogue partners. This has made it possible for the members of each church to bring into focus some of the convictions that are dear to our hearts concerning our self-understanding, to express some of the gifts that we have received from one another, and to reflect upon the challenges that these conversations pose for our consideration in the years ahead. In line with this aim, the following paragraphs, composed respectively by the representatives of each communion, express what these conversations have led them to conclude regarding their cherished convictions, regarding the gifts they have received from one another, and regarding the challenges to our churches for ongoing reflection about their theology and practice of baptism.

CONCLUDING MENNONITE REFLECTIONS

Convictions Held

116. We believe that the community gathered in the Jesus' name is called to receive the guiding wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we strive to be such a hermeneutical community, interpreting God's Word together, from the vantage point of those without political power.

114. For these responses, see *Called to be Peacemakers*, §§ 141-143, and *Healing Memories*, pages 89-90.

117. We believe that the church at all levels, especially in its congregations, is called to be a web of relational communities in which people usually know one another well enough to discern their gifts of ministry and take responsibility for their mutual well-being, as the members live out their baptism.

118. We believe that baptism on confession of faith is the norm in the New Testament and the apostolic church, as scholars in diverse Christian traditions affirm. We are one of the churches that witnesses to and practices this pattern.

119. We believe the Sermon on the Mount provides guidance for the Christian life in private, ecclesial, and public realms. We believe that such discipleship is possible because the kingdom of God was inaugurated in Jesus Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. In most Mennonite churches nonviolent peacemaking is considered essential to grasping and living this new reality.

Gifts Received

120. We are thankful that, after centuries of conflict concerning baptism, this dialogue has been possible and fruitful. We are grateful for the gifts of trust, patience, and receptivity that our partners have given us throughout the entire process.

121. Through the dialogue we have realized that many of our historic prejudices about Lutheran and Catholic understandings of baptism never were, or are no longer, true. We have seen that we share a Trinitarian and Christocentric faith and its expression in discipleship.

122. We have learned about the indispensability, in Catholicism, of the recipient's faith for the fruitful reception of a sacrament. We are grateful to learn that, in Catholic understanding, the saving power of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the sacrament of baptism. This encourages us to revisit our own understanding. We have discovered that Lutheran theology affirms the centrality of discipleship as a response of gratitude for grace. Both churches hold to the primacy of the Bible and place the Bible at the center of theology and spirituality, as we do. At the same time they have a developed understanding of tradition in relation to scripture and its role in guiding the church from which we can learn.

123. To understand one another's theology and practice of baptism it has been helpful to consider together the larger process of initiation into Christ, the church, and discipleship. Doing so reveals important parallels with Catholics and Lutherans. For example, while churches that practice believers' baptism do not baptize infants, most of them practice the dedication of children by parents, as well as nurturing and instruction in church and home of those children. It is the hope of the parents that their children will eventually arrive at an owned faith, at which point they will be baptized into Christ and his body. Lutherans and Catholics share this hope when they baptize infants and nurture children.

Challenges Accepted

124. We welcome the challenge this dialogue has brought us to more clearly see a commitment to the unity of the body of Christ as integral to our sense of church and mission. Working for church unity enlarges our faithfulness to the gospel rather than, as is sometimes feared, reducing it. We recognize the pain that those traditions express when we baptize someone who has been baptized as an infant in their churches, which suggests to them that we consider their baptism invalid.

125. We have much to learn concerning the faithful practice of “reconciled diversity”. By the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit this practice holds together divergent realities in unity. One of these realities is the fostering of deep convictions arising from obedience to the gospel. Another is a willingness to learn from and co-operate with those of different convictions that also arise from obedience to the gospel.

126. We have been challenged to acknowledge that the beginning of infant baptism is not co-terminus with the rise of the state church. Infant baptism was practiced in some settings before Constantine. But baptism on confession of faith remained the dominant form of baptism after a Christian social order had been established. In some settings infant and believers baptism were practiced side by side without being church dividing.

127. We have been challenged in our understanding of conversion and baptism to better hold together an awareness of our continuing tendency to go against God and the possibility of leading a life following Jesus Christ faithfully.

128. We have been challenged not to allow our concern for the human response in conversion and baptism to overshadow the divine initiative in every aspect of salvation, including baptism.

129. We have been challenged to develop greater consistency and depth in preparing people for baptism and in making the remembrance of our baptism a lifelong motif of discipleship.

130. We have been challenged to formulate a fuller theology of the child, particularly with regard to the age of accountability and the salvific status of older children who have reached the age of accountability. Clarity at these points would enrich the dedication of parents and newborn children as well as their subsequent nurture.

For Consideration

131. With these gifts and challenges in mind and heart we continue to affirm our historic belief that the baptism of believers is the normative teaching and practice of the New Testament. We reaffirm this teaching and practice as normative today. At the same time we respect those who make a theological case for infant baptism that is linked integrally to a personal confirmation of faith and a life of discipleship as an adult.

132. We affirm our oneness with the whole body of Christ in Trinitarian faith lived out through trust in and obedience to Jesus Christ. We believe that this oneness is greater than our disagreement concerning particular practices of baptism and their timing.

133. On the basis of this shared faith and in respect for the intention of those who baptize infants – setting them on the path toward life in Christ – we propose that Anabaptist-Mennonite churches consider:

- a. receiving members from infant baptism churches on the basis of their confession of faith and commitment to discipleship without repeating the water rite. If the candidate requests rebaptism a process of discernment prior to her/his reception should include conversation between the candidate, the church of origin, and the receiving church in respect for one another and unity in the body of Christ;
- b. honoring the nurturing that candidates received toward Christ in their church of origin (where that is the case);
- c. asking all members, including those now being received, 1) to affirm our theological- ecclesiological interpretation and practice of baptism and 2) to respect those churches which practice baptism into a life of faith and discipleship differently as brothers and sisters in the one body of Christ;
- d. enriching (or developing) practices of thanksgiving and blessing of newborn children and their parents as well as committing local congregations to nurture and care for them;
- e. providing occasions for all members to “remember their baptism” and renew their baptismal commitments in both congregational and interchurch settings.
- f. calling for collective and individual soul searching as to why it has been so difficult for us to hold together the quest for purity and the quest for unity, among ourselves and with other churches.

We pray that this trilateral dialogue on the matter of baptism might bring its three partners to greater integrity and faithfulness in living the whole gospel in a broken world.

CONCLUDING LUTHERAN REFLECTIONS

Convictions Held

134. Lutherans believe that baptism is the great promise of God, given once and for the whole life, to receive a human being into communion with the Triune God. Thus they are called to ground their Christian life on a word and action of God who is faithful even though they might not be faithful. Luther emphasized, “And this is the reason why our theology is certain: it snatches us away from ourselves and places us outside ourselves.”¹¹⁵ Since human beings are never able to have full insight into their inner state, and their inner life often changes, they cannot fully trust in themselves. It was Luther’s liberating insight not to set his eyes on his contrition when he asked for forgiveness, but on Christ’s promise. Thus assurance of faith and the joy of the gospel filled his heart.

115. *Luther’s Works*, 26: 387.

135. When Lutherans believe in the promise of Christ, they do not describe it in terms of a decision of their will to believe, rather as a situation of eye-opening that has happened to them, as was the case with the two disciples of Jesus on the way to Emmaus. Their eyes were closed, but they encountered Jesus when their eyes were opened. In a similar way Luther describes coming to believe as illumination:

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith.¹¹⁶

136. While Lutherans emphasize that faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit, they continue to say,

When, however, people have been converted and thus have been enlightened, and the will has been renewed, then such people desire the good (insofar as they are born anew and are new creatures) and ‘delight in the law in the inmost self’ (Rom 7:22). As Paul says, ‘For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God’ [Rom 8:14] [...] This leading of the Holy Spirit is not a *coactio* (or a compulsion), but rather the converted person does the good spontaneously [...] It follows from this [...] that as soon as the Holy Spirit has begun his work of rebirth and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that on the basis of his power we can and should be cooperating with him, though still in great weakness. This occurs not on the basis of our fleshly, natural powers but on the basis of the new powers and gifts which the Holy Spirit initiated in us in conversion.¹¹⁷

Gifts Received

137. The gift that Lutherans received from Mennonites is the gift of reconciliation. At the 450th anniversary of the *Augsburg Confession*, Mennonites made Lutherans aware that their confession contained five condemnations of Anabaptist convictions and also of Anabaptists themselves, and that such condemnations had serious consequences in the 16th century and after that: marginalization, expulsion, and persecution. The dialogues following that anniversary confronted Lutherans with a dark part of their history. For the Lutheran members of the study commission and all who were engaged in that process, this was a painful and shameful learning process. It was very helpful and a condition that the process led to a good end, that Mennonites in those conversations were very patient, putting no pressure on the Lutherans, not expecting a particular reaction, even being self-critical, open to what the Holy Spirit wanted to tell both communions. This attitude allowed Lutherans to experience the Mennonite commitment to peace and reconciliation. So Lutherans were free to find their own way to relate to this painful history, and when they decided to confess publicly the sins of the Lutherans and ask for forgiveness, the Mennonites took these plans up in a very thoughtful, brotherly and

116. Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 355-356.

117. Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 556 (Formula of Concord. Solid Declaration, art. II: Free Will).

sisterly way. The overwhelming reaction to LWF's announcement of a public action at the Assembly of the Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay was an unexpected, deeply moving gift to the Lutherans, and even more the courage, the strength, the generosity to grant forgiveness, and to be open for reconciliation at the Lutheran Assembly in Stuttgart in 2010. Lutherans are delighted that the process of being in dialogue, keeping an eye on one another, following the path of reconciliation and healing memories continues. Even if we cannot change history, we can reduce the burdens of history that we have to carry, thus opening the ways to a future of brotherly and sisterly relations and cooperation.

138. The gift that Lutherans received from the Catholics in recent years is their widespread readiness to join the Lutherans in commemorating the Reformation. Lutheran/Catholic ecumenism took up the challenge of a joint commemoration. This required a learning process on both sides, for example in the Lutheran/Roman Catholic Commission on Unity. The mere fact that many Catholics gave up saying "There is nothing to be celebrated in 2017" is a great gift for Lutherans. They realized that the Reformation is a highly complex reality that includes aspects to be lamented, but also aspects that are gifts for the whole church. The Catholic/Lutheran dialogues have revealed so much common ground between Lutherans and Catholics that there are many reasons also for celebrating the Reformation. It is a remarkable sign that in 2017 we looked back at 500 years of the Reformation, but also at 50 years of ecumenical dialogue between the two churches that were in conflict for such a long time. That Catholics – also the leadership of the Catholic Church – were ready to begin a journey from conflict to communion and to continue on it, was an astonishing gift for Lutherans, unthinkable even a few decades ago. This process came to its strongest visible expression in the ecumenical prayer service in the Cathedral of Lund on October 31, 2016, jointly led by the Lutheran leaders and Pope Francis. That the Pope would lead a common prayer in commemoration of the Reformation that began with the expression of joy and thankfulness for what the Church (in the singular) had received through the Reformation was a gift. Pope Francis prayed: "O Holy Spirit: help us to rejoice in the gifts that have come to the Church through the Reformation, prepare us to repent for the dividing walls that we, and our forebears, have built, and equip us for common witness and service in the world." What a gift!

139. One major gift that the Lutherans received in the trilateral dialogue on baptism is the following experience. Even though our three communities have been divided over the understanding and practice of baptism, explaining to one another the respective insights, experiences, concerns that lie behind the other's practice of baptism, opened the eyes of the Lutherans to the spiritual and ecclesial realities of the others, and they have realized many features and aspects in the other churches that are valuable and familiar to them. Lutherans have come to appreciate that in a time of growing individualism Mennonite congregations offer a communal space for the growth in faith of those who are baptized. They have also been impressed and challenged by the way Mennonites live out baptism through the commitment to non-violence and peacemaking in society. Catholics challenged Lutherans through the emphasis on the family's role in baptism and on the faith of the church in which a person is baptized, and through the awareness of the presence of the universal church in each baptism.

Experiencing those commonalities and these strengths of the others brought the participants of the dialogue much closer together.

Challenges Accepted

140. Lutherans are challenged to develop a theology of the child, especially addressing the soteriological status of unbaptized children and to reflect on how to relate to article IX of the Latin version of the *Augsburg Confession* and its condemnation of those who assert “that children are saved without baptism.”¹¹⁸

141. Lutherans emphasize that promise and faith, the act of baptism and faith in it belong together in order to achieve salvation; nevertheless, they experience quite often that baptized people do not take their baptism seriously. Looking at our own churches with the eyes of Mennonites makes this even more painful. Therefore the conclusion should be drawn that, whoever baptizes infants has the obligation to do mission, catechesis and make all attempts so that the baptized appreciate their baptism and rejoice in it in faith.

142. That baptism is the basis and point of reference for the whole Christian life, is often forgotten in the everyday journey of the believer. Thus all possible attempts should be made to make people aware of baptism as a gift and challenge for everybody’s Christian life, for example through services for the commemoration of baptism.

143. Baptism is the introduction into the body of Christ that transcends the borders of nations and confessions of faith. Looking at our baptism with the eyes of Catholics, Lutherans might become aware that the dimension of the universal church is often absent from their minds. In order to strengthen the awareness of this dimension that belongs to each baptism, one could think of special baptismal services in which representatives of other churches participate and give a testimony for the baptized. In so doing, they witness to the presence of the universal church.

CONCLUDING CATHOLIC REFLECTIONS

Convictions Held

144. Catholics believe that Christ founded his Church as the “universal sacrament of salvation”¹¹⁹ that is, as a sign and effective instrument to bring about communion with God and among human beings. The Church is the pilgrim people of God, journeying through history to the promised kingdom which Jesus inaugurated in his incarnation, mission, death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit is the principle of unity of the Church, giving her life and empowering her for this journey. Baptism, along with the other sacraments, fits into this ecclesiological framework. It is the beginning of Christian life, the doorway to the reception of the other six sacraments which assist Catholics throughout life in their path of discipleship. Baptism frees from sin, gives one new birth as a child

118. Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 43.

119. *Lumen gentium*, § 48; *Gaudium et spes*, § 45

of God, incorporates into the body of Christ the Church, calls and equips one to strive for holiness, and impels one to participate in service both within the confines of the Christian community and in the church's evangelization and service to the world.

145. Baptism is related to the catholicity of the church, as this quality is understood in its various meanings. Through baptism, a Catholic feels and is part of a world-wide community, so that the initiatives (such as the proclamation of a "holy year" dedicated to reflecting upon God's mercy) or teachings (such as those calling on all who request baptism to commit themselves to a life of sanctity or emphasize the centrality of the Word of God for the life of the Church) touch Catholics throughout the entire world. But Baptism is also part of the life of the local communities, be they dioceses under the guidance of the bishop, who each year on Holy Thursday consecrates the oil of chrism that is used in every celebration of baptism, or be they parishes, where baptism is often celebrated within the context of the Sunday liturgy. Even that smallest expression of the church – the family, which is considered "the domestic church" – has an important role in the celebration of baptism. The Catholic practice of baptizing infants, which is one of the most ancient traditions of the church, is predicated upon and officially encouraged only on the basis of confidence in parents to provide for the Christian formation of their children.

146. Catholic tradition includes a firm belief in the unconditional love of God and confidence in the Father's universal will of salvation (see 1 Tim 2:4). Affirming that Jesus is the one and only savior (see Acts 4:12), Catholics believe that the action of Holy Spirit (Spirit of Christ) is not limited to the Church or to Christianity, to the point of having hope for the salvation of those who remain unbaptized. This led the bishops at Vatican II to state in *Gaudium et spes*: "For since Christ died for all, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery".¹²⁰

Gifts Received

147. We have received a sense of hope for Christian unity in light of the witness of faith that has been expressed by our dialogue partners during these conversations.

148. We have been inspired by the willingness of Mennonites to consider the reasons which we give in favor of our practice of baptizing small children and possibly to revisit their past evaluations of our practice and their courage in remembering the past in such a way as to seek a healing of memories and reconciliation.

149. We appreciate the depth of theological reflection about the seriousness and power of sin, which we have listened to in the presentation and discussion of contributions by our Lutheran partners.

120. *Gaudium et spes*, § 22.

150. We have appreciated the experience of worship with both of our partners, the dimensions of flexibility and spontaneity in prayer, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

151. We have valued the sharing of beautiful perspectives about and commitment to peace, to Christian mission and to community life.

152. We have appreciated the role of the Bible in the thought and practice of our Lutheran and Mennonite partners.

153. We note that some of the common challenges which we face today seem more urgent than the traditional frontiers and barriers that divide us.

Challenges Accepted

154. In light of the fact that the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* proved to be a valuable resource during our conversations about baptism, indicating that it can be useful in dialogue about more topics than just that of justification by faith, the Catholic church ought to continue to explore ways of inviting even more churches to associate with that agreement.

155. We need to devise strategies and pastoral programs that will help Catholics to more deeply appreciate the value of baptism, recognizing that there is a problem in the current lack of such appreciation.

156. It would be good to devise a common ritual for the welcoming into our Church believers who have been baptized in other communities.

157. There is a clear gap between our theology of baptism which relates it inseparably to discipleship of Christ and involvement in the life of the community, on the one hand, and the fact that such commitment on the part of many baptized Catholics is lukewarm or lacking, on the other. Pastoral strategies and faith formation are called for to address this gap between our professed baptismal theology and our pastoral experience, especially to ensure that parents who request the baptism of their children understand the responsibility they are assuming to provide the means for the child to arrive at a personal and committed faith.

158. We need to stress more effectively the link between baptism and mission.

For Consideration

159. Future dialogues might take up and/or continue to explore:

- a. the relation between baptism and profession of faith as expressed in the creed, as professed by all, including children, in the assembly on Sundays;
- b. the discernment and pastoral assistance of those already baptized who seek fuller commitment (such as formation, liturgical instruction, pastoral accompaniment through difficult situations, training in missions) to counter the challenge of further fracturing or division within our own communities;

- c. the practical and theological links between baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit, baptism of desire, and baptism of blood could help us to challenge a too simplistic vision of baptism; if baptism is a participation in the life and death of Christ, it needs to be realized according to various vocations and situations;
- d. further study of the theology and practice of confirmation as it relates to baptism (not just as a profession of faith) – especially in relation to the Lutheran understanding and practice of confirmation.

IN THANKSGIVING FOR OUR ONE BAPTISM

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:4-7)

160. In recent decades, Lutherans, Mennonites, and Catholics have made new efforts to walk together toward greater unity. As Pope Francis pointed out in a Vespers celebration concluding the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity, “Unity grows along the way; it never stands still. Unity happens when we walk together.”¹²¹ The two bilateral dialogues in which the Mennonite World Conference engaged – one with Catholics (1998-2003), resulting in the report *Called to be Peacemakers*, and the other with Lutherans (2005-2008), resulting in the report *Healing Memories*, led to a powerful service of reconciliation in 2010. Both dialogues entailed an honest assessment of the painful memories of our past histories. In doing so, we rediscovered one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, which gave rise to the desire to explore one of the more important features in the life of each of our churches – the theology and practice of baptism. To borrow an expression from a recent bilateral report produced for the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation, our three communities have been moving from “Conflict to Communion”. Steps toward reconciliation of our historical experiences have engendered the desire to take up the theological and pastoral issues surrounding baptism, which have been a source of conflict between us in the past.

161. The reason for now entering into serious discussion about theological and pastoral questions can be found in our conviction that Jesus Christ calls us to be one and we are unfaithful to him if we acquiesce to our current state of division. Our aim has been to continue on the path of increased mutual understanding and cooperation by focusing on foundational matters concerning the understanding and practice of baptism. Without avoiding areas of disagreement, we have learned that when considering baptism as it relates to the justification and sanctification of the sinner, as it entails entrance into the faith and life of the Christian community, and as it calls for a daily cooperation with the grace of the Holy Spirit so as to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we have many convictions in common. In particular, we have striven to overcome misunderstandings

121. Homily for Vespers concluding the week of prayer for Christian Unity, January 25, 2015; text available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150125_vespri-conversione-san-paolo.html [accessed 1 December, 2018].

and stereotypes in order to have a more adequate grasp of how each of our churches seeks to support theologically its understanding and practice of baptism. We have discovered that some of the differences are not contradictory but rather acceptable variations of perspective and that some of the differences in practice or in the living out of baptism may be complementary, even mutually enriching. We have observed developments in the doctrine and practice of baptism over the course of the centuries within all of our traditions that have allowed each of our three traditions to see the others in a more positive light.

162. In the course of our conversations relating baptism to the overcoming of sin, to life within the Christian community, and to the living out of faith, several topics emerged which could provide motivation and material for fruitful dialogue in the future. A first topic concerns the challenge of arriving at agreement about what can be considered as an authentic living out of baptism, on a number of specific questions. How and why is it that churches and committed Christians can come to contradictory conclusions about issues such as just war or human sexuality? What means are available to the Church to arrive at consensus on ethical issues in today's world, when many values about which Christians had been in agreement in the past now are being reconsidered, leading to contradictory conclusions? How do the churches arrive at consensus about living according to the Gospel? Is agreement on following Christ of such importance that it is an essential element of the unity which is sought by the churches engaged in the ecumenical movement? Do contradictory moral convictions make unity impossible? A second matter related to baptism, which perhaps acquires special relevance in today's world of global interconnectedness, would be to consider together how we reconcile the message of the New Testament that Jesus is the one and only savior of humanity with the fact that billions of human beings in the past, at present, and in the foreseeable future have not accepted and most likely may never accept the good news of the Gospel? Can our churches arrive at some common perspectives on the unique saving mission of Jesus and its implications for our approach to evangelization and our respect for those who do not yet accept Christ? Finally, another trilateral conversation between our churches might revisit the recent Lutheran-Catholic international commission's work on how recognition of baptism relates to the possibility of sharing the Eucharist, so as to explore whether the Anabaptist tradition could provide further insight on this important topic. Each of these issues relates in some way to ecclesiology. Perhaps our three churches may want to consider sponsoring a further trilateral conversation to address them, so as not only to help us grow toward fuller unity but also to enrich reflection and practice within each of our communities.

163. We believe that, having involved three churches instead of following the more common bilateral format, our conversations have enjoyed a unique, dynamic quality which has been particularly enriching. We would suggest that this dynamic interchange of insights be shared by the readers of this report, by finding means to read and discuss it within a group setting that includes members of all three communities. Convinced by the words of the apostle Paul in the letter to the Ephesians, we propose to our sponsoring churches that they consider setting in motion some process that could produce a prayer service in which members of all three of our communities could thank God for the gift of their "one baptism," celebrate the fact that we are all baptized into that "one

body” in the name of the one Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and renew together their baptismal commitment to live in life-long discipleship. Such a joint celebration bringing together Christians – whether they had been baptized as infants, young persons, or adults – could be a powerful step in fostering greater reconciliation among us, as we renew together our common commitment to follow Jesus Christ daily.

164. The principle aim of our five years of dialogue with one another has been to help each other grow in faithfulness to Jesus Christ. More, specifically it has been to grow in faithfulness in the way in which we understand, celebrate, and live out our baptism. Our shared prayer and reflection on the Scriptures, during each of our annual sessions, had this as its purpose. We make it our prayer again as we bring these years of dialogue to a close.

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WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2021

LETTER OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY TO THE ECUMENICAL COMMISSIONS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES AND OF THE SYNODS OF THE ORIENTAL CATHOLIC CHURCHES

On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, I am pleased to send you the enclosed resources for the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity 2021. These materials have been prepared by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp (Switzerland) in collaboration with an international committee comprising representatives from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

The biblical theme that was chosen, “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit”, is based on John 15:1-17 and expresses Grandchamp Community’s vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the church and the human family. Abiding in God’s love means first of all to be reconciled with oneself. As we continue to abide in God’s love we are pruned by means of God’s Word and we grow spiritually. Drawing on an image from the 6th century Palestinian monk, Dorotheus of Gaza, the sisters invite us to understand that as one comes closer to God in the spiritual life one also draws closer to one’s brothers and sisters in Christ and into greater solidarity with the whole of creation. Reconciliation with God in prayer bears fruit in reconciliation with others and with creation.

The Worship Service reflects the ways in which the sisters of Grandchamp pray. Therefore it is shaped by three sections, called ‘vigils’, which follow a pattern used by the community and propose different actions.

The enclosed materials include also an introduction to the theme, a selection of readings together with reflections and prayers for the eight days of the Octave of Prayer octave, and an account on the ecumenical experience in the Community of Grandchamp. A selection of hymns are also proposed to be used during the three vigils.

The resources can be drawn upon in many ways, and are intended for use not only during the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity, but throughout the year 2021. The materials are also available online, and in translation, at the website of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity:

<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en.html>

The Pontifical Council for the Promoting of Christian Unity requests that you bring these resources to the attention of those responsible for coordinating Prayer for Christian Unity events. We strongly encourage the regional or local adaptation of the material, so that it may effectively address the local religious and social context. It is also hoped that the material will be adapted and made available to young people, youth groups and associations. This process will provide a further valuable opportunity for collaboration between Christians at the local level.

With every good wish, and in appreciation of your efforts for the cause of Christian Unity, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ

✠ Brian Farrell
Secretary

RESOURCES FOR
THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR
CHRISTIAN UNITY
AND THROUGHOUT THE YEAR 2021

Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit

(cf. Jn 15:5–9)

Jointly prepared and published by
The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
The Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches

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TO THOSE ORGANIZING THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

THE SEARCH FOR UNITY: THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

The traditional period in the northern hemisphere for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is 18-25 January. Those dates were proposed in 1908 by Paul Wattson to cover the days between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul, and therefore have a symbolic significance. In the southern hemisphere where January is a vacation time churches often find other days to celebrate the Week of Prayer, for example around Pentecost (suggested by the Faith and Order movement in 1926), which is also a symbolic date for the unity of the Church.

Mindful of the need for flexibility, we invite you to use this material throughout the whole year to express the degree of communion which the churches have already reached, and to pray together for that full unity which is Christ's will.

ADAPTING THE TEXT

This material is offered with the understanding that, whenever possible, it will be adapted for use in local situations. Account should be taken of local liturgical and devotional practice, and of the whole social and cultural context. Such adaptation should ideally take place ecumenically. In some places ecumenical structures are already set up for adapting the material; in other places, we hope that the need to adapt it will be a stimulus to creating such structures.

USING THE WEEK OF PRAYER MATERIAL

- For churches and Christian communities which observe the Week of Prayer together through a single common service, an order for an ecumenical worship service is provided.
- Churches and Christian communities may also incorporate material from the Week of Prayer into their own services. Prayers from the ecumenical worship service, the “eight days”, and the selection of additional prayers can be used as appropriate in their own setting.
- Communities which observe the Week of Prayer in their worship for each day during the week may draw material for these services from the “eight days”.
- Those wishing to undertake bible studies on the Week of Prayer theme can use as a basis the biblical texts and reflections given in the eight days. Each day the discussions can lead to a closing period of intercessory prayer.
- Those who wish to pray privately may find the material helpful for focusing their prayer intentions. They can be mindful that they are in communion with others praying all around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ's Church.

BIBLICAL TEXT FOR 2021

John 15:1–17

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

New Revised Standard Version

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2021

Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit *(cf. Jn 15:5-9)*

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2021 was prepared by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp.¹ The theme that was chosen, “*Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit*”, is based on John 15:1-17 and expresses Grandchamp Community’s vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the church and the human family.

In the 1930s a number of Reformed women from French-speaking Switzerland who belonged to a group known as the “Ladies of Morges” rediscovered the importance of silence in listening to the Word of God. At the same time they revived the practice of spiritual retreats to nourish their life of faith, inspired by the example of Christ who went apart to a lonely place to pray. They were soon joined by others who took part in regularly organized retreats in Grandchamp, a small hamlet near the shores of Lake Neuchâtel. It became necessary to provide a permanent presence of prayer and welcome for the growing number of guests and retreatants.

Today the community has fifty sisters, all women from different generations, church traditions, countries and continents. In their diversity the sisters are a living parable of communion. They remain faithful to a life of prayer, life in community and the welcoming of guests. The sisters share the grace of their monastic life with visitors and volunteers who go to Grandchamp for a time of retreat, silence, healing or in search of meaning.

The first sisters experienced the pain of division between the Christian churches. In this struggle they were encouraged by their friendship with Abbé Paul Couturier, a pioneer of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Therefore, from its earliest beginnings prayer for Christian unity was at the heart of the life of the community. This commitment, together with Grandchamp’s fidelity to the three pillars of prayer, community life and hospitality, form the foundations of these materials.

1. See also the presentation on the community at the end of this booklet, as well as www.grandchamp.org.

To abide in God's love is to be reconciled with oneself

The French words for monk and nun (moine/moniale) come from the Greek *μόνος* which means alone and one. Our hearts, bodies and minds, far from being one, are often scattered, being pulled in several directions. The monk or nun desires to be one in his or her self and united with Christ. "Abide in me as I abide in you," Jesus tells us (Jn 15:4a). An integrated life presupposes a path of self-acceptance, of reconciliation with our personal and inherited histories.

Jesus said to the disciples, "abide in my love" (Jn 15:9). He abides in the love of the Father (Jn 15:10) and desires nothing other than to share this love with us: "I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (Jn 15:15b). Grafted into the vine, which is Jesus himself, the Father becomes our vinedresser who prunes us to make us grow. This describes what happens in prayer. The Father is the centre of our lives, who centres our lives. He prunes us and makes us whole, and whole human beings give glory to the Father.

Abiding in Christ is an inner attitude that takes root in us over time. It demands space to grow. It can be overtaken by the struggle for the necessities of life and it is threatened by the distractions, noise, activity and the challenges of life. In the turmoil of Europe in 1938, Geneviève Micheli, who would later become Mother Geneviève, the first mother of the community, wrote these lines which remain relevant today:

We live in a time that is both troubling and magnificent, a dangerous time where nothing preserves the soul, where rapid and wholly human achievements seem to sweep beings away ... And I think that our civilization will die in this collective madness of noise and speed, where no being can think ... We Christians, who know the full value of a spiritual life, have an immense responsibility and must realize it, unite and help each other create forces of calmness, refuges of peace, vital centres where the silence of people calls on the creative word of God. It is a question of life and death.

Abiding in Christ until we bear fruit

"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit" (Jn 15:8). We cannot bear fruit on our own. We cannot bear fruit separated from the vine. It is the sap, the life of Jesus flowing through us, that produces fruit. Remaining in Jesus's love, remaining a branch of the vine, is what allows his life to flow through us.

When we listen to Jesus his life flows through us. Jesus invites us to let his word abide in us (John 15:7) and then whatever we ask will be done for us. By his word we bear fruit. As persons, as a community, as the entire church, we wish to unite ourselves to Christ in order to keep his commandment of loving one another as He has loved us (Jn 15:12).

Abiding in Christ, the source of all love, the fruit of communion grows

Communion with Christ demands communion with others. Dorotheus of Gaza, a monk in Palestine in the 6th century, expressed this in the following way:

Imagine a circle drawn on the ground, that is, a line drawn in a circle with a compass, and a centre. Imagine that the circle is the world, the centre is God, and the radii are the different paths or ways people live. When the saints, desiring to draw near to God, walk toward the middle of the circle, to the extent that they penetrate its interior, they draw closer to each other; and the closer they draw to each other, the closer they come to God. Understand that the same thing applies conversely, when we turn away from God and withdraw toward the outside. It then becomes obvious that the more we move away from God, the more we move away from each other, and the more we move away from each other, the more we also move away from God.

Moving closer to others, living together in community with others, sometimes people very different from ourselves, can be challenging. The sisters of Grandchamp know this challenge and for them the teaching of Brother Roger of Taizé² is very helpful: “There is no friendship without purifying suffering. There is no love of one’s neighbour without the cross. The cross alone allows us to know the unfathomable depth of love.”³

Divisions among Christians, moving away from one another, are a scandal because it is also moving further away from God. Many Christians, moved to sorrow by this situation, pray fervently to God for the restoration of that unity for which Jesus prayed. Christ’s prayer for unity is an invitation to turn back to him and so come closer to one another, rejoicing in the richness of our diversity.

As we learn from community life, efforts at reconciliation are costly and demand sacrifice. We are sustained by the prayer of Christ, who desires that we might be one, as he is one with the Father so that the world may believe (cf. Jn 17:21).

Abiding in Christ the fruit of solidarity and witness grows

Though we, as Christians, abide in the love of Christ, we also live in a creation that groans as it waits to be set free (cf. Rom 8). In the world we witness the evils of suffering and conflict. Through solidarity with those who suffer we allow the love of Christ to flow through us. The paschal mystery bears fruit in us when we offer love to our brothers and sisters and nurture hope in the world.

Spirituality and solidarity are inseparably linked. Abiding in Christ, we receive the strength and wisdom to act against structures of injustice and oppression, to fully recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters in humanity, and to be creators of a new way of living, with respect for and communion with all of creation.

The summary of the rule of life⁴ that the sisters of Grandchamp recite together each morning begins with the words “pray and work that God may reign”. Prayer and

2. The Community of Grandchamp and that of the brothers of Taizé in France are bound together first of all in view of the history of their origins, but also by the fact that the sisters of Grandchamp based their Rule on the book mentioned in footnote 3.

3. Frère Roger de Taizé, *Les écrits fondateurs, Dieu nous veut heureux* (Taizé: Les Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 2011), 95.

4. During the ecumenical celebration, we propose reciting this text together; see p. 332.

everyday life are not two separate realities but are meant to be united. All that we experience is meant to become an encounter with God.

For the eight days of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2021, we propose a journey of prayer:

- Day 1: Called by God: “You did not choose me but I chose you” (Jn 15:16a)
- Day 2: Maturing internally: “Abide in me as I abide in you” (Jn 15:4a)
- Day 3: Forming one body: “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12b)
- Day 4: Praying together: “I do not call you servants any longer ... but I have called you friends” (Jn 15:15)
- Day 5: Letting oneself be transformed by the Word: “You have already been pruned by the word...” (Jn 15:3)
- Day 6: Welcoming others: “Go and bear fruit, fruit that will last” (Jn 15:16b)
- Day 7: Growing in unity: “I am the vine, you are the branches” (Jn 15:5a)
- Day 8: Reconciling with all of creation: “So that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (Jn 15:11)

THE PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2021

The international group jointly sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches to prepare materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2021 met in Grandchamp, Areuse, in the canton of Neuchatel, Switzerland, 15-18 September. The World Council of Churches had invited the Community of Grandchamp to choose a theme and draft a text for the Week of Prayer. The whole Community worked over the course of several months on this draft, which then formed the basis of the drafting work with the international group. Four of the sisters also worked with the international group during the September meeting. The meeting was chaired jointly by the director of the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission, Revd Odair Pedroso Mateus, and Revd Anthony Currer from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Community of Grandchamp is a monastic community that brings together sisters from different churches and countries. The Community was established in the first half of the twentieth century, and from its inception had close ties with both the Community of Taizé and Abbé Paul Couturier, a seminal figure in the history of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Today there are about fifty sisters in the community, committed to seeking the path of reconciliation between Christians, across the human family, and with respect to the whole of creation.

The theme chosen by the local writing group was *Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit* (cf. Jn 15:5-9). This allowed the sisters to share the experience and wisdom of their contemplative life abiding in the love of God, and to speak about the fruit of this prayer: closer communion with one's brothers and sisters in Christ and greater solidarity with the whole of creation.

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Participants from the Community of Grandchamp

Sr Anne-Emmanuelle Guy

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Secretarial Support was provided by Mr Alexander Freeman of the WCC.

ECUMENICAL CELEBRATION

INTRODUCTION

This celebration reflects the ways in which the sisters of Grandchamp pray. In this tradition three of the monastic prayer services – sometimes called ‘vigils’ or ‘nocturns’ in the Benedictine tradition– traditionally said during the night are combined into one evening service. In the same way, our service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is shaped by three sections, called ‘vigils’, which follow a pattern used by the community of Grandchamp.

Each vigil follows the same pattern: readings from scripture; a sung response; a time of silence; and intercessions. Each vigil also has an action reflecting its theme; these are outlined below. Each ends with the singing of *Light of God (Lumière de Dieu)*, composed by a member of the community of Grandchamp.

The first vigil is centred on the unity of the whole person and our abiding in Christ. Participants are invited to five minutes of silence. These moments are repeated throughout the celebration.

The second vigil expresses the desire to rediscover the visible unity of Christians. Anchored in the love of Christ, we turn to our neighbours and exchange with each other a sign of his peace.

The third vigil opens us up to the unity of all peoples, all creation. The action in it is inspired by a text of Dorotheus of Gaza (see introduction). Several people are positioned around a circle, and move towards the centre. The closer we move to God - the centre - the closer we draw to each other.

There is a variety of ways in which this action may be choreographed depending on the space being used, and the traditions of those involved. The following may serve as a guide:

- Each person in the congregation will need to have an unlit candle.
- Organisers may wish to consider whether it is possible for the congregation to be “in the round” with radial aisles to facilitate this action.
- A large, raised lit candle (for example the Easter candle in many traditions) is set as the central point of a circle.
- Six to eight people from different Christian traditions surround the candle in a circle that may be outlined on the ground, or shaped by the congregation’s sitting in the round.
- Each of these people carries a small unlit candle raised high so all can see.
- During the reading accompanying the action (see p. 17), each person in the circle takes steps at the same pace towards the centre.

- When they reach the centre they light their unlit candles and return to the congregation. Everyone’s candle is then lit.
- During the lighting of the congregation’s candles, *Lumière de Dieu (Light of God)* is sung.
- Everyone holds their lighted candle through to the Dismissal. In some places, where it is appropriate and practicable, the congregations may process out of the place of worship into the wider world, with candles lit.

The litany at the beginning can be read or sung – if possible, by two different people. The psalms can also be read or sung, or replaced by a hymn related to the theme of the vigil. The responses during the prayers of intercession can be read, sung or replaced by others. The intercessions can be prolonged by adding time for free prayer. Musical settings of the litany, responses and intercessions used at Grandchamp can be found on pp. 333–335.

Hymns can be accessed and heard on the website of the Community of Grandchamp: www.grandchamp.org.

You can also listen to their common prayer online every day at: www.grandchamp.org/prier-avec-nous

ORDER OF THE CELEBRATION

**Abide in my love
and you shall bear much fruit**
(cf. Jn 15:5–9)

- L** Leader
C Congregation
R Reader

INVITATION TO PRAYER

ENTRANCE HYMN

A hymn invoking the Holy Spirit (to be chosen locally)

WORDS OF WELCOME

- L** May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you always!
- C** **And also with you.**

R1 Brothers and sisters in Christ, this year the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, chosen by the sisters of the Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland, is: “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit”.

R2 It is the great desire of God, expressed by Jesus, that we might come to him and abide in him. He waits for us tirelessly, hoping that, united to him in love, we will bear fruit that will bring life to all. Faced with the difference of ‘the other’, we risk withdrawing into ourselves and seeing only that which separates us. But let us listen to how Christ calls us to abide in his love, and so bear much fruit.

R1 In the three moments of prayer that follow, we remember the call of Christ, we turn to his love, to him who is the centre of our life. For the path of unity begins in our intimate relationship with God. Abiding in his love strengthens the desire to seek unity and reconciliation with others. God opens us up to those who are different from us. This is an important fruit, a gift of healing for the divisions within us, between us, and in the world.

L In peace let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, you are the vinedresser who cares for us with love.
You call on us to see the beauty of each branch united to the vine,
the beauty of each person.
And yet, too often the differences in others make us afraid.
We withdraw into ourselves.
Our trust in you is forsaken.
Enmity develops between us.

Come and direct our hearts toward you once again.
Grant us to live from your forgiveness
so that we may be together and praise your name.

LITANY OF PRAISE

C You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

R1 We sing your praise in the midst of the world and among all peoples,

R2 We sing your praise in the midst of creation and among all creatures.

C You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

R1 We sing your praise among suffering and tears,

R2 We sing your praise among promises and achievements.

C You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

R1 We sing your praise in the places of conflict and misunderstanding;

R2 We sing your praise in the places of encounter and reconciliation.

C You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

- R1 We sing your praise in the midst of rifts and divisions,
 R2 We sing your praise in the midst of life and death,
 the birth of a new heaven and a new earth.

C You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

First Vigil | **Abiding in Christ:
 The unity of the whole person**

- Psalm:** 103
Reading: Jn 15:1-17
Response: Ubi caritas (p. 333)
Short silence (approximately 1 minute)

Intercessions

R God of love, through Christ you said to us: “You did not choose me but I chose you”. You seek us, you invite us to receive your friendship and abide in it. Teach us to respond more deeply to this invitation, and grow in a life that is ever more complete.

C The joy of our heart is in God. (*if sung, p. 334*)

R God of life, you call us to be praise in the midst of the world and to welcome one another as a gift of your grace. May your loving gaze, which rests upon each person, open us to receive each other just as we are.

C The joy of our heart is in God.

R God who gathers, you knit us together as one vine in your Son Jesus. May your loving Spirit abide in us at parish meetings and local ecumenical gatherings. Grant that together we might celebrate you with joy.

C The joy of our heart is in God.

R God of the one vineyard, you call us to abide in your love in all we do and say. Touched by your goodness, grant us to be a reflection of that love in our homes and workplaces. May we pave the way for bridging rivalries and overcoming tensions.

C The joy of our heart is in God.

Action: A time of silence

R Very often we think of prayer as something we do, an activity of our own. In this short time we are invited to an interior silence, and to turn aside from all the noise and concerns of our lives and thoughts. In this silence the action belongs to God. We are simply called to abide in God’s love, to rest in him.

Silence (approximately 5 minutes)

HYMN

Lumière de Dieu (Light of God) (p. 334)

Second Vigil | **The visible unity of Christians**

Psalm: 85

Reading: 1 Cor 1:10-13a

Response: There is One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism (p. 334)

Short silence (approximately 1 minute)

Intercessions

R Holy Spirit, you create and re-create the church in all places. Come and whisper in our hearts the prayer which Jesus addressed to his Father on the eve of his passion: “that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe”.

C Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy)

R Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, light the fire of your love in us so that suspicions, contempt and misunderstanding cease in the church. May the walls that separate us fall.

C Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy)

R Holy Spirit, Consoler of all, open our hearts to forgiveness and reconciliation and bring us back from our wanderings.

C Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy)

R Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, give us poverty of spirit so that we may welcome the unexpectedness of your grace.

C Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy)

R Holy Spirit, you never abandon the men, women and children who are persecuted for their fidelity to the gospel. Give them strength and courage, and support those who help them.

C Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy)

Action: Sharing a Sign of Peace

R The Lord calls us to be united among ourselves. He gives us his peace and invites us to share it. Let us exchange a sign of his peace with our neighbours.

Everyone turns to those near them and offers a sign of peace, in keeping with their local context.

HYMN

Lumière de Dieu (Light of God) (p. 334)

Third Vigil | The unity of all peoples and all creation

Psalm: 96

Reading: Rev. 7: 9-12

Response: O you who are beyond all things (p. 335)

Optional homily

Short silence (approximately 1 minute)

Intercessions

R God of life, you have created every human being in your image and likeness. We sing your praise for the gift of our many cultures, expressions of faith, traditions and ethnicities. Grant us the courage always to stand against injustice and hatred based on race, class, gender, religion, and fear of those not like ourselves.

C God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope! (*if sung, p. 335*)

R Merciful God, you have shown us in Christ that we are one in you. Teach us to use this gift in the world so that believers of all faiths in every country may be able to listen to each other and live in peace.

C God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

R O Jesus, you came into the world and shared fully in our humanity. You know the hardships of life for people who suffer in so many different ways. May the Spirit of compassion move us to share our time, life and goods with all those in need.

C God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

R Holy Spirit, you hear the fury of your wounded creation and the cries of those already suffering from climate change. Guide us toward new behaviours. May we learn to live in harmony as part of your creation.

C God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Action: Moving to the centre... and out to the world

inspired by a text of Dorotheus of Gaza

R We are called to be ministers of God's healing and reconciling love. This work can only be fruitful when we abide in God, as branches of the true vine which is Jesus Christ. As we come closer to God we draw closer to one another.

Imagine a circle drawn on the ground. Imagine that this circle is the world.

The designated persons stand up and form a circle around a central candle.

R The centre represents God, and the paths to the centre are different ways people live. When people living in this world, desiring to draw closer to God, walk toward the centre of the circle...

The persons take several steps toward the centre.

R ... to the extent that they move closer to the centre, to God, they move closer to one another. And the closer they come to one another....

The persons move to the centre together.

R ... the closer they come to God.

When the candle-bearers reach the centre they each light their candle. As they stand together at the centre all keep a time of prayer in silence.

Short Silence (*approximately 1 minute*)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

L With the words that Jesus taught us, let us now pray together:

C Our Father...

HYMN

Lumière de Dieu (Light of God) (p. 334)

During the singing the candle-bearers return and share with the congregation the light that they have received.

R Spirituality and solidarity are inseparably linked. Prayer and action belong together. When we abide in Christ, we receive the Spirit of courage and wisdom to act against all injustice and oppression. We say together:

**C Pray and work that God may reign.
Throughout your day
let the Word of God breathe life into work and rest.
Maintain inner silence in all things
so as to dwell in Christ.
Be filled with the spirit of the Beatitudes:
joy, simplicity, mercy.**

These words are recited daily by the Sisters of the Grandchamp Community.

BLESSING

L Be one, so that the world may believe! Abide in his love, go into the world and bear the fruits of this love.

C May the God of hope fill us with all joy and all peace in faith, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

FINAL HYMN

(to be chosen locally)

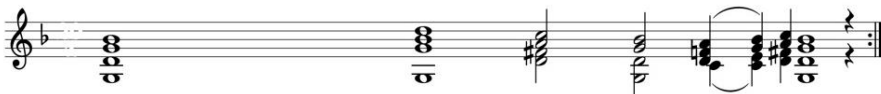
ADDITIONAL MATERIAL*

1. Litany of praise: “You who call us”

T: Esaie 62,7

Litanie "Toi qui nous appelles"

M: Grandchamp



Toi qui nous appelles à être lou-ange au mi-lieu de la terre : Gloi-re à Toi !

2. First vigil: Response after Jn 15:1–17: “Ubi Caritas”

Ubi caritas Deus ibi est

♩ = 58



U - bi ca - ri - tas et a - mor, u - bi ca - ri - tas De - us i - bi est.

J Where there is char-i-ty, self-less love, Where there is char-i-ty, God — is tru-ly there. / Ten, kur gai-les-tis ir mei-lè, ten, kur gai-les-tis, Die-vasten y-ra. /
いつくしみあいの あるところか-みとみに

Music: J. Gelineau

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* These hymns have been suggested by the Community of Grandchamp, which prepared the first project of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2021, and are published under their responsibility.

3. First vigil: Response for the intercession: “The joy of our hearts”

La joie de notre cœur

M+T: Grandchamp

V+R : La joie de no - tre cœur est en Dieu.

4. At the end of each vigil: “Light of God”

Lumière de Dieu

T+M : Grandchamp

1. Lu miè - re de Dieu, in - on - de la ter - re,
 2. Komm, gött - li - ches Licht, er - leuch - te die Er - de,
 3. Come light, light of God, give light to cre - a - tion,
 4. O god - de - lijk licht kom on - der ons wo - nen,
 5. Ó luz do Senh - or que vens so - bre a ter - ra
 6. Kom, Gud, med ditt ljus, och ge - nom - lys värld - en,
 7. Za - plav ce - lou zem, svě - tlo Bo - ží tvá - ře,
 8. Mwa - nga - za wa Mungu, u - ja - za un - do - go,

1. vi - si - te nos cœurs et de - meure a - vec nous.
 2. er - füll' un - sre Her - zen, nimm Woh - nung in uns.
 3. en - light - en our hearts and re - main with your world.
 4. door - dring de - ze aar - de, daal neer in ons hart.
 5. in - on - da meu ser, per - ma - ne - ce em nós.
 6. och fyll vå - ra hjär - tan, med när - va - ron din.
 7. vej - di do srd - cí a zů - stá - vej u nás.
 8. tembe - le - a mioyo yetu, na u - ka - e na - si.

5. Second vigil: Response after 1 Cor 1:10-13: “There is one Lord”

T : Eph. 4
 M : J. Berthier

There is one Lord one faith, one bap - ti - sm ;
 there is one God who is Fa - ther of all.

*Un seul Seigneur, une seule foi, un seul baptême,
 un seul Dieu qui est Père de tous.*

6. Third vigil after Rev. 7:9-12: “O you who are beyond all things”

♩ - 66 Ô toi l'au-delà de tout

O toi, l'au-de-là de tout, quel es-prit peut te sai-sir? Tous les
 ê-tres te cé-lè-brent, le dé-sir de tous a-spi-re vers toi. O

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a treble and bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 66. The melody is in G major and consists of two lines of music. The first line includes the lyrics 'O toi, l'au-de-là de tout, quel es-prit peut te sai-sir? Tous les' and the second line includes 'ê-tres te cé-lè-brent, le dé-sir de tous a-spi-re vers toi. O'. The piano accompaniment provides a steady harmonic foundation.

(You who are beyond all things, what mind can grasp you? All that lives celebrates you; the desire of all reaches out towards you. / Oh tú, el más allá de todo, ¿qué espíritu puede comprenderte? Todos los seres te celebran, el deseo de todos aspira a ti. / Tu che sei oltre ogni cosa, chi potrà mai afferrarti? Ogni creatura ti onora; verso te i desideri di tutti. / O du, der alles überragt, wie kann unser Verstand dich schauen? Jedes Wesen jubelt dir zu; allen gemeinsam ist die Sehnsucht nach dir. / Tyś jest ponad wszystko, jakież duch Cię ogarnie? Wszystkie stworzenia wystawiają Ciebie, wszyscy Ciebie pragną. S. Grégoire de Nazianze)

Music: Taizé

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7. Third vigil: Response for the intercession: “God of peace, God of love”

Dieu de paix, Dieu d'amour, en toi notre espoir - ce.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a treble clef with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of one flat (F major/D minor). The melody is simple and consists of a single line of music. The lyrics are 'Dieu de paix, Dieu d'amour, en toi notre espoir - ce.' The piano accompaniment is minimal, consisting of a few chords.

BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE EIGHT DAYS

DAY 1

Called by God

“You did not choose me but I chose you”

(Jn 15:16a)

Gen 12:1-4		The call of Abraham
Jn 1:35-51		The call of the first disciples

Meditation

The start of the journey is an encounter between a human being and God, between the created and the Creator, between time and eternity.

Abraham heard the call: “Go to the land I will show you”. Like Abraham we are called to leave that which is familiar and go to the place that God has prepared in the depths of our hearts. Along the way, we become more and more ourselves, the people God has wanted us to be from the beginning. And by following the call that is addressed to us, we become a blessing for our loved ones, our neighbours, and the world.

The love of God seeks us. God became human in Jesus, in whom we encounter the gaze of God. In our lives, as in the Gospel of John, God’s call is heard in different ways. Touched by his love, we set out. In this encounter, we walk a path of transformation - the bright beginning of a relationship of love that is always started anew.

One day you understood that, without your being aware of it, a yes had already been inscribed in your innermost depths. And so you chose to go forward in the footsteps of Christ....

In silence in the presence of Christ, you heard him say, “Come, follow me; I will give you a place to rest your heart.”

The Sources of Taizé (2000) p. 52

Prayer

Jesus Christ,
you seek us, you wish to offer us your friendship
and lead us to a life that is ever more complete.
Grant us the confidence to answer your call
so that we may be transformed
and become witnesses of your tenderness for the world.

DAY 2

Maturing internally

“Abide in me as I abide in you”

(Jn 15:4a)

Eph 3:14-21		May Christ dwell in our hearts
Lk 2:41-52		Mary treasured all these things

Meditation

The encounter with Jesus gives rise to the desire to stay with him and to abide in him: a time in which fruit matures.

Being fully human, like us Jesus grew and matured. He lived a simple life, rooted in the practices of his Jewish faith. In this hidden life in Nazareth, where apparently nothing extraordinary happened, the presence of the Father nourished him.

Mary contemplated the actions of God in her life and in that of her son. She treasured all these things in her heart. Thus, little by little, she embraced the mystery of Jesus.

We too need a long period of maturation, an entire lifetime, in order to plumb the depths of Christ's love, to let him abide in us and for us to abide in him. Without our knowing how, the Spirit makes Christ dwell in our hearts. And it is through prayer, by listening to the word, in sharing with others, by putting into practice what we have understood, that the inner being is strengthened.

“Letting Christ descend into the depths of our being ... He will penetrate the regions of the mind and the heart, he will reach our flesh unto our innermost being, so that we too will one day experience the depths of mercy.”

The Sources of Taizé (2000) p. 134

Prayer

Holy Spirit,
May we receive in our hearts the presence of Christ,
and cherish it as a secret of love.
Nourish our prayer,
enlighten our reading of Scripture,
act through us,
so that the fruits of your gifts can patiently grow in us.

DAY 3

Forming one body

“Love one another as I have loved you”

(Jn 15:12b)

Col 3:12-17 | Clothe yourself with compassion
Jn 13:1-15; 34-35 | Love one another

Meditation

On the eve of his death, Jesus knelt to wash the feet of his disciples. He knew the difficulty of living together and the importance of forgiveness and mutual service. “Unless I wash you,” he said to Peter, “you have no share with me.”

Peter received Jesus at his feet; he was washed and was touched by the humility and gentleness of Christ. Later he would follow Jesus’ example and serve the fellowship of the faithful in the early church.

Jesus wishes that life and love circulate through us as the sap through the vine, so that Christian communities be one body. But today as in the past, it is not easy to live together. We are often faced with our own limitations. At times we fail to love those who are close to us in a community, parish or family. There are times when our relationships break down completely.

In Christ we are invited to be clothed in compassion, through countless new beginnings. The recognition that we are loved by God moves us to welcome each other with our strengths and weaknesses. It is then that Christ is in our midst.

With almost nothing, are you a creator of reconciliation in that communion of love, which is the Body of Christ, his Church? Sustained by a shared momentum, rejoice! You are no longer alone, in all things you are advancing together with your brothers and sisters. With them, you are called to live the parable of community.

The Sources of Taizé (2000) pp. 48-49

Prayer

God our Father,
you reveal to us your love through Christ
and through our brothers and sisters.
Open our hearts so that we can welcome each other
with our differences and live in forgiveness.
Grant us to live united in one body,
so that the gift that is each person comes to light.
May all of us together be a reflection of the living Christ.

DAY 4

Praying together

**“I do not call you servants any longer...
but I have called you friends”**

(Jn 15:15)

Rom 8:26-27 | The Spirit helps us in our weakness
Lk 11:1-4 | Lord, teach us to pray

Meditation

God thirsts for relationship with us. He searches for us as he searched for Adam, calling to him in the garden: “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9)

In Christ, God came to meet us. Jesus lived in prayer, intimately united to his Father, while creating friendships with his disciples and all those he met. He introduced them to that which was most precious to him: the relationship of love with his Father, who is our Father. Jesus and the disciples sang psalms together, rooted in the richness of their Jewish tradition. At other times, Jesus retired to pray alone.

Prayer can be solitary or shared with others. It can express wonder, complaint, intercession, thanksgiving or simple silence. Sometimes the desire to pray is there, but one has the feeling of not being able to do so. Turning to Jesus and saying to him, “teach me”, can pave the way. Our desire itself is already prayer.

Getting together in a group offers us support. Through hymns, words and silence, communion is created. If we pray with Christians of other traditions, we may be surprised to feel united by a bond of friendship that comes from the One who is beyond all division. The forms may vary, but it is the same Spirit that brings us together.

In the regularity of our common prayer, the love of Jesus springs up within us, we know not how. Common prayer does not exempt us from personal prayer. One sustains the other. Let us take a time each day to renew our personal intimacy with Jesus Christ.

The Rule of Taizé in French and English

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Great Britain pp. 19 & 21

Prayer

Lord Jesus,
your entire life was prayer,
perfect harmony with the Father.
Through your Spirit, teach us to pray according to your will of love.
May the faithful of the whole world unite in intercession and praise,
and may your kingdom of love come.

DAY 5

Letting oneself be transformed by the Word

“You have already been pruned by the word...”

(Jn 15:3)

Deut 30:11-20 | The word of God is very close to you
Mt 5:1-12 | Blessed are you

Meditation

The Word of God is very close to us. It is a blessing and a promise of happiness. If we open our hearts, God speaks to us and patiently transforms that which is dying in us. He removes that which prevents the growth of real life, just as the vine grower prunes the vine.

Regularly meditating on a biblical text, alone or in a group, changes our outlook. Many Christians pray the Beatitudes every day. The Beatitudes reveal to us a happiness that is hidden in that which is unfulfilled, a happiness that lies beyond suffering: blessed are those who, touched by the Spirit, no longer hold back their tears but let them flow and thus receive consolation. As they discover the wellspring hidden within their inner landscape, the hunger for justice, and the thirst to engage with others for a world of peace, grows in them.

We are constantly called to renew our commitment to life, through our thoughts and actions. There are times when we already taste, here and now, the blessing that will be fulfilled at the end of time.

Pray and work that God may reign.

Throughout your day

Let the Word of God breathe life into work and rest.

Maintain inner silence in all things

so as to dwell in Christ.

Be filled with the spirit of the Beatitudes,

joy, simplicity, mercy.

These words are recited daily by the Sisters of the Grandchamp Community

Prayer

Blessed are you, God our Father,
for the gift of your word in Holy Scripture.
Blessed are you for its transforming power.
Help us choose life and guide us by your Spirit,
so that we can experience the happiness which you want so much to share with us.

DAY 6

Welcoming others

“Go and bear fruit, fruit that will last”

(Jn 15:16b)

Gen 18:1-5
Mk 6:30-44

Abraham hosts the angels at the Oak of Mamre
Jesus' compassion for the crowds

Meditation

When we let ourselves be transformed by Christ, his love in us grows and bears fruit. Welcoming the other is a concrete way of sharing the love that is within us.

Throughout his life, Jesus welcomed those he met. He listened to them and let himself be touched by them without being afraid of their suffering.

In the gospel account of the multiplication of the loaves, Jesus is moved with compassion after seeing the hungry crowd. He knows that the entire human person must be nourished, and that he alone can truly satisfy the hunger for bread and the thirst for life. But he does not wish to do this without his disciples, without that little something they can give him: five loaves and two fish.

Even today he draws us to be co-workers in his unconditional care. Sometimes something as small as a kind look, an open ear, or our presence is enough to make a person feel welcome. When we offer our poor abilities to Jesus, he uses them in a surprising way.

We then experience what Abraham did, for it is by giving that we receive, and when we welcome others, we are blessed in abundance.

It is Christ himself whom we receive in a guest.

The rule of Taizé in French and English (2012) p. 103

Will the people we welcome day after day find in us men and women radiant with Christ, our peace?

The Sources of Taizé (2000) p. 60

Prayer

Jesus Christ,
we desire to welcome fully the brothers and sisters who are with us.
You know how often we feel helpless in the face of their suffering,
yet you are always there ahead of us
and you have already received them in your compassion.
Speak to them through our words, support them through our actions, and let your
blessing rest on us all.

DAY 7

Growing in unity

“I am the vine, you are the branches”

(Jn 15:5a)

1 Cor 1:10-13; 3:21-23
Jn 17:20-23

Is Christ divided?
As you and I are one

Meditation

On the eve of his death, Jesus prayed for the unity of those the Father gave him: “that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe”. Joined to him, as a branch is to the vine, we share the same sap that circulates among us and vitalizes us.

Each tradition seeks to lead us to the heart of our faith: communion with God, through Christ, in the Spirit. The more we live this communion, the more we are connected to other Christians and to all of humanity. Paul warns us against an attitude that had already threatened the unity of the first Christians: absolutizing one’s own tradition to the detriment of the unity of the body of Christ. Differences then become divisive instead of mutually enriching. Paul had a very broad vision: “All are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God” (1 Cor 3:22-23).

Christ’s will commits us to a path of unity and reconciliation. It also commits us to unite our prayer to his: “that they may all be one. . .so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21).

Never resign yourself to the scandal of the separation of Christians who so readily profess love for their neighbour, and yet remain divided. Make the unity of the body of Christ your passionate concern.

The Rule of Taizé in French and English (2012) p. 13

Prayer

Holy Spirit,
vivifying fire and gentle breath, come and abide in us.
Renew in us the passion for unity
so that we may live in awareness of the bond that unites us in you.
May all who have put on Christ at their Baptism
unite and bear witness together to the hope that sustains them.

DAY 8

Reconciling with all of creation

**“So that my joy may be in you,
and that your joy may be complete”**

(Jn 15:11)

Col 1:15-20 | In him all things hold together
Mk 4:30-32 | As small as a mustard seed

Meditation

The hymn to Christ in the epistle to the Colossians invites us to sing the praise of God’s salvation, which encompasses the entire universe. Through the crucified and risen Christ, a path of reconciliation has been opened up; creation too is destined for a future of life and peace.

With the eyes of faith, we see that the kingdom of God is a reality that is very close but still very small, hardly visible – like a mustard seed. However, it is growing. Even in the distress of our world the Spirit of the Risen One is at work. He encourages us to become involved – with all people of good will – in tirelessly seeking justice and peace, and ensuring the earth is once again a home for all creatures.

We participate in the work of the Spirit so that creation in all its fullness may continue to praise God. When nature suffers, when human beings are crushed, the Spirit of the risen Christ – far from allowing us to lose heart – invites us to become part of his work of healing.

The newness of life that Christ brings, however hidden, is a light of hope for many. It is a wellspring of reconciliation for the whole of creation and contains a joy that comes from beyond ourselves: “so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (Jn 15:11).

Do you wish to celebrate the newness of life that Christ gives through the Holy Spirit, and let it live in you, among us, in the church, in the world and in all of creation?

Second promise made during profession at the Community of Grandchamp

Prayer

Thrice-holy God, we thank you for having created and loved us.

We thank you for your presence in us and in creation.

May we learn to look upon the world as you look upon it, with love.

In the hope of this vision, may we be able to work for a world

where justice and peace flourish,

for the glory of your name.

THE COMMUNITY OF GRANDCHAMP AND THE ECUMENICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE*

In the 1930s, a group of women of the Reformed Church of French-speaking Switzerland known as the “Ladies of Morges” rediscovered the importance of silence in listening to the word of God, taking as their model Christ, who often retired alone to pray. They hosted spiritual retreats, which they opened up to others, and gradually found a regular home for these retreats in Grandchamp, a small hamlet near Lake Neuchâtel. Subsequently, the need arose for a permanent presence for prayer and hospitality. Thus, a woman who would later become Sister Marguerite settled in Grandchamp. She was quickly joined by two other women. Geneviève Micheli, the initiator of these retreats, led this modest beginning in prayer and encouraged the first three sisters on their journey. At their request, she became the first mother of the community in 1944.

Lacking experience and having neither a service book nor a monastic rule, and since at that time there were no monastic communities in the Reformation churches, the first sisters turned to monasteries of other confessions for guidance. They opened themselves up to the treasures of these other traditions. They had to learn everything: how to live a life based on the word of God and daily contemplation, how to live in community and how to receive others in hospitality.

The first sisters suffered over the division of Christians – particularly Mother Geneviève, who therefore understood the full importance of ecumenical and theological work. However, this work had to be founded on that which was essential for her, prayer in the light of John 17:21: “that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” She sought to give her life for unity in Christ and through Christ, until the day when God would be all in all. The ecumenical calling of the community was therefore not a choice but a gift, a grace received from the beginning and born of poverty.

This grace was confirmed and stimulated by several decisive encounters. One such encounter for the fledgling community was that with Father Paul Couturier. A Catholic priest in Lyon, he was one of the pioneers of ecumenism and of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity as we know it today. Deep bonds developed between him and the first sisters, and he accompanied them faithfully on their spiritual journey, as evidenced by their correspondence. In 1940, he wrote to Mother Geneviève:

... No spiritual retreat should take place without having Christians leave it with acute suffering over separations and the determination to work for unity through fervent prayer and progressive purification ... For me, the problem of unity is primarily and fundamentally a problem of the orientation of one's inner life. Thus, you understand how much importance I attach to your request and to the work of spiritual retreats. Let us pray fervently, in other words, let us freely let Christ into us.

* This text is reproduced under the sole authority and responsibility of the Community of Grandchamp which wrote the source texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2021.

Another very important encounter was that with Roger Schutz, the future Brother Roger of Taizé, who visited Grandchamp in 1940. His own search was encouraged by that of the sisters with whom he would keep in contact. Bonds of communion developed over the years and these deepened in 1953 when the Community of Grandchamp adopted both the Rule of Taizé and the Taizé Office immediately upon its publication. Brother Roger wrote:

*The constant search for unity harmonizes the human being; it provides thought with deeds and being with action. This equilibrium is acquired to the extent that we strive – in successive steps – to be consistent with what is best in ourselves and what is at our innermost core: Christ within us.*⁵

Very soon, in conjunction with the brothers of Taizé and the Little Sisters of Jesus, the sisters of Grandchamp were also called to live out the simple presence of prayer and friendship in small communities often in underprivileged areas, particularly in Algeria, Israel, Lebanon and in working-class areas in various countries of Europe. The deep ties established with local neighbours and churches allowed them to discover a diversity of liturgical rites in the universal church and opened them up to encounters with other religions.

Grandchamp's ecumenical vocation commits it to the work of reconciliation between Christians, within the human family, and with respect to all creation. As a community the sisters of Grandchamp discovered very quickly that this vocation requires them to embody reconciliation, first and foremost within themselves and among themselves. Immediately after the Second World War, German and Dutch sisters (influenced by recent events), followed by sisters from Indonesia, Austria, Congo, the Czech Republic, Sweden and Latvia belonging to different denominations, joined the first sisters from Switzerland and France. The community currently numbers about fifty sisters from different generations.

Like all the baptized, the sisters are called to become that which they already are at a deeper level: beings in communion. How can we be such beings if we do not learn first to accept ourselves with our differences? Differences are both a gift of God and a formidable challenge. With a diversity of confessions, languages, cultures and generations the community faces the challenge of living unity in diversity in its own small way. This diversity also entails different ways of praying, thinking, doing, being in a relationship, as well as a diversity of characters. How then can one work for reconciliation except by living forgiveness day after day? Above all, this requires work on one's inner self and then work in our relationships, trusting in God's mercy. It all starts inside one's heart, where the root of all division is to be found, the deepest wounds waiting to be visited in order to receive God's healing peace. The unity between us is thus the fruit of the slow and patient transformation of our lives which the Spirit accomplishes with our consent.

Liturgical prayer is the backbone of Grandchamp's day and gathers the community four times every day. The various times of liturgical worship help the sisters internalize the life of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

5. Frère Roger, de Taizé, *Les écrits fondateurs, Dieu nous veut heureux* (Taizé: Les Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 2011) p. 121.

The icon of the Trinity in the centre of Grandchamp's chapel welcomes the sisters in silence. It invites them to enter into the communion of love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to let this love grow within and flow among them and toward those who come as visitors. Then there is often an exchange of gifts. The sister's like to say that they always receive more than they give!

This welcoming has enabled surprising encounters with people who have sensitized the community to the non-violence of the gospel: Jean and Hildegard Goss, Joseph Pyronnet and Simone Pacot, who initiated the "Bethesda" sessions, a profound evangelization. At the same time, the sisters' awareness of ecology has increased in a very palpable way through the development of an organic garden, their use of environmentally friendly produce, and careful consideration of the way they feed themselves, travel, the management of goods, and what it means to live in solidarity. This is why the sisters take care to forge links and exchanges with other communities, groups, movements and committed people, particularly with the networks of religious and/or monastic communities at the local, regional, international and ecumenical levels, with ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, movements for reconciliation, justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Despite a renewal for which the sisters are grateful, like many other communities in Europe they are also confronted with the weakening of their lifeblood – ageing, which forces them to be creative. Just as the first sisters had to depend on help from others, so the sisters today depend on outside help in order to welcome others. The volunteer work that they offer is a sharing of their life of prayer and work. It is first and foremost open to young people, but it is also without age limits and open to people from all continents who are looking to give meaning to their lives, to Christians of different denominations, sisters and brothers from other communities, sometimes Jews, Muslims and adherents of other religions, and to people without any specific religious attachments. In this way the community wishes to become a house of prayer for everyone, a place of welcome, dialogue and encounter.

The poverty of other religious communities has opened up a new ministry, one which forces the sisters to listen with other religious and to discern how to respond to the calls that are being addressed to them. It is a new grace to be able to be a place of prayer and a sign of reconciliation together. Thus, for six years, one of the Grandchamp sisters has lived in France in an ecumenical sisterhood comprised of sisters from four different communities. For several years now sisters have made simple journeys, for the duration of a three-month visa, to experience life in Israel. One of the sisters joined a sisterhood of the Little Sisters of Jesus in order to share their everyday lives. A little later two other sisters experienced life in a community of Carmelites of St. Joseph. Today, some sisters are present in Taizé on an informal basis. These new experiences bring new gifts into the community.

The work of the World Council of Churches occupies an important place in Grandchamp's prayer. Every Monday evening, the sisters pray with the intercessions of the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle proposed by the WCC. The sisters have had the privilege of participating in several WCC assemblies – in Vancouver, Harare and Porto Alegre. For several years, the sisters were present at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, a small community of prayer, hospitality and friendship during the months of the graduate school.

Religious life occupies a privileged place – although very hidden – on the path of the reconciliation of the churches. It sings of the risen Christ, the gift of a communion that is always being offered, which the Holy Spirit causes to blossom in a multitude of faces and gifts. It can serve as leaven in the dough, a ferment of unity, because it takes us to the depths of the mystery of faith, on a path of continual conversion, of transformation. And in some circumstances religious life can help individuals to transcend themselves. Sometimes, and unbeknownst to us, this can have repercussions in some other part of the Body of Christ. André Louf expressed this in the following words:

In a divided church, the monastery instinctively constitutes the “no-man’s land” of the Spirit. The monastery should be an ecumenical land par excellence. It can prefigure communions that exist elsewhere only in hope. Wherever it may be, a monastery does not fundamentally belong to Orthodoxy or Catholicism, to the extent that they are still temporarily opposed. It is already a sign of the undivided church toward which the Spirit is powerfully driving us today.⁶

6. Dom André LOUF, lecture on 16 December 1979 in Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris for the inauguration of the Saint Benedict Year.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Themes 1968-2021

Materials jointly prepared by the WCC Faith and Order Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity were first used in 1968

- 1968 To the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:14)
- 1969 Called to freedom (Galatians 5:13)
(Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1970 We are fellow workers for God (1 Corinthians 3:9)
(Preparatory meeting held at the Monastery of Niederaltaich, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1971 ...and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:13)
(Preparatory meeting in Bari, Italy)
- 1972 I give you a new commandment (John 13:34)
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1973 Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)
(Preparatory meeting held at the Abbey of Montserrat, Spain)
- 1974 That every tongue confess: Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:1-13)
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1975 God's purpose: all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-10)
(Material from an Australian group – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1976 We shall be like him (1 John 3:2) or, Called to become what we are
(Material from Caribbean Conference of Churches.
Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1977 Enduring together in hope (Romans 5:1-5)
(Material from Lebanon, in the midst of a civil war.
Preparatory meeting held in Geneva)
- 1978 No longer strangers (Ephesians 2:13-22)
(Material from an ecumenical team in Manchester, England)
- 1979 Serve one another to the glory of God (1 Peter 4:7-11)
(Material from Argentina – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)

- 1980 Your kingdom come (Matthew 6:10)
(Material from an ecumenical group in Berlin, German Democratic Republic – Preparatory meeting held in Milan)
- 1981 One Spirit - many gifts - one body (1 Corinthians 12:3b-13)
(Material from Graymoor Fathers, USA – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1982 May all find their home in you, O Lord (Psalm 84)
(Material from Kenya – Preparatory meeting held in Milan, Italy)
- 1983 Jesus Christ - the life of the world (1 John 1:1-4)
(Material from an ecumenical group in Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Céligny (Bossey), Switzerland)
- 1984 Called to be one through the cross of our Lord (1 Corinthians 2:2 and Colossians 1:20)
(Preparatory meeting held in Venice, Italy)
- 1985 From death to life with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-7)
(Material from Jamaica – Preparatory meeting held in Grandchamp, Switzerland)
- 1986 You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1:6-8)
(Material from Yugoslavia (Slovenia) – Preparatory meeting held in Yugoslavia)
- 1987 United in Christ - a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17-6:4a)
(Material from England – Preparatory meeting held in Taizé, France)
- 1988 The love of God casts out fear (1 John 4:18)
(Material from Italy – Preparatory meeting held in Pinerolo, Italy)
- 1989 Building community: one body in Christ (Romans 12:5-6a)
(Material from Canada – Preparatory meeting held in Whaley Bridge, England)
- 1990 That they all may be one...That the world may believe (John 17)
(Material from Spain – Preparatory meeting held in Madrid, Spain)
- 1991 Praise the Lord, all you nations! (Psalm 117 and Romans 15:5-13)
(Material from Germany – Preparatory meeting held in Rotenburg an der Fulda, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1992 I am with you always... Go, therefore (Matthew 28:16-20)
(Material from Belgium – Preparatory meeting held in Bruges, Belgium)
- 1993 Bearing the fruit of the Spirit for Christian unity (Galatians 5:22-23)
(Material from Zaire – Preparatory meeting held near Zurich, Switzerland)

- 1994 The household of God: called to be one in heart and mind (Acts 4:23-37)
(Material from Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Dublin, Republic of Ireland)
- 1995 Koinonia: communion in God and with one another (John 15:1-17)
(Material from Faith and Order – Preparatory meeting held in Bristol, England)
- 1996 Behold, I stand at the door and knock (Revelation 3:14-22)
(Material from Portugal – Preparatory meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal)
- 1997 We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20)
(Material from Nordic Ecumenical Council – Preparatory meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden)
- 1998 The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:14-27)
(Material from France – Preparatory meeting held in Paris, France)
- 1999 He will dwell with them as their God, they will be his peoples (Revelation 21:1-7)
(Material from Malaysia – Preparatory meeting held in Monastery of Bose, Italy)
- 2000 Blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14)
(Material from the Middle East Council of Churches – Preparatory meeting held La Verna, Italy)
- 2001 I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (John 14:1-6)
(Material from Romania – Preparatory meeting held at Vulcan, Romania)
- 2002 For with you is the fountain of life (Psalm 36:5-9)
(Material CEEC and CEC – Preparatory meeting near Augsburg, Germany)
- 2003 We have this treasure in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:4-18)
(Material churches in Argentina – Preparatory meeting at Los Rubios, Spain)
- 2004 My peace I give to you (John 14:23-31; John 14:27)
(Material from Aleppo, Syria – Preparatory meeting in Palermo, Sicily)
- 2005 Christ, the one foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:1-23)
(Material from Slovakia – Preparatory meeting in Piestañy, Slovakia)
- 2006 Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them
(Matthew 18:18-20)
(Material from Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Prosperous, Co. Kildare, Ireland)
- 2007 He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak (Mark 7:31-37)
(Material from South Africa – Preparatory meeting held in Faverges, France)

- 2008 Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:(12a) 13b-18)
(Material from USA – Preparatory meeting held in Graymoor, Garrison, USA)
- 2009 That they may become one in your hand (Ezekiel 37:15-28)
(Material from Korea – Preparatory meeting held in Marseilles, France)
- 2010 You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:48)
(Material from Scotland – Preparatory meeting held in Glasgow, Scotland)
- 2011 One in the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer
(cf. Acts 2:42)
(Material from Jerusalem – Preparatory meeting held in Saydnaya, Syria)
- 2012 We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ
(cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58)
(Material from Poland – Preparatory meeting held in Warsaw, Poland)
- 2013 What does God require of us? (cf. Micah 6:6-8)
(Material from India – Preparatory meeting held in Bangalore, India)
- 2014 Has Christ been divided? (1 Corinthians 1:1-17)
(Material from Canada – Preparatory meeting held in Montréal, Canada)
- 2015 Jesus said to her: Give me to drink (John 4: 7)
(Material from Brazil – Preparatory meeting held in São Paulo, Brazil)
- 2016 Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord (cf. 1 Peter 2:9)
(Material from Latvia – Preparatory meeting held in Rīga, Latvia)
- 2017 Reconciliation - The love of Christ compels us (2 Cor 5:14-20)
(Material from Germany – Preparatory meeting held in Wittenberg, Germany)
- 2018 Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power (Ex 15:6)
(Material from the Caribbean – Preparatory meeting held in Nassau, Bahamas)
- 2019 Justice and only justice you shall pursue (Deut 16:18-20)
(Material from Indonesia – Preparatory meeting held in Jakarta, Indonesia)
- 2020 They showed us unusual kindness (Acts 28:2)
(Material from Malta – Preparatory meeting held in Rabat, Malta)
- 2021 Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit (cf. John 15:5-9)
(Material from Community of Grandchamp – Preparatory meeting held at Areuse, Switzerland)

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

- c. 1740 In Scotland a Pentecostal movement arose, with North American links, whose revivalist message included prayers for and with all churches.
- 1820 The Revd James Haldane Stewart publishes “Hints for the General Union of Christians for the Outpouring of the Spirit”.
- 1840 The Revd Ignatius Spencer, a convert to Roman Catholicism, suggests a “Union of Prayer for Unity”.
- 1867 The First Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops emphasizes prayer for unity in the Preamble to its Resolutions.
- 1894 Pope Leo XIII encourages the practice of a Prayer Octave for Unity in the context of Pentecost.
- 1908 First observance of the “Church Unity Octave” initiated by the Revd Paul Wattson.
- 1926 The Faith and Order movement begins publishing “Suggestions for an Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity”.
- 1935 Abbé Paul Couturier of France advocates the “Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity” on the inclusive basis of prayer for “the unity Christ wills by the means he wills”.
- 1958 Unité Chrétienne (Lyons, France) and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches begin co-operative preparation of materials for the Week of Prayer.
- 1964 In Jerusalem, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I prayed together Jesus’ prayer “that they all may be one” (John 17).
- 1964 The Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II emphasizes that prayer is the soul of the ecumenical movement and encourages observance of the Week of Prayer.
- 1966 The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity [now known as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity] begin official joint preparation of the Week of Prayer material.
- 1968 First official use of Week of Prayer material prepared jointly by Faith and Order and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

- 1975 First use of Week of Prayer material based on a draft text prepared by a local ecumenical group. An Australian group was the first to take up this plan in preparing the 1975 initial draft.
- 1988 Week of Prayer materials were used in the inaugural worship for The Christian Federation of Malaysia, which links the major Christian groupings in that country.
- 1994 International group preparing text for 1996 included representatives from YMCA and YWCA.
- 2004 Agreement reached that resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity be jointly published and produced in the same format by Faith and Order (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Catholic Church).
- 2008 Commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. (Its predecessor, the Church Unity Octave, was first observed in 1908).
- 2017 Marking the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the materials for the Week of Prayer in 2017 were prepared by Christians in Germany.

UPDATES PUBLISHED IN L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO IN JANUARY 2020

As customary, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity L'Osservatore Romano published a series of articles providing updates on the work of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Written by the President and staff members, the texts outline the current status of the theological dialogues and relations.

Per ricordare l'Enciclica "Ut unum sint" di Papa Giovanni Paolo II

L'ECUMENISMO DEI MARTIRI

Cardinale Kurt Koch, Presidente

Un quarto di secolo fa, Papa Giovanni Paolo II pubblicò la sua incisiva Enciclica sull'impegno ecumenico, "Ut unum sint". L'allora cardinale Joseph Ratzinger, esprimendo il suo apprezzamento, osservò che, con tale documento, il Papa era riuscito "con tutta la forza della sua passione ecumenica" a risvegliare l'urgenza della ricerca dell'unità dei battezzati "nella coscienza della Chiesa"¹. Con "Ut unum sint", il Papa intendeva incoraggiare i fedeli ad accogliere l'appello all'unità dei cristiani che era stato lanciato con grande forza dal Concilio Vaticano Secondo. Trent'anni dopo la conclusione del Concilio, Giovanni Paolo II rivolse la sua particolare attenzione a un fenomeno che, a suo avviso, stava impartendo una rinnovata energia all'esortazione espressa dal Concilio e che metteva la Chiesa davanti al suo dovere di assumere e di tradurre nella realtà concreta le richieste conciliari. Questo fenomeno era la "testimonianza coraggiosa di tanti martiri del nostro secolo", appartenenti anche ad altre Chiese e Comunità ecclesiali non in piena comunione con la Chiesa cattolica. Là il Papa ravvisò "la prova più significativa che ogni elemento di divisione può essere trasceso e superato nel dono totale di sé alla causa del Vangelo"².

Un martirologio comune

Riferendosi a tale testimonianza già nell'introduzione dell'Enciclica, il Papa ricorda il doloroso fatto che alla fine del secondo millennio e all'inizio del terzo la cristianità è tornata ad essere una Chiesa di martiri, in una misura senza precedenti. I martiri di oggi sono infatti più numerosi rispetto a quelli che hanno subito le persecuzioni contro i cristiani nei primi secoli. L'ottanta per cento di coloro che vengono perseguitati a causa della loro fede oggi sono cristiani. La fede cristiana è la religione più perseguitata nel mondo odierno. Questo triste fenomeno ci ricorda che la Chiesa cristiana è sempre una Chiesa del martirio, dove il battesimo nel nome del Dio uno e trino si radicalizza nel battesimo del sangue. Poiché i martiri sono un fenomeno non marginale ma centrale nella Chiesa, il martirio è un'esperienza fondamentale della cristianità e fa parte della natura e della missione della Chiesa sin dal suo inizio.

Per Papa Giovanni Paolo II, è dunque particolarmente importante il riconoscimento del fatto che tutte le Chiese e le Comunità ecclesiali hanno i loro martiri. Oggi i cristiani non sono perseguitati perché appartenenti a una particolare comunità cristiana, perché ortodossi o cattolici, luterani o anglicani, ma perché cristiani. Il martirio è ecumenico e si deve parlare di un vero e proprio ecumenismo dei martiri. Tuttavia, malgrado la sua drammaticità, esso contiene anche un messaggio di speranza, secondo il quale “in una visione teocentrica, noi cristiani già abbiamo un Martirologio comune”, che mostra “come, ad un livello profondo, Dio mantenga fra i battezzati la comunione nell’esigenza suprema della fede, manifestata col sacrificio della vita”³.

Nell’ecumenismo dei martiri Papa Giovanni Paolo II ravvisa già un’unità fondamentale tra noi cristiani, e nutre la speranza che i martiri dal cielo ci aiutino a ritrovare la piena unità. Mentre noi cristiani e noi Chiese su questa terra siamo ancora in una comunione imperfetta, i martiri nella gloria celeste vivono già in una comunione piena e compiuta. Il sangue che i martiri hanno versato per Cristo non ci separa, ma ci unisce. L’ecumenismo dei martiri conferma ancora una volta la convinzione della Chiesa primitiva, che Tertulliano riassunse affermando che il sangue dei martiri è il seme di nuovi cristiani: “Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum”. Allo stesso modo, anche noi possiamo vivere oggi nella speranza che il sangue di così tanti martiri dei nostri giorni sarà il seme della piena unità ecumenica dell’unico Corpo di Cristo, lacerato da così tante divisioni. Possiamo essere certi che la sofferenza di così tanti cristiani crea un’unità più forte delle differenze che tuttora dividono le Chiese cristiane, e che, nel sangue dei martiri, siamo già diventati una cosa sola.

L’ecumenismo dei martiri è una delle ragioni più profonde del forte impegno ecumenico di Giovanni Paolo II, come egli stesso sottolineò dopo la celebrazione della Via Crucis al Colosseo, il Venerdì Santo del 1994: “Noi siamo uniti sullo sfondo dei martiri, non possiamo non essere uniti.” Per Giovanni Paolo II, l’ecumenismo dei martiri è la forma più credibile dell’ecumenismo di sempre: “L’ecumenismo dei santi, dei martiri, è forse il più convincente. La *communio sanctorum* parla con voce più alta dei fattori di divisione.”⁴ Profondamente convinto di ciò, Giovanni Paolo II ha riconosciuto e apprezzato senza alcuna esitazione come martiri e dunque come testimoni della cristianità indivisa i cristiani di altre Chiese e Comunità ecclesiali che hanno dato la vita per la loro fede in Gesù Cristo.

La dimensione ecumenica del martirio

L’importanza teologica della pratica, diffusa oggi nella Chiesa, del riconoscimento dei martiri cristiani in altre Comunità ecclesiali risulta evidente solo se si tiene conto del fatto che, nel corso della storia, ha prevalso a lungo la pratica opposta. Nel passato, veniva riconosciuto come martire solo il cristiano che aveva testimoniato con la vita la verità inalterata di Cristo. Non si poteva presumere che un’adesione così vitale alla piena verità di Cristo esistesse anche al di fuori della Chiesa cattolica. Di conseguenza, non era possibile accettare il martirio avvenuto in altre comunità cristiane. Già nei primi tempi del cristianesimo, solo i testimoni della fede della Chiesa cattolica erano riconosciuti come martiri, mentre il sacrificio della propria vita nelle comunità eretiche era considerato senza valore. Durante gli scontri con i donatisti, ad esempio, Cipriano e Agostino insistevano sul fatto che potessero esserci veri martiri soltanto nella Chiesa cattolica.

L'interpretazione del martirio si restrinse ulteriormente a causa delle successive divisioni nella Chiesa. Mentre i cristiani di varie Chiese facevano dono della vita, dimostrando fedeltà alla confessione di fede della denominazione di appartenenza, la qualifica religiosa del martirio fu riconosciuta solo ai testimoni della fede della propria comunità, e negata ai cristiani di altre comunità morti violentemente, sebbene tutti interpretassero la morte dei propri martiri come testimonianza resa a Cristo. Si arrivò a una confessionalizzazione del concetto di martirio persino maggiore con le lotte confessionali e con le guerre di religione del XV e XVI secolo, a causa del fatto che i cristiani si uccidevano a vicenda nelle diverse comunità cristiane e riconoscevano come martiri solo i propri morti.

Questa visione confessionalmente ristretta è stata superata soprattutto con il Concilio Vaticano Secondo, grazie a un rinnovato sguardo rivolto a quelle Chiese e Comunità ecclesiali cristiane che non sono ancora in piena comunione con la Chiesa cattolica, ma con le quali essa "sa di essere per più ragioni congiunta"⁵. Il motivo di questo legame è ravvisato dal Decreto sull'ecumenismo "Unitatis redintegratio" in primo luogo nel battesimo, che stabilisce un "vincolo sacramentale dell'unità che vige tra tutti quelli che per mezzo di esso sono stati rigenerati"⁶, e che costituisce costoro in "una certa comunione, sebbene imperfetta, con la Chiesa cattolica"⁷. Il Decreto sottolinea quindi che molti degli "elementi o beni dal complesso dei quali la stessa Chiesa è edificata e vivificata" possono trovarsi "fuori dei confini visibili della Chiesa cattolica", come "la parola di Dio scritta, la vita della grazia, la fede, la speranza e la carità, e altri doni interiori dello Spirito Santo ed elementi visibili"⁸. Tra questi elementi, la Costituzione dogmatica sulla Chiesa "Lumen gentium" annovera in modo speciale una "vera unione nello Spirito Santo", poiché anche nei cristiani non cattolici "egli opera con la sua virtù santificante per mezzo di doni e grazie e ha dato ad alcuni la forza di giungere fino allo spargimento del sangue"⁹. Grazie a queste importanti dichiarazioni del Concilio, la realtà del martirio anche in altre Chiese cristiane è stata riconosciuta e apprezzata.

Su questo fondamento conciliare, ancora durante il Concilio, il Santo Papa Paolo VI confermò la visione ecumenica del martirio quando, nel corso della 103.ma Congregazione Generale, canonizzò i martiri dell'Uganda onorando anche gli anglicani che avevano subito le stesse sofferenze dei loro fratelli cattolici. Il riconoscimento dei martiri appartenenti ad altre Chiese e Comunità cristiane, insieme alla loro venerazione comune, fu in seguito un obiettivo particolarmente caro a Papa Giovanni Paolo II, che volle esprimere la dimensione ecumenica del martirio soprattutto con la celebrazione comune tenutasi al Colosseo nell'anno giubilare 2000. In tale occasione, il Papa, alla presenza di alti rappresentanti di varie Chiese e Comunità ecclesiali, commemorò i martiri del XX secolo, e ascoltò le varie testimonianze di fede, tra cui quella del Metropolita ortodosso Serafim, del Pastore protestante Paul Schneider e del sacerdote cattolico Maximilian Kolbe. Tale celebrazione permise di sperimentare nella fede la profonda comunione che unisce i cristiani nelle varie Chiese e Comunità ecclesiali, nonostante le differenze e gli ostacoli tuttora esistenti. Di fatti, nella persecuzione comune - specialmente nei campi di concentramento nazisti e nei gulag comunisti - i cristiani e le comunità ecclesiali sono cresciuti insieme, hanno scoperto la loro comunione nella fede e hanno stretto un'amicizia ecumenica.

La continuità della visione ecumenica

Nell'ecumenismo dei martiri va ravvisato il nucleo più profondo dell'impegno ecumenico a favore dell'unità della Chiesa. Possiamo essere grati che questa visione ecumenica del martirio sia stata portata avanti dai successori di Papa Giovanni Paolo II sul soglio pontificio. Ciò vale innanzitutto per Papa Benedetto XVI, che ha sottolineato soprattutto la dimensione cristologica del martirio, particolarmente importante dal punto di vista ecumenico. Di fatti, "la forza per affrontare il martirio" nasce dalla "profonda e intima unione con Cristo". Il martirio, pertanto, non è "il risultato di uno sforzo umano", ma "la risposta ad un'iniziativa e ad una chiamata di Dio", "un dono della Sua grazia, che rende capaci di offrire la propria vita per amore a Cristo e alla Chiesa, e così al mondo"¹⁰. Visitando nel 2008 la Basilica di San Bartolomeo all'Isola Tiberina, dedicata alla memoria dei martiri del XX secolo, Papa Benedetto XVI ha evidenziato che "apparentemente sembra che la violenza, i totalitarismi, la persecuzione, la brutalità cieca si rivelino più forti, mettendo a tacere la voce dei testimoni della fede, che possono umanamente apparire come sconfitti della storia", ma Gesù risorto illumina la loro testimonianza, così che la forza dell'amore, e dunque "la forza che sfida e vince la morte", si rivela vittoriosa anche nell'apparente sconfitta¹¹. Il martirio, anche e soprattutto nella sua dimensione ecumenica, è davvero la più alta testimonianza dell'amore.

Anche Papa Francesco ha più volte insistito sull'importanza dell'ecumenismo dei martiri o, come lui stesso lo ha definito, "l'ecumenismo del sangue". Egli ha ben chiaro il fatto che oggi i cristiani sono perseguitati perché cristiani. E sono soprattutto gli stessi persecutori dei cristiani ad averci fatto comprendere il senso dell'ecumenismo del sangue. Infatti, "per i persecutori, noi non siamo divisi, non siamo luterani, ortodossi, evangelici, cattolici... No! Siamo uno! Per i persecutori siamo cristiani! Non interessa altro. Questo è l'Ecumenismo del sangue che oggi si vive."¹² L'ecumenismo del sangue ci pone dunque davanti a una grande sfida, riassunta da Papa Francesco con questa domanda eloquente: "Se il nemico ci unisce nella morte, chi siamo noi per dividerci nella vita?"¹³ Non è allora una vergogna che i persecutori dei cristiani abbiano spesso una visione ecumenica migliore dei cristiani stessi? Essi sanno che noi cristiani siamo, profondamente, una cosa sola. Per Papa Francesco, il riconoscimento dei martiri cristiani e la ricerca ecumenica dell'unità dei cristiani sono inscindibilmente legati: "I martiri appartengono a tutte le Chiese e la loro sofferenza costituisce un 'ecumenismo del sangue' che trascende le divisioni storiche tra cristiani, chiamando tutti noi a promuovere l'unità visibile dei discepoli di Cristo."¹⁴

I martiri per l'unità dei cristiani

Nell'ecumenismo dei martiri, meritano una menzione speciale quei martiri cristiani che hanno consapevolmente dato la vita per la sacra causa dell'unità dei cristiani. Come rappresentante di molti altri, ricordiamo la figura di Max Metzger¹⁵, sacerdote incardinato nell'arcidiocesi di Friburgo, che si impegnò a favore del movimento ecumenico già molto tempo prima del suo arresto da parte dei nazisti. Egli comprese la sua imminente esecuzione come offerta espiatoria resa al Signore per la pace del mondo e per l'unità della Chiesa, due cause che aveva particolarmente a cuore: "Sarei felice se, sacrificando la mia vita, fossi in grado di servire con efficacia la causa alla quale la mia vita ha aspirato senza certezza di successo"¹⁶. E poco prima della sua esecuzione, scrisse le parole che possono essere considerate il suo vero e proprio lascito: "Ora il Signore vuole che

sacrifichi la mia vita. Pronuncio il mio felice Sì alla sua volontà. Gli ho offerto la vita per la pace del mondo e per l'unità della Chiesa. La vuole. Che la benedica!"¹⁷.

Max Josef Metzger è uno di quei martiri cristiani riferendosi ai quali Papa Giovanni Paolo II ha affermato che "la comunione più vera che ci sia con Cristo che effonde il suo sangue e, in questo sacrificio, fa diventare vicini coloro che un tempo erano lontani (cfr. Ef 2,13)" permette anche una comunione più intensa tra i cristiani¹⁸. Come Gesù è andato incontro alla sua morte "per riunire insieme i figli di Dio che erano dispersi" (Gv 11,52), così le figure ricordate hanno accettato consapevolmente il loro martirio per l'unità dei cristiani. Non solo sono diventati guide credibili verso l'unità visibile, ma con loro è stata completamente superata la visione riduttiva del martirio, chiusa confessionalmente, soprattutto grazie al fatto che le Chiese cristiane riconoscono ormai anche i martiri in altre comunità ecclesiali e li considerano testimoni comuni. Nei martiri dell'intera cristianità, infatti, "è presente la cristianità indivisa ed è stata superata la divisione della Chiesa"¹⁹.

In questa "Una Sancta in vinculis", come il teologo protestante e martire Dietrich Bonhoeffer ha definito lo stretto legame ecumenico tra i cristiani nelle diverse Chiese durante la loro resistenza al regime di violenza nazista e comunista, incontriamo la forma più credibile della testimonianza cristiana comune, che è il fondamento della speranza nell'unità del Corpo di Cristo e lo stimolo a continuare a costruire sulla base dell'unità che i martiri hanno posto per l'unità dei cristiani.

È del tutto evidente ormai che la sofferenza di così tanti cristiani nel mondo di oggi è un'esperienza cristiana comune, e che quindi l'ecumenismo dei martiri e del sangue è il segno più convincente dell'ecumenismo attuale. In esso ritroviamo un importante lascito ecumenico di Papa Giovanni Paolo II, il quale era convinto che il ministero affidato al successore di Pietro fosse il ministero dell'unità e si esplicasse "in particolare nel campo ecumenico"²⁰ Papa Giovanni Paolo II ha vissuto nella stimolante speranza che dopo il primo millennio della storia cristiana, tempo della Chiesa indivisa, e dopo il secondo millennio, tempo di profonde divisioni nella Chiesa sia in Oriente che in Occidente, al terzo millennio spettasse il grande compito di ripristinare la perduta unità dei cristiani.

Un compito davanti al quale ci troviamo ancora oggi. L'anniversario della lusinghiera Enciclica "Ut unum sint" di Papa Giovanni Paolo II, pubblicata 25 anni fa, è una proficua occasione per riprendere coscienza di questa sfida e per assumerla con passione, con rinnovata speranza nell'unità di tutti i battezzati, già donatoci nell'ecumenismo dei martiri.

1. J. Ratzinger – Benedetto XVI, *La fede rifugio dell'umanità. Le 14 encicliche di Giovanni Paolo II*, in: *Giovanni Paolo II. Il mio amato predecessore* (Cinisello Balsamo 2007) 33-49, cit. 43.

2. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 1.

3. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 84.

4. Giovanni Paolo II, *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 37.

5. *Lumen gentium*, 15.

6. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 22.

7. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.

8. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.

9. *Lumen gentium*, 15.

10. Benedetto XVI, Discorso durante l'Udienza Generale dell'11 agosto 2010.
11. Benedetto XVI, Omelia durante la Memoria dei Testimoni della fede del XX e XXI secolo nella Basilica di San Bartolomeo all'Isola Tiberina, il 7 aprile 2008.
12. Francesco, Discorso ai Membri della "Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowship", il 31 ottobre 2014.
13. Francesco, Discorso al Movimento del Rinnovamento dello Spirito, il 3 luglio 2015.
14. Dichiarazione comune di Sua Santità Francesco e di Sua Santità Karekin II nella Santa Etchmiadzin, Repubblica di Armenia, il 26 giugno 2016.
15. Cfr. J. Ernesti, *Ökumene im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn 2007) 182-219.
16. M. J. Metzger, *Christuszeuge in einer zerrissenen Welt. Briefe und Dokumente aus der Gefangenschaft 1934-1944*, hrsg. von K. Kienzler (Freiburg i. Br. 1994) 137.
17. *Ibid* 2018.
18. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut unum sint*, 84.
19. E. Schockenhoff, *Entschiedenheit und Widerstand. Das Lebenszeugnis der Märtyrer* (Freiburg i. Br. 2015) 157.
20. Giovanni Paolo II, *Varcare la soglia della speranza* (Milano 1994) 168.

(L'Osservatore Romano, 18 gennaio 2020)

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Le relazioni tra la Chiesa cattolica e la Chiesa ortodossa

DIALOGO CHE CONTINUA

Mons. Andra Palmieri, Sotto-segretario

Il 2019 ha visto l'allacciarsi di una fitta trama di relazioni tra la Chiesa cattolica e la Chiesa ortodossa. Le crescenti tensioni esistenti all'interno del mondo ortodosso, legate alla concessione dell'autocefalia alla Chiesa ortodossa ucraina da parte del Patriarcato ecumenico di Costantinopoli il 6 gennaio 2019, non hanno impedito che si continuasse a sviluppare rapporti bilaterali con ciascuna delle Chiese ortodosse e che il dialogo teologico ufficiale proseguisse il suo cammino.

In questo contesto, lo scorso 30 novembre, è ricorso il quarantesimo anniversario dell'annuncio dell'istituzione della Commissione mista internazionale per il dialogo teologico tra la Chiesa cattolica e la Chiesa ortodossa da parte di Papa Giovanni Paolo II e del Patriarca ecumenico Dimitrios. Questo anniversario è stato ricordato da Papa Francesco nel suo messaggio indirizzato al Patriarca ecumenico Bartolomeo in occasione della festa di Sant'Andrea, patrono della Chiesa di Costantinopoli e del Patriarcato ecumenico. In tale messaggio il Papa ha sottolineato i molti passi in avanti compiuti dalla Commissione. In effetti, nel corso di questi quarant'anni la Commissione si è riunita in quattordici sessioni plenarie e ha pubblicato sei importanti documenti: "Il Mistero della Chiesa e dell'Eucaristia alla luce del Mistero della Santissima Trinità" (Monaco di Baviera, Germania, 1982), "Fede, Sacramenti e Unità della Chiesa" (Bari, Italia, 1987), "Il Sacramento dell'Ordine nella struttura sacramentale della Chiesa, in particolare l'importanza della successione apostolica per la santificazione e l'unità del popolo di

Dio” (Valamo, Finlandia, 1988), “L’Uniatismo, Metodo d’unione del passato e ricerca attuale della piena comunione” (Balamand, Libano, 1993), “Le conseguenze ecclesiologicalhe e canoniche della natura sacramentale della Chiesa - Comunione ecclesiale, conciliarità e autorità” (Ravenna, Italia, 2007), “Sinodalità e Primato nel Primo Millennio. Verso una comune comprensione nel servizio all’unità della Chiesa” (Chieti, Italia, 2016).

Questi testi, che meritano di essere ulteriormente recepiti dalle Chiese locali e maggiormente approfonditi dalle istituzioni teologiche cattoliche e ortodosse, mostrano l’esistenza di un’ampia e solida convergenza di visioni tra le Chiese su fondamentali questioni teologiche, sacramentali ed ecclesiologicalhe. Nonostante un millennio di separazione, segnato spesso da un forte spirito polemico, la Chiesa cattolica e la Chiesa ortodossa hanno convenuto di aver conservato entrambe la stessa struttura ecclesiologicala, fondata sulla stessa fede trinitaria, sull’esperienza sacramentale e sulla successione apostolica. Su queste basi è stato possibile riconoscere insieme per la prima volta la necessità di un servizio primaziale anche a livello della vita della Chiesa universale, spettante al vescovo della Chiesa di Roma, da esercitarsi nel contesto della sinodalità secondo i principi del primo millennio che restano permanentemente normativi.

Nel corso di questo itinerario, come si è visto, la Commissione ha cominciato ad affrontare la spinosa questione dell’esercizio del primato del vescovo di Roma, che rappresenta un punto cruciale delle relazioni cattolico – ortodosse. Al momento attuale il Comitato di coordinamento della Commissione è impegnato nello studio di un nuovo documento, intitolato “Primato e sinodalità nel secondo millennio ed oggi”, il cui processo di redazione è iniziato nel 2018. Il testo prende in esame i principali avvenimenti del secondo millennio in Occidente e in Oriente, che hanno influito sullo sviluppo del rapporto tra primato e sinodalità nelle due Chiese, cercando di pervenire ad un’interpretazione condivisa. In questo documento, la Commissione non intende tracciare una storia esaustiva del secondo millennio, né trattare tutti i temi che nel corso del periodo storico in oggetto hanno suscitato contese tra cattolici e ortodossi, ma vuole concentrarsi esclusivamente sulle questioni ecclesiologicalhe inerenti al titolo del documento. Tuttavia, poiché gli sviluppi ecclesiologicali sono stati spesso legati a fattori non teologici di natura storica e culturale, occorre a volte riassumere fenomeni molto complessi in poche righe senza con ciò rinunciare ad essere accurati.

A questo delicato lavoro il Comitato di coordinamento ha già dedicato due riunioni che hanno avuto luogo dal 13 al 17 novembre 2018 e dall’11 al 15 novembre 2019, entrambe presso il monastero di Bose (Italia). Una nuova riunione è prevista per settembre di quest’anno a Rethymno (Grecia). I tempi di preparazione del documento, che non sono superiori a quelli di testi precedentemente pubblicati dalla Commissione, sono legati al desiderio unanimemente condiviso da tutti i membri del Comitato di coordinamento di rendere il testo sempre più preciso e completo. Naturalmente saranno poi i membri della Commissione riuniti in plenaria a valutare se il testo è davvero maturo per la pubblicazione.

Alle due sopramenzionate riunioni del Comitato di coordinamento della Commissione non ha partecipato il rappresentante del Patriarcato di Mosca che in passato in simili circostanze era presente. L’assenza del rappresentante del Patriarcato di Mosca non è dovuta a questioni relative al dialogo, ma ad una decisione del Sinodo di quella Chiesa che, a causa della questione ucraina, ha vietato ai suoi membri di partecipare a qualunque commissione presieduta da un vescovo del Patriarcato ecumenico.

Poiché sia la Commissione mista internazionale che il Comitato di coordinamento sono co-presieduti, da parte ortodossa, dall'Arcivescovo Job di Telmessos, del Patriarcato ecumenico di Costantinopoli, il Patriarcato di Mosca ha pertanto sospeso la sua partecipazione al dialogo teologico ufficiale. Nonostante tale assenza, che si aggiunge a quella dei rappresentanti del Patriarcato di Bulgaria, i quali ormai da circa un decennio non partecipano alle riunioni della Commissione, il dialogo procede. Da parte cattolica, pur rispettando le scelte prese dai rispettivi Sinodi, non si può che esprimere l'auspicio che tutte le Chiese ortodosse tornino a prendere parte attivamente al dialogo teologico.

Alcuni avvenimenti dello scorso anno hanno contribuito allo sviluppo di sempre migliori relazioni tra la Chiesa cattolica e la Chiesa ortodossa. Tra questi si possono menzionare la visita di Papa Francesco a Sofia e a Bucarest, dove ha incontrato il Patriarca di Bulgaria Neofit (5 maggio) ed il Patriarca di Romania Daniel (31 maggio) e i loro rispettivi Sinodi, nonché la visita del Patriarca ecumenico Bartolomeo a Roma, dove ha incontrato nuovamente Papa Francesco (17 settembre). Un gesto di particolare importanza nelle relazioni cattolico – ortodosse è stato compiuto da Papa Francesco lo scorso 29 giugno, con il dono fatto al Patriarcato ecumenico di Costantinopoli alcuni frammenti delle reliquie di San Pietro. Riferendosi a questo significativo gesto, in una lettera indirizzata al Patriarca ecumenico Bartolomeo datata 30 agosto, Papa Francesco ha scritto che esso “intende essere una conferma del cammino compiuto dalle nostre Chiese nell'avvicinarsi l'una all'altra: un cammino a volte esigente e difficile, ma anche accompagnato da segni evidenti della grazia di Dio. Seguire questo cammino richiede soprattutto conversione spirituale e rinnovata fedeltà al Signore, che domanda maggiore impegno e nuovi coraggiosi passi da parte nostra”. Il valore ecumenico del dono di Papa Francesco è stato sottolineato dal Patriarca ecumenico Bartolomeo, il quale, nel suo discorso al termine della divina liturgia nella Chiesa patriarcale di San Giorgio al Fanar in occasione della festa dell'Apostolo Andrea, lo scorso 30 novembre, alla presenza di una delegazione della Santa Sede, ha affermato che “l'arrivo delle reliquie del santo apostolo Pietro nella sede del patriarcato ecumenico a Costantinopoli è stato di per sé una benedizione, poiché san Pietro è una figura centrale del cristianesimo come apostolo della confessione, testimone della risurrezione e segno di speranza per tutti i cristiani. Questo dono di nostro fratello Papa Francesco è una nuova pietra miliare sulla via dell'avvicinamento... Il fatto che i fratelli Pietro e Andrea siano di nuovo riuniti attraverso la presenza delle loro sante reliquie ci incoraggia a continuare con ancor più enfasi e speranza nel nostro cammino verso l'auspicata unità”.

Poiché il dialogo della verità è preceduto ed è costantemente sostenuto dal dialogo della carità, senza il quale si ridurrebbe a discussione accademica, possiamo essere assolutamente certi che gli incontri ed i gesti che sono stati precedentemente ricordati daranno un ulteriore impulso al dialogo teologico portato avanti dalla Commissione mista internazionale.

(L'Osservatore Romano, 20-21 gennaio 2020)

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LA RISPOSTA CATTOLICA A
“LA CHIESA: VERSO UNA VISIONE COMUNE”

Rev.do Andrzej Choromanski, Ufficiale della sezione occidentale

“La Chiesa: verso una visione comune” – Una convergenza ecumenica sull’ecclesiologia

Nel 2013 la Commissione Fede e Costituzione del Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese (CEC) ha pubblicato il testo “La Chiesa: verso una visione comune” (LCVUVC), documento di Fede e Costituzione n. 214. Il documento è il risultato di oltre vent’anni di intenso lavoro ecumenico portato avanti dalla Commissione. LCVUVC è significativo in sé, data la natura specifica della Commissione Fede e Costituzione, che include teologi di quasi tutte le tradizioni cristiane: ortodossa, ortodossa orientale, cattolica, anglicana, protestante di vari tipi, evangelicale e pentecostale.

LCVUVC si autodefinisce un “testo di convergenza” ed è solo il secondo documento di questo tipo presentato dalla Commissione dopo la pubblicazione, avvenuta trenta anni prima, di “Battesimo, Eucaristia e Ministero” (1982), noto come Dichiarazione di Lima. In quanto tale, LCVUVC non pretende di esprimere un pieno consenso su tutte le questioni considerate, ma di illustrare il punto al quale sono arrivate le comunità cristiane nella loro comune comprensione della Chiesa, e della sua natura, missione e unità. Non si tratta di una nuova “ecclesiologia ecumenica” volta a sostituire le “ecclesiologie confessionali” esistenti, ma di una sintesi dei risultati del dialogo ecumenico degli ultimi decenni che propone una visione della Chiesa ampiamente condivisibile e che allo stesso tempo riconosce gli aspetti divergenti che richiedono studi ulteriori. LCVUVC non rispecchia in maniera esclusiva alcuna tradizione ecclesiale specifica, ma, usando come punti di partenza la Sacra Scrittura e la Tradizione comune, propone un quadro ecclesiologico comune utile nell’affrontare insieme le divergenze permanenti riguardo alla comprensione del concetto di Chiesa. Tener presente questa premessa è fondamentale per un’appropriata valutazione della Risposta cattolica a LCVUVC.

Dopo la sua pubblicazione, l’ufficio di Ginevra della Commissione Fede e Costituzione ha inviato il testo alle Chiese membro e ai partner ecumenici del CEC, chiedendo loro una risposta ufficiale. Il testo è stato tradotto in una ventina di lingue e ampiamente diffuso. L’ufficio di Ginevra ha ricevuto oltre settanta risposte da singole Chiese, da Consigli nazionali di Chiese, da gruppi ecumenici e da singoli studiosi. Negli ultimi quattro anni, un gruppo ecumenico di esperti, tra cui anche alcuni cattolici, si è riunito per studiare il materiale a disposizione. L’ultimo incontro si è svolto presso l’Istituto ecumenico di Bossey, in Svizzera, dall’8 all’11 gennaio 2020. Più di quindici temi sono stati ritenuti pertinenti nelle risposte; essi sono oggetto di contributi tematici che verranno presentati insieme a un rapporto generale prima della fine di quest’anno.

La preparazione della Risposta cattolica

Dalla pubblicazione di LCVUVC, il Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell’Unità dei Cristiani (PCPUC) è stato impegnato nella preparazione di una Risposta cattolica ufficiale. Questo processo ha compreso, in un primo momento, consultazioni con Conferenze episcopali in tutto il mondo, nonché contributi di teologi, di gruppi di studio accademici, di movimenti ecclesiali e di laici. In un secondo momento, è stato istituito un gruppo di redazione internazionale composto da una decina di teologi, tra cui sia

laici che ecclesiastici, donne e uomini. Dopo aver valutato il materiale preparato dal gruppo di redazione, sono state organizzate varie sessioni di lavoro a Roma ed è stato elaborato un primo schema di Risposta. A seguito di ulteriori miglioramenti da parte di esperti e di redattori, il testo in lingua inglese è stato approvato dalla Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede e inviato al Segretariato di Fede e Costituzione a Ginevra, il 18 ottobre 2019, come Risposta cattolica ufficiale (R). Esso è consultabile sul sito web del PCPUC (<http://www.christianunity.va>). La Risposta è un ampio documento di 57 pagine che offre un'analisi completa di ciascuno dei quattro capitoli di LCVUVC e fornisce risposte alle cinque domande poste dalla Commissione.

Il processo di preparazione della Risposta esprime in sé un aspetto importante dell'autocomprensione della Chiesa cattolica. L'insegnamento del Magistero ufficiale (a cui si fa frequente riferimento nel testo), la consultazione con le chiese locali, le competenze di teologi professionisti, la voce di laici e di movimenti ecclesiali e la guida di un'autorità ecclesiale competente convergono tutti nel discernimento di un'interpretazione autentica della verità rivelata. In virtù di questo processo piuttosto lungo ma ampio e variegato, la Risposta rappresenta già una fase importante della ricezione di LCVUVC nella Chiesa cattolica. La pubblicazione della Risposta intende ulteriormente promuovere questo processo, invitando i cattolici a studiare il documento a livello locale, regionale e universale e a trarre conseguenze pastorali dalla convergenza dottrinale raggiunta.

Una visione della Chiesa “in armonia” con la dottrina cattolica

Secondo la Risposta, la visione generale della Chiesa presentata in LCVUVC può essere ritenuta in armonia con la dottrina cattolica e in particolare con gli insegnamenti del Concilio Vaticano II e del Magistero postconciliare. La Risposta afferma che non vi sono flagranti discrepanze nel corpo principale del testo e sottolinea che, su diversi elementi specifici dell'ecclesiologia, LCVUVC mostra un notevole livello di convergenza, che può essere considerato quasi come il conseguimento di un “consenso” (R. p.9).

La struttura del documento di Fede e Costituzione è il frutto di un paziente e arduo processo, consistente nel mettere insieme diversi approcci ecclesiologici. Il testo mostra una stretta affinità con il pensiero teologico del Concilio Vaticano II sulla Chiesa. Il fondamento trinitario della Chiesa, la sua natura missionaria radicata nella *missio Dei*, il ministero di Gesù Cristo che manifesta il Regno di Dio, l'opera dello Spirito Santo che alimenta la comunione all'interno della Chiesa, la vocazione della Chiesa a diffondere il Vangelo e ad essere uno strumento dell'amore di Dio nel mondo, e la chiamata all'unità possono essere pienamente accolti dalla Chiesa cattolica (R p.9).

Un'importante convergenza è stata raggiunta per quanto riguarda la relazione tra Chiesa e mondo. LCVUVC vede la Chiesa nel mondo come un segno e uno strumento al servizio del Regno di Dio inaugurato da Gesù per la salvezza dell'umanità. La Risposta sottolinea che questa visione coincide con l'insegnamento della Costituzione conciliare *Lumen gentium*, che definisce la Chiesa “il segno e lo strumento dell'intima unione con Dio e dell'unità di tutto il genere umano” (LG 1). Entrambi i documenti descrivono la Chiesa come segno e strumento al servizio del grande disegno di Dio (*oikonomia*) per il mondo. Con questo approccio, si esortano tutte le Chiese a farsi più attente all'urgenza dell'unità visibile in virtù della loro comune responsabilità nei confronti dell'intera umanità.

Nel quadro del rapporto tra Chiesa e mondo, LCVUVC sviluppa il carattere missionario della Chiesa, che anima l'intero documento e che viene presentato in maniera più sistematica nell'ultimo capitolo. Il documento insiste sul fatto che l'evangelizzazione, l'incontro interreligioso e il dialogo con le persone che non professano alcuna fede sono aspetti essenziali dell'attività missionaria della Chiesa. La Risposta accoglie favorevolmente l'accento posto da LCVUVC su questi temi, che per decenni hanno ispirato l'attività pastorale della Chiesa cattolica e che sono stati incoraggiati da numerosi documenti del Magistero a partire dal Decreto conciliare sull'attività missionaria della Chiesa, *Ad gentes* (1965), fino alla recente Esortazione Apostolica di Papa Francesco sull'annuncio del Vangelo nel mondo attuale, *Evangelii gaudium* (2013).

La visione dell'unità sulla quale si basa LCVUVC è quella della comunione (*koinonia*), che è una delle categorie più rilevanti nel recente dialogo ecumenico sulla Chiesa. La Risposta afferma che può essere scoperto un profondo riavvicinamento con il pensiero ecclesologico cattolico su questo punto. In effetti, il Sinodo straordinario del 1985 per la celebrazione del 20° anniversario della conclusione del Concilio Vaticano II ha ravvisato nell' "ecclesiologia di comunione" uno dei temi principali del Concilio. Dal punto di vista cattolico, LCVUVC compie un passo importante verso una visione comune della Chiesa sostenendo che i tre elementi essenziali della comunione riguardano la fede, il culto e il ministero o servizio (cfr. LCVUVC 37-57). La Risposta sottolinea che "l'insistenza sulla fede, sui sacramenti e sul ministero come elementi essenziali della comunione riflette bene l'interpretazione cattolica della Chiesa" (R. p.44). Riconosce anche che "se molte chiese, attraverso il loro processo di ricezione, potranno accettare questo modo di definire gli elementi fondamentali della comunione, si sarà compiuto un grande passo avanti" (R.p.6).

La Risposta osserva che la sezione del documento relativa alla questione della diversità e al suo rapporto con l'unità della Chiesa (§28-30) può essere facilmente messa in parallelo con dichiarazioni simili del Concilio Vaticano II e del Magistero postconciliare. Citando l'Enciclica *Ut unum sint*, ricorda che dal punto di vista cattolico l'obiettivo del movimento ecumenico è ristabilire la piena unità nella legittima diversità (cfr. UUS 57). L'unità fa parte di quelli che sono definiti "elementi essenziali", mentre la diversità è consentita in tutti gli altri aspetti della vita della Chiesa, come la liturgia, le usanze e il diritto, la spiritualità e la teologia. Tuttavia, la diversità non è illimitata. Questo è il motivo per cui la Risposta esprime un particolare apprezzamento nei confronti dell'affermazione esplicita di LCVUVC secondo cui la diversità, quando supera i limiti accettabili, può distruggere l'unità (cfr. §30).

LCVUVC sostiene che uno dei doveri di coloro che, nella comunità, esercitano il ministero della supervisione (*episkopé*) è la promozione dell'unità nella diversità (§54). La Risposta accoglie questa affermazione come conforme all'insegnamento cattolico. E fa notare che può essere applicata non solo a coloro che esercitano l'*episkopé* a livello locale, ma anche al Vescovo di Roma, che, come pontefice universale, esercita il ministero della supervisione in tutta la Chiesa. Non va trascurato il fatto che la missione del Papa consiste nel preservare non solo l'unità della Chiesa, ma anche la sua legittima diversità, come esplicitamente affermato dal Vaticano II: "esistono legittimamente in seno alla comunione della Chiesa le Chiese particolari, con proprie tradizioni, rimanendo però integro il primato della cattedra di Pietro, la quale presiede alla comunione universale di carità, tutela le varietà legittime e insieme veglia affinché ciò che è particolare, non solo non pregiudichi l'unità, ma piuttosto la serva" (LG 13). Una maggiore insisten-

za su questo aspetto nel dialogo ecumenico potrebbe aiutare altre Chiese a vedere sotto una luce diversa il ministero universale del Vescovo di Roma e in particolare il suo ruolo nel tutelare e nel promuovere la legittima diversità all'interno della necessaria unità (cfr. R. p. 24).

Un altro aspetto di LCVUVC degno di nota dal punto di vista cattolico è la sua visione del ministero ordinato. LCVUVC suggerisce una visione della Chiesa strutturata intorno a un triplice ministero ordinato di *episkopos-presbyteros-diakonos* (§46-47). L'integrazione di questo modello di ministero fondato sulla Sacra Scrittura e sulla Tradizione antica in un "testo di convergenza" è stato il risultato di un dialogo decennale e rappresenta uno dei più importanti passi avanti nella discussione ecumenica sulla Chiesa. La Risposta afferma che "la Chiesa cattolica approva con convinzione" la conclusione del § 47, sul fatto "che il triplice ministero può servire oggi come espressione dell'unità che cerchiamo e anche come mezzo per raggiungerla" (cfr. R. p. 31).

Pietra miliare, ma non ancora traguardo

Ovviamente LCVUVC non presenta in maniera esauriente l'insegnamento cattolico sulla Chiesa. La valutazione positiva offerta nella Risposta cattolica è legata alla natura precipua di LCVUVC quale "dichiarazione di convergenza" che si basa sugli avvicinamenti ecclesiologicali fondamentali conseguiti negli ultimi decenni. È comprensibile che alcuni temi specifici dell'ecclesiologia cattolica non possano essere affrontati in un testo che intende esprimere l'attuale convergenza tra le varie tradizioni cristiane. Tuttavia, tali temi rimangono di grande importanza per la Chiesa cattolica, che considera alcuni di loro addirittura essenziali per il ripristino dell'unità visibile. Consapevole di ciò, la Risposta elenca diverse aree che necessitano di ulteriori studi, tra cui: il rapporto tra diversità e separazione, la questione di un ministero universale del primato al servizio dell'unità dei cristiani, il sacramento e la sacramentalità della Chiesa, la tradizione apostolica, l'autorità nella Chiesa, l'antropologia, il significato ecclesiologicalo delle cosiddette "nuove Chiese" e "Chiese emergenti", i carismi e la dimensione carismatica della Chiesa, la secolarizzazione come sfida per le Chiese e la spiritualità ecumenica (R. p. 54-55).

Nonostante questi temi ancora in sospeso, la Risposta esprime il riconoscimento ufficiale cattolico del fatto che LCVUVC predispona un terreno comune per un ulteriore accordo tra le Chiese *in via* verso la piena unità visibile. La speranza ora è che la ricezione di LCVUVC nelle Chiese di tutto il mondo le aiuti a progredire insieme verso il superamento della divisione e il compimento della volontà di Gesù, affinché tutti siano una cosa sola (cfr. Gv 17,21).

(L'Osservatore Romano, 19 gennaio 2020)

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PRESERVANDO L'UNITÀ

Rev.do Anthony Curren, Ufficiale della sezione occidentale

La Comunione Anglicana e la Lambeth Conference del 2020

Nel luglio 2020, l'Università del Kent a Canterbury ospiterà vescovi anglicani di tutta la Comunione Anglicana che si riuniranno per la quindicesima Lambeth Conference. Per

poter comprendere l'importanza di tale Conferenza per la Comunione Anglicana sarà utile considerare sia il background storico sia il contesto più recente.

La prima Lambeth Conference si tenne nel 1867 dietro richiesta della Chiesa anglicana del Canada con l'intento di preservare l'unità della Comunione. Era stata concepita come un incontro di tutti i vescovi diocesani al servizio della Comunione Anglicana; tuttavia, poco più della metà di loro (76 vescovi) partecipò a questo primo incontro. La seconda Lambeth Conference ebbe luogo nel 1878. Da allora, essa si è riunita generalmente ogni dieci anni, sebbene le due guerre mondiali del XX secolo abbiano forzato un intervallo più lungo. Dal 1978 gli incontri si sono svolti a Canterbury a motivo del crescente numero dei vescovi presenti.

La più recente Lambeth Conference si è tenuta nel 2008. Nel 2004, l'ordinazione episcopale del Rev.do Gene Robinson come Vescovo del New Hampshire, che viveva allora in una relazione pubblica con una persona dello stesso sesso, aveva attirato l'attenzione sulla questione dell'omosessualità, già percepita con qualche disagio durante la precedente Conferenza del 1998. Il fatto che il Vescovo Robinson non fosse stato invitato alla Lambeth Conference del 2008 sollevò l'irritazione di una parte importante della Comunione Anglicana. Numerosi vescovi evangelicali della Comunione minacciarono di boicottare Lambeth e organizzarono a Gerusalemme una conferenza alternativa, la Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON). Nel 2008, 291 vescovi anglicani parteciparono a GAFCON e 670 vescovi diocesani degli 880 della Comunione Anglicana presero parte a Lambeth, con alcuni vescovi presenti a entrambe le Conferenze.

In previsione della Lambeth Conference del 2008, l'Arcivescovo Rowan Williams aveva affermato che la Conferenza si sarebbe incentrata sulla formazione alla missione, e che non sarebbero state presentate o discusse risoluzioni formali. Con ciò, intendeva evitare che si riaprisse il dibattito controverso sulla sessualità umana. Tuttavia, poiché il suo scopo era impedire discussioni dannose e divisorie, ma non eludere la questione in sé, fu riservato spazio alla presentazione e all'ascolto di opinioni diverse sulla sessualità umana, da parte di membri appartenenti a varie regioni della Comunione Anglicana. Data la profondità del disaccordo tra le Province liberali e le Province conservatrici della Comunione, alcuni si chiesero se ci sarebbe mai stata un'altra Lambeth Conference dopo il 2008.

Nei suoi primi 18 mesi dopo essere stato consacrato Arcivescovo di Canterbury nel marzo del 2013, Justin Welby ha voluto visitare, come sua priorità, ciascuno dei Primate della Comunione. Nel gennaio del 2016 ha ospitato la prima Riunione dei Primate tenutasi dopo il 2011, con la partecipazione di tutti e 38 i Primate della Comunione. In tale occasione, è stato deciso di imporre sanzioni volte ad impedire ai membri delle Province che consentono il matrimonio omosessuale di votare su questioni dottrinali nelle riunioni della Comunione Anglicana o di rappresentare la Comunione nei dialoghi ecumenici per un periodo di tre anni. Queste sanzioni sono state imposte alla Chiesa episcopale degli Stati Uniti nel 2016, alla Chiesa episcopale scozzese nel 2017 e ora si presume che verranno applicate alla Chiesa anglicana del Brasile. Avendo ottenuto l'accordo dei Primate su tali sanzioni e la loro determinazione a "camminare insieme, a una certa distanza", il comunicato stampa della Riunione dei Primate del 2016 ha annunciato che la prossima Lambeth Conferenza si terrà nel 2020.

Nonostante gli energici sforzi compiuti dall'Arcivescovo Welby per giungere a un compromesso che unisca le Province della Comunione, la pace rimane fragile. Poi-

ché vi sono pochissime questioni dottrinali trattate al livello della Comunione, le sanzioni riguardanti le Province statunitensi, scozzesi e brasiliane hanno un effetto molto limitato. Inoltre, non è chiaro se le sanzioni imposte alla Chiesa episcopale americana per un periodo di tre anni nel 2016 siano ora scadute. Nel 2019 i delegati del Consiglio Consultivo Anglicano provenienti da ciascuna di queste tre Province hanno votato su tutte le risoluzioni, e le sanzioni non sono state menzionate. Le sanzioni, pertanto, non sono state applicate in modo chiaro e rigoroso.

Le sanzioni non hanno neanche assicurato la partecipazione di quelle Province conservatrici alle riunioni tenutesi al livello della Comunione dal 2016 in poi. Le Chiese anglicane della Nigeria, dell'Uganda e del Ruanda non hanno preso parte ai Consigli Consultivi Anglicani del 2016 e del 2019, né alla Riunione dei Primate del 2017, e non parteciperanno neppure alla Riunione dei Primate del 2020 (13 - 15 gennaio). Queste tre Province rappresentano oltre 30 milioni di anglicani sui circa 85 milioni della Comunione Mondiale Anglicana.

La mancata presenza di queste tre Province conservatrici non significa che la questione della sessualità cessi di essere problematica. Ciò è apparso in maniera evidente durante il Consiglio Consultivo Anglicano del 2019, che si è riunito a Hong Kong (28 aprile - 5 maggio). Là è stata proposta una risoluzione secondo la quale coloro che sono “emarginati a causa della loro sessualità... dovrebbero essere pienamente inclusi nella vita della Comunione Anglicana”. Rapidamente, la discussione si è fatta tesa ed emotivamente intensa. Lo stesso Arcivescovo Welby è dovuto intervenire con una nuova risoluzione, la quale propone “che si metta in atto un processo di ascolto con un meccanismo solidale e indipendente al fine di ascoltare le preoccupazioni e le voci delle persone, in particolare di coloro che si sono sentiti emarginati a causa della loro sessualità”. Questo episodio dimostra non solo la natura esplosiva della tematica, ma anche l'acume politico dell'Arcivescovo, che è riuscito a posizionarsi tra le parti opposte e a impedire che l'incontro si sfaldasse.

Cosa ci si potrebbe attendere dunque dalla Lambeth Conference del 2020? Per quanto riguarda la partecipazione, l'Arcivescovo di Canterbury estende inviti a singoli vescovi della Comunione; è pertanto possibile che alcuni di loro partecipino nonostante provengano da Province solitamente assenti negli incontri organizzati al livello della Comunione. Tuttavia, è immaginabile anche che alcuni vescovi boicottino la Conferenza anche se appartenenti a Province che generalmente partecipano. Sembra quindi probabile una presenza di circa due terzi dei vescovi (600).

Come avvenuto nella Lambeth Conference del 2008, è prevedibile che la Conferenza del 2020 non prenda risoluzioni, e consenta poco spazio al dibattito. Il tema scelto, “La Chiesa di Dio per il mondo di Dio”, riflette il desiderio dell'Arcivescovo Welby di far sì che la Chiesa sposti la sua attenzione dalle questioni interne, dimostrate divise, alla sua missione nel mondo. Egli ha affermato: “Prego affinché, ispirata dallo Spirito Santo, la Lambeth Conference rinvigorisca la Comunione con la visione e con le risorse capaci di trasmettere l'amore trasformante di Gesù Cristo ad ogni livello della società in tutto il mondo”.

Come nel 2008, la Lambeth Conference del 2020 comprenderà diversi elementi: ritiro, studio biblico, interventi e discussioni volti a rafforzare la Comunione. Ciò non significa necessariamente che le questioni controverse verranno del tutto evitate. In effetti, l'Arcivescovo ha affermato che la Conferenza “sarà un momento per affrontare i punti dolenti e le preoccupazioni” e “per confrontarsi con le questioni davanti alle quali

si trovano la Chiesa e il mondo”. Tuttavia, egli ha anche sottolineato la necessità di ascoltarsi rispettosamente gli uni gli altri, di approfondire le relazioni, di sostenersi a vicenda e di “trovare il modo di camminare insieme”.

È evidente che riunire gli anglicani delle Province liberali, in particolare del mondo anglosassone, e gli anglicani delle Province più conservatrici dell'Asia e dell'Africa comporta sempre il rischio di suscitare tensioni e divisioni. Poiché tale era anche il rischio della Riunione dei Primate del 2016, l'Arcivescovo aveva fatto in modo che ci fosse un elemento spirituale catalizzatore, per appianare possibili tensioni: Jean Vanier si era rivolto ai Primate e aveva lavato loro i piedi, e i Primate avevano pregato riuniti intorno a due reliquie, il presunto manico del bastone pastorale di San Gregorio Magno e i Vangeli di Sant'Agostino.

Analogamente, una reliquia di San Thomas Beckett sarà al centro dell'attenzione alla Lambeth Conference del 2020. Il 7 luglio 1220, le reliquie dell'Arcivescovo assassinato furono traslate dalla cripta della Cattedrale di Canterbury a un santuario predisposto nell'abside. (Il santuario fu in seguito distrutto dai commissari del re Enrico VIII). Per celebrare l'800° anniversario della traslazione, la tunica insanguinata indossata da Beckett al momento del martirio verrà prestata alla Cattedrale di Canterbury dal tesoro della Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, dove è stata conservata dal XV secolo. La liturgia vespertina per la festa della Traslazione delle Reliquie sarà celebrata il 5 luglio, e riunirà i successori dei vescovi e dei dignitari che parteciparono alla cerimonia del 1220, siano essi anglicani, cattolici o appartenenti a un'altra tradizione cristiana. Il 7 luglio, data esatta dell'anniversario della festa, il Cardinale Vincent Nichols celebrerà la messa nella Cattedrale. La reliquia rimarrà quindi a Canterbury come fulcro della preghiera durante la Lambeth Conference e rafforzerà la speranza dell'Arcivescovo Welby che la Conferenza s'incentri soprattutto sulla testimonianza cristiana nel mondo.

L'impegno dell'Arcivescovo Justin Welby per la pace nel Sudan del Sud

L'Arcivescovo Justin Welby è venuto a Roma due volte nel 2019. La prima visita è stata in occasione di un ritiro ospitato congiuntamente dall'Arcivescovo e da Papa Francesco nella Domus Sanctae Marthae e destinato a leader politici e a leader cristiani del Sudan del Sud. Al ritiro hanno partecipato il Sig. Salva Kiir Mayardit, presidente della Repubblica, e quattro dei cinque vice-presidenti: il Sig. Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon, il Sig. James Wani Igga, il Sig. Taban Deng Gai e la Sig.ra Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior. Erano presenti anche otto membri del Consiglio delle Chiese del Sudan del Sud. Il Rev.do John Baptist Odama, Arcivescovo di Gulu (Uganda), e il Rev.do P. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, SJ, presidente della Conferenza dei Superiori maggiori dell'Africa e del Madagascar, hanno predicato nei servizi liturgici del ritiro. Questo evento, sia ecumenico che diplomatico, è stato organizzato dietro suggerimento dell'Arcivescovo di Canterbury con la collaborazione della Segreteria di Stato. Lo scopo di entrambe le Chiese era quello di offrire uno spazio di preghiera e di riconciliazione a coloro che hanno la responsabilità di lavorare per un futuro di pace e di prosperità per il popolo del Sudan del Sud.

Il 13 novembre, l'Arcivescovo Welby è tornato a Roma per l'installazione dell'Arcivescovo Ian Ernst come nuovo direttore del Centro Anglicano e rappresentante personale dell'Arcivescovo di Canterbury presso la Santa Sede. L'Arcivescovo Ernst è stato Primate della Chiesa anglicana dell'Oceano Indiano, dove ha lavorato a stretto

contatto con il suo omologo cattolico, il Cardinale Maurice Piat. È membro del Task Group dell'Arcivescovo, istituito in seguito alla Riunione dei Primate del 2016 per “ripristinare le relazioni, ricostruire la fiducia reciproca, guarire il retaggio delle ferite ed esplorare alcune profonde differenze” nella Comunione Anglicana.

Durante questa seconda visita, l'Arcivescovo ha avuto un colloquio privato con Papa Francesco, e la questione del Sudan del Sud è stata nuovamente sollevata. I due hanno concordato, in linea di principio, di visitare il Paese il più presto possibile, una volta che il governo di transizione sarà stato istituito. Papa Francesco e l'Arcivescovo Welby hanno riaffermato il loro impegno comune a favore delle iniziative di pace nel Sudan del Sud.

La United Methodist Church e il Consiglio Metodista Mondiale

La più grande delle Chiese del Consiglio Metodista Mondiale, la United Methodist Church (UMC), conta fedeli soprattutto negli Stati Uniti (circa 7 milioni su un totale di 12 milioni), ma ha anche un numero significativo di membri in Africa, Asia e Sud America. Nel febbraio 2019, essa ha tenuto una sessione speciale della Conferenza Generale, al fine di pervenire a una decisione sul Rapporto di una Commissione istituita per esaminare i paragrafi del “The Book of Discipline” che riguardano la sessualità umana. Con 438 voti contrari e 384 favorevoli, la Conferenza ha respinto le modifiche proposte per consentire ai singoli pastori di decidere se celebrare matrimoni omosessuali e di ordinare clero avente una relazione omosessuale. Tuttavia, le 17 petizioni emerse da questa riunione, indicate come “Piano tradizionale”, hanno incontrato da allora una forte opposizione. Nell'aprile del 2019, il Consiglio Giuridico della Chiesa ha dichiarato che 10 petizioni erano valide e 7 incostituzionali. I leader della Chiesa hanno ora proposto un piano per creare una nuova Chiesa “metodista tradizionalista” per coloro che desiderano lasciare l'UMC. Questa proposta sarà esaminata in una riunione della Conferenza Generale nel maggio 2020.

È importante capire come è strutturata la Comunione Metodista per comprendere le implicazioni di questo piano. Sebbene la United Methodist Church si consideri una Comunione cristiana mondiale, essa fa parte del molto più ampio Consiglio Metodista Mondiale (CMM) comprendente circa 80 milioni di cristiani. Se la United Methodist Church davvero si scindesse, entrambe le parti continuerebbero ad appartenere al CMM e così continuerebbero a essere in comunione sacramentale l'una con l'altra. La divisione avverrebbe principalmente a livello di gestione e comporterebbe una rottura delle strutture di comunione, o di “connessione” nella terminologia metodista, il che richiederebbe una divisione di risorse e di fondi.

Conclusione

Non dovremmo sottovalutare il dolore che questa divisione provoca in milioni di cristiani, né gli sforzi appassionati compiuti per preservare l'unità della United Methodist Church. Lo stesso vale per le tensioni sulla questione della sessualità umana nella Comunione Anglicana: sono fonte di sofferenza e sono all'origine di sforzi eroici per mantenere e rinsaldare l'unità della Chiesa.

Forse la tunica di San Thomas Beckett offre un'immagine salutare. Si presenta come contrapposta a un'altra tunica, quella indossata da Cristo. I Padri della Chiesa, e in particolare San Cipriano, videro nell'abito senza cuciture di Cristo il simbolo della Chiesa come cucita da Dio con un unico pezzo. Davanti alla tunica di Beckett, strappata e

insanguinata dai colpi violenti dei cavalieri di Enrico II, comprendiamo che è sempre il peccato umano a lacerare il tessuto della comunità cristiana. Nel 2020 sarà importante pregare per i nostri fratelli e le nostre sorelle in Cristo anglicani e metodisti, affinché lo Spirito, che è l'unico a poter tessere un'unità indistruttibile, rafforzi la comunione che li unisce.

(L'Osservatore Romano, 23 gennaio 2020)

Rapporti con le Chiese ortodosse orientali

COME IN UN RISVEGLIO

Rev.do Padre Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP, Ufficiale della sezione orientale

Sul cammino ecumenico della piena comunione tra i cristiani, occorre un triplice sguardo: sul passato, sul presente e sul futuro. Nel 2019 le relazioni con le Chiese ortodosse orientali – che siano di tradizione siriana, copta o armena – illustrano bene questa necessità.

Lo sguardo sul passato è essenziale innanzitutto per trarre ispirazione dalla nostra storia comune. Con le Chiese ortodosse orientali questo significa risalire al periodo precalcedonese, vale a dire ai primi cinque secoli. La Commissione mista internazionale per il dialogo teologico tra la Chiesa cattolica e le Chiese ortodosse orientali l'ha fatto nel suo documento del 2015, intitolato "L'esercizio della comunione nella vita della Chiesa primitiva e le sue ripercussioni sulla nostra ricerca di comunione oggi". Studiando le espressioni di comunione tra le Chiese nei primi cinque secoli, il documento mostra che "nella maggior parte, in questo periodo queste espressioni di comunione erano informali, cioè non svolte all'interno di strutture chiare". Inoltre, "tendevano ad attuarsi principalmente a livello regionale; non c'era un chiaro punto di riferimento centrale". Infatti, "da un lato, a Roma vi era una crescente consapevolezza di un ministero di più ampia comunione e unità, in particolare dalla fine del III secolo in poi; d'altra parte, non vi sono prove chiare che le Chiese ortodosse orientali abbiano mai accettato un simile ministero" (71). Questa constatazione è un insegnamento importante nell'attuale ricerca della piena comunione con le Chiese ortodosse orientali.

Guardare al passato è anche necessario per un'altra ragione: per la purificazione della memoria. La memoria delle nostre Chiese è spesso ferita da una storia conflittuale, alla quale non di rado si mescolano aspetti non teologici di natura culturale, politica o nazionale. Il 2019 ha visto la realizzazione di diverse iniziative in questo campo con le Chiese ortodosse orientali. Nel maggio 2019 si è tenuta ad Addis Abeba una conferenza sulle relazioni tra la Chiesa cattolica e la Chiesa ortodossa etiopie Tewahedo. Prima iniziativa del genere in Etiopia, l'incontro mirava a rileggere insieme la storia spesso dolorosa dei rapporti tra la Chiesa cattolica e la Chiesa ortodossa Tewahedo, ai quali si aggiunge la spinosa questione dei rapporti tra Italia ed Etiopia. La rilettura di una storia contrastata è anche una delle dimensioni del dialogo della Chiesa cattolica con la Chiesa ortodossa siriana malankarese. Uno dei progetti della commissione mista di dialogo con questa Chiesa, che, come ogni anno, si è incontrata in Kerala nel mese di

dicembre 2019, è la pubblicazione comune di un “Libro di riferimento sulla storia della Chiesa” che intende presentare alcuni documenti sulla storia controversa del cristianesimo in India fino al XVII secolo.

Lo sguardo sul passato è inoltre fondamentale per interpretare le differenze teologiche tra le nostre Chiese. Un approccio ermeneutico deve distinguere, tra le differenze ereditate dal passato, quelle che ci dividono da quelle che sono parte di una legittima diversità nell'espressione di una comune fede. Tale ermeneutica è stata applicata da subito nel dialogo con le Chiese ortodosse orientali, con le quali la separazione è dovuta a ragioni cristologiche. Il dialogo teologico ha permesso di riconoscere che condividiamo una stessa fede cristologica espressa in vario modo, come spiega particolarmente bene la dichiarazione comune del 1990 di san Giovanni Paolo II e del Catholicos Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I della Chiesa ortodossa siriana malankarese: il contenuto della fede cristologica “è lo stesso”, anche se “nella formulazione di questo contenuto nel corso della storia sono comparse differenze nella terminologia e nell'enfasi” – tuttavia “queste differenze possono esistere nella stessa comunione e quindi non devono dividerci, specialmente quando proclamiamo [Dio] ai nostri fratelli e sorelle nel mondo in termini che possono comprendere più facilmente” (8).

È la stessa metodologia ermeneutica che viene applicata oggi nel dialogo teologico con queste antiche Chiese, che, dal 2015, si è concentrato sui sacramenti. La commissione mista internazionale di dialogo ha tenuto nel gennaio 2019 a Roma la sua sedicesima riunione, dedicata al tema del matrimonio. La commissione ha sottolineato che, nonostante i riti e la teologia del matrimonio abbiano sviluppato tradizioni diverse – in particolare per quanto riguarda la questione del ministro –, la comprensione del matrimonio come sacramento è fondamentalmente la stessa. La commissione si riunirà di nuovo dal 26 gennaio al 1 febbraio di quest'anno a Atchaneh in Libano, su invito del patriarcato siro-ortodosso, per discutere di teologia sacramentale in generale. Questo incontro, che dovrebbe essere l'ultimo passo prima della stesura di un documento comune sull'argomento, includerà probabilmente un'importante dimensione ermeneutica consentendo di discernere una stessa fede sacramentale al di là delle legittime differenze di rito e di espressione teologiche.

Con la Chiesa assira dell'Oriente, che riconosce solo i primi due concili ecumenici, il metodo ermeneutico ha anche dato importanti frutti. Il dialogo ha permesso di riconoscere la validità dell'anafora eucaristica di Adai e Mari, dove le parole dell'istituzione eucaristica “sono presenti non in modo narrativo coerente e *ad litteram*, ma in modo eucologico e disseminato”, come spiega il Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani nei suoi *orientamenti* del 2001. La commissione mista per il dialogo teologico con questa Chiesa, che ha celebrato a Roma nel novembre 2019 il 25° anniversario della sua creazione, sta attualmente lavorando sulle immagini della Chiesa. La tradizione assira, infatti, ha sviluppato la sua ecclesiologia innanzitutto tramite la sua ricchissima innografia (nella quale la Chiesa viene presentata, ad esempio, come Arca della salvezza, Sposa dello Sposo, Ospedale spirituale...) che, al di là di un'espressione spesso diversa dalla tradizione latina, comporta una simile comprensione della Chiesa.

Se il dialogo teologico studia il passato per le ragioni sopra esposte, deve anche guardare al presente. In effetti, non solo il passato, ma anche le attuali relazioni tra le nostre Chiese, in tutte le loro dimensioni, sono un *locus theologicus*. Spetta alla teologia formulare ciò che le Chiese stanno già vivendo oggi sotto la guida dello Spirito Santo.

Come il patriarca Atenagora dichiarò laconicamente a proposito del suo incontro con Papa Paolo VI nel 1964: “I capi delle Chiese fanno, i teologi spiegano”. I rapporti tra le Chiese riguardano non solo i loro Primate, ciò che viene chiamato il “dialogo della carità”, ma tutti i fedeli, in ciò che può essere chiamato il “dialogo della vita”.

In un momento in cui le relazioni tra le nostre Chiese a tutti i livelli si stanno intensificando, sembra più che mai necessaria una rilettura teologica di questi rapporti, sia nel “dialogo della carità” che nel “dialogo della vita”. È ciò che il sesto “*Colloquium Syriacum*” della Fondazione Pro Oriente di Vienna ha intrapreso nel novembre 2019. L’incontro è stato dedicato a una valutazione dei numerosi accordi pastorali tra la Chiesa cattolica e le Chiese ortodosse di tradizione siriana, molti dei quali consentono una certa *communicatio in sacris*: ad esempio l'accordo del 1994 con la Chiesa ortodossa siriana – primo accordo pastorale reciproco della Chiesa cattolica con un'altra Chiesa –, o anche l'accordo del 1994 sui matrimoni misti con la Chiesa malankarese siriana ortodossa o quello già menzionato del 2001 con la Chiesa assira dell'Oriente. La conclusione della conferenza è stata un appello a “sviluppare nuovi approcci teologici tenendo conto degli accordi pastorali già esistenti e delle realtà vissute in comune dai fedeli delle nostre Chiese”.

Sguardo sul passato e sul presente. Ma sul cammino ecumenico è essenziale anche uno sguardo prospettico verso il futuro. Traendo ispirazione dal passato e attingendo all'esperienza presente, come concepire una Chiesa riconciliata? Questo tipo di considerazione richiede una riflessione sul ruolo del Vescovo di Roma. Nel terzo capitolo di *Ut unum sint*, intitolato “*Quanta est nobis via?*”, Giovanni Paolo II invitava i pastori e i teologi delle diverse Chiese a cercare, “evidentemente insieme, le forme nelle quali questo ministero possa realizzare un servizio di amore riconosciuto dagli uni e dagli altri” (95). In un documento del 2010 intitolato “Passi verso una Chiesa riunita: schizzo di una visione ortodosso-cattolica del futuro”, la commissione nordamericana di dialogo cattolico-ortodosso si è proposta di rispondere a questo invito. Da parte delle Chiese ortodosse orientali, non ci sono state risposte all'invito di *Ut unum sint*. Infatti, spetta probabilmente alla Chiesa cattolica avanzare una proposta concreta, accettabile per gli ortodossi orientali, sull'esercizio del ministero dell'unità del vescovo di Roma a livello universale. Proprio su questo “*Quanta est nobis via?*” dell'enciclica di cui celebriamo quest'anno il 25° anniversario il Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani rifletterà durante la sua prossima plenaria che dovrebbe aver luogo nel novembre 2020.

Lo sguardo sul futuro è necessario anche per non perdere di vista lo scopo del nostro cammino di unità. Cinquant'anni fa, l'11 maggio 1970, subito dopo un'udienza privata con Papa Paolo VI, il Catholicos armeno Vasken I dichiarò che lui e il Papa “ricordavano, come in un risveglio, che siamo fratelli da duemila anni”. E continuò “O Signore, lascia che questo momento duri per sempre, perché è sublime!”. Possa questo risveglio continuare in modo che possiamo risvegliare insieme il mondo nell'annuncio del Cristo risorto.

(*L'Osservatore Romano*, 22 gennaio 2020)

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UNITÀ SEGNO DELLA FEDELITÀ A DIO

Rev.do Avelino González-Ferrer, Ufficiale della sezione occidentale

Il 2020 segnerà l'anniversario di numerosi eventi significativi per i cristiani in diverse parti del mondo, tra cui il 400° anniversario del viaggio dei *Pilgrim Fathers* dall'Inghilterra al Nuovo Mondo e la firma del *Mayflower Compact* nel novembre del 1620, la commemorazione nella Repubblica Ceca del 600° anniversario delle Crociate ussite (1420-1431) e del 400° anniversario della Battaglia della Montagna Bianca (Bila Hora) durante la Guerra dei Trent'anni (8 novembre 1620). Ma in questa Settimana di Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani, guardiamo al 2019 prestando attenzione ad alcuni importanti eventi ecumenici verificatisi tra la Chiesa cattolica, le Comunioni riformate e battiste, e l'Esercito della Salvezza.

Dal 9 al 15 maggio 2019, il Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani (PCPUC) ha partecipato all'incontro annuale del Comitato Esecutivo della Comunione Mondiale delle Chiese Riformate (CMCR) che si è riunito a Kappel, in Svizzera, in occasione del 500° anniversario dell'inizio della Chiesa riformata in Svizzera nel 1519 (l' "Anno Zwingliano"). Come osservatore, il PCPUC porta avanti una lunga tradizione nel metodo del dialogo ecumenico, per riconoscere e incoraggiare il lavoro delle Chiese della più ampia comunità ecumenica. Una parte fondamentale di questa attività di incoraggiamento è stata la presentazione del saluto formale del Cardinale Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio, il Cardinale Kurt Koch, al Segretario Generale, il Rev.do Dott. Chris Ferguson, e ai membri del Comitato Esecutivo.

Di particolare interesse ecumenico è stato l'avvio, a Kappel, di un nuovo dialogo tra la CMCR e la Conferenza Mondiale Mennonita intorno al tema "Alla ricerca di una testimonianza comune: ripristinare la nostra famiglia nella pienezza". Il nuovo dialogo riformato-mennonita si concentrerà sui seguenti argomenti: "la giusta memoria, la reciproca riconciliazione e la collaborazione internazionale". Esso si basa sulla guarigione della memoria iniziata con il dialogo cattolico-mennonita che ha avuto luogo dal 1998 al 2003, e sul raduno della Federazione Luterana Mondiale del 2010 a Stoccarda, in Germania, dove i luterani hanno chiesto ai mennoniti perdono per il loro duro trattamento ed entrambi si sono impegnati a cercare il modo di favorire un processo di riconciliazione. La storia delle relazioni tra le tradizioni riformate e mennonite è stata tristemente segnata dalla violenza, specialmente in Svizzera; l'attuale desiderio di riconciliazione rappresenta dunque un considerevole risultato ecumenico.

L'importanza della guarigione della memoria, segno distintivo del movimento ecumenico e del processo verso la pace e la riconciliazione, è stata evidenziata in particolare il 12 marzo dell'Anno giubilare 2000, quando San Giovanni Paolo II ha scritto una significativa pagina di storia, chiedendo perdono per i peccati commessi nel corso della storia da membri della Chiesa cattolica (come le Crociate, l'Inquisizione e le prevaricazioni contro ebrei, donne e minoranze), affermando: "Per la parte che ciascuno di noi, con i suoi comportamenti, ha avuto in questi mali, contribuendo a deturpare il volto della Chiesa, chiediamo umilmente perdono. In pari tempo, mentre confessiamo le nostre colpe, perdoniamo le colpe commesse dagli altri nei nostri confronti." Questo atto pubblico di pentimento e di richiesta di perdono ha fatto eco in tutto il mondo cristiano e oggi è un aspetto centrale dell' "ecumenismo spirituale".

Il 2019 ha segnato anche venti anni dalla storica firma, avvenuta nell'ottobre 1999, della Dichiarazione Congiunta sulla Dottrina della Giustificazione, una delle pie-

tre miliardi di maggior rilievo del movimento ecumenico negli ultimi cinquant'anni. Una nuova fase nella recezione di questo documento è stata raggiunta quando, dal 26 al 28 marzo, si sono riuniti presso la University of Notre Dame negli Stati Uniti responsabili di alto livello delle cinque confessioni cristiane che hanno formalmente aderito alla Dichiarazione Congiunta - anglicani, luterani, metodisti, riformati e cattolici -, per una consultazione sui prossimi passi da compiere.

L'obiettivo della riunione era riflettere sulle implicazioni della Dichiarazione Congiunta nel contesto della crescente vicinanza e collaborazione tra le varie tradizioni ecclesiali. La Dichiarazione della Consultazione di Notre Dame ha confermato questo scopo, affermando: "Ci siamo incontrati [...] spinti dalla comune urgenza di presentare il messaggio della speranza e della grazia liberatrice di Dio per il nostro mondo". La Dichiarazione ha inoltre ribadito il "Lund imperative" del 2016 (un riferimento allo storico incontro tra Papa Francesco e i responsabili della Federazione Luterana Mondiale a Lund, in Svezia, nel 2016) per agire sempre partendo dal punto di vista dell'unità piuttosto che dal punto di vista della divisione. I partecipanti hanno anche riconosciuto la necessità di applicare il Principio di Lund del 1952, che appella le comunità cristiane ad agire insieme in tutte le cose, tranne quando differenze significative di convinzione le inducono ad agire separatamente. L'incontro di tre giorni ha coinvolto gli studenti del campus di Notre Dame e la più ampia comunità cristiana, con un servizio di preghiera pubblica e una discussione di gruppo insieme ai leaders della Chiesa. I partecipanti alla consultazione hanno deciso di proseguire la conversazione istituendo un comitato direttivo per portare avanti i loro lavori.

L'8 novembre 2019, una delegazione dell'Esercito della Salvezza guidata dal generale Brian Peddle e dal commissario Rosalie Peddle ha compiuto una visita in Vaticano e ha incontrato il Santo Padre. Noti con il nome di salvazionisti, i membri dell'Esercito della Salvezza cercano di portare salvezza e aiuto umanitario alle persone bisognose. I salvazionisti sono sia una comunità cristiana protestante che un'organizzazione umanitaria internazionale, con oltre 1,7 milioni di membri.

Questo è stato il secondo incontro tra i dirigenti dell'Esercito della Salvezza e Papa Francesco, il quale, durante un colloquio franco e caloroso, ha rammentato la prima lezione sull'ecumenismo ricevuta da sua nonna: "Come qualche volta ho ricordato..., è stato incontrando dei membri dell'Esercito della Salvezza che ho ricevuto la mia prima lezione di ecumenismo da mia nonna, molti anni fa...!" Si tratta di un aneddoto raccontato da Papa Francesco in varie occasioni, risalente a quando aveva quattro anni e sua nonna gli spiegò chi erano i salvazionisti del loro quartiere: "...ho detto a mia nonna: 'Quelle, chi sono? Monache, suore?'. E mia nonna ha detto: 'No. Sono protestanti, ma sono buone'" (incontro del 12 dicembre 2014). Il Papa ha poi aggiunto davanti alla delegazione: "Il loro esempio di umile servizio agli ultimi tra i nostri fratelli e sorelle parla con più eloquenza di ogni parola."

Nell'incontro tra i rappresentanti dell'Esercito della Salvezza e il Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani è stata discussa la prospettiva di portare avanti regolarmente le conversazioni. Il generale Peddle ha sottolineato le aree in cui l'Esercito della Salvezza e la Chiesa cattolica si trovano a dover affrontare sfide comuni nella missione a favore dei poveri e degli emarginati. La discussione si è anche concentrata sulla missione e sull'evangelizzazione efficaci e sul servizio all'umanità sofferente. La prima visita dei leader dell'Esercito della Salvezza compiuta nel 2014 era

avvenuta al termine di una serie storica di conversazioni teologiche svoltesi dal 2007 al 2012.

Infine, dal 9 al 13 dicembre 2019, si è tenuta a Varsavia, in Polonia, la terza riunione della terza fase del dialogo internazionale tra l'Alleanza Battista Mondiale e il Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani. L'incontro è stato ospitato dall'Unione Battista di Polonia presso il Seminario teologico battista di Varsavia. Esso ha trattato il tema delle "Sfide della testimonianza comune", prestando attenzione alle sfide attuali affrontate da battisti e cattolici nell'adempiere la loro missione di testimonianza comune a Cristo, tra cui: il divario crescente legato a questioni etiche e morali; la politicizzazione della religione, e la crescita del secolarismo e dei cosiddetti "none?" (coloro che dichiarano di non avere alcuna appartenenza religiosa).

Proseguendo sulle basi gettate in due precedenti dialoghi battisti-cattolici (1984-1988 e 2006-2010), la Commissione congiunta sta ora valutando ciò che cattolici e battisti sono in grado di affermare insieme riguardo a un carattere e a una pratica che possono essere riconosciuti come validi da entrambe le comunità nel campo della testimonianza cristiana comune, alla luce di un divario crescente tra la testimonianza della Tradizione e la cultura attuale.

Mentre celebriamo la Settimana di Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani, leggiamo, negli Atti degli Apostoli 27, come San Paolo incoraggiò gli altri passeggeri sulla nave a non aver paura e ad avere fede in Dio per la loro salvezza. Spesso le divisioni nella Chiesa e la mancanza di fede nel mondo tentano anche noi, come avvenne con i passeggeri della nave di San Paolo, ad abbandonare ogni speranza di salvezza o di raggiungimento della piena unità visibile. Tuttavia, coloro che hanno fede comprendono che Dio ha un disegno più grande. Dobbiamo ricordare che l'unità dei cristiani non è in definitiva qualcosa che possiamo realizzare con i nostri soli sforzi, ma è un dono al quale possiamo prepararci tramite la pazienza, la preghiera e la fedeltà a Dio. Può essere utile tener presente che, sebbene la poppa della nave che trasportava San Paolo sia stata spezzata dalla forza delle onde, è stato attraverso alcune assi e altri rottami della nave che "tutti poterono mettersi in salvo a terra."

(L'Osservatore Romano, 25 gennaio 2020)

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Le relazioni con le Chiese ortodosse nell'Europa centro-orientale

"RICEVERE E ACCOGLIERE IL DONO DEL FRATELLO"*

Rev.do Jaromír Zádrapa *Ufficiale della sezione orientale*

"Storicamente la Chiesa cristiana consta di tutti gli uomini che hanno accolto Cristo; ma Lo si può accogliere in maniera esteriore e in maniera interiore. Accogliere interiormente Cristo vuol dire essere l'uomo spirituale nuovo, vuol dire rinascere spiritualmente dall'alto o dallo spirito, come è detto nel colloquio con Nicodemo, cioè quando l'uomo riconosce la non verità della sua vita e sente in se stesso la fonte positiva di un'altra vita vera, indipendente dalla carne e dall'intelletto dell'uomo. Ma si può accogliere Cristo anche solo esteriormente, riconoscendo semplicemente l'incarnazione miracolosa di un

ente divino per la salvezza degli uomini e accettando la sua legge secondo la lettera come legge esteriore obbligatoria”.

Queste parole di Vladimir Solov'ëv ci aiutano a cogliere una distinzione che ci ricordano tanti teologi, non solo della tradizione latina, ma anche e soprattutto dell'oriente cristiano – da Berdjaev fino a Yannaras ai nostri giorni –, cioè la differenza tra religione e fede. La religione, in prima battuta, è una costruzione umana per salire a Dio, per ingraziarselo, per trascinarlo dalla propria parte. La religione si presenta come una struttura che regola il rapporto tra l'uomo e Dio: facendo ciò che Dio richiede, siamo premiati, se non lo facciamo siamo puniti. Il destino dell'uomo è dunque nelle sue mani, nell'impegno, nell'osservanza, nell'obbedienza con cui adempie prescrizioni ed opere religiose. La fede invece è l'accoglienza di una discesa, di ciò che Dio in Gesù Cristo ha già fatto per noi. La fede dunque ha a che fare con la coscienza del dono.

Ora, è proprio questa coscienza del dono del Signore – e dell'atteggiamento che l'accompagna, la gratitudine – che ci apre gli occhi e ci fa scoprire come dono anche i fratelli. La gratitudine ha una straordinaria capacità di moltiplicarsi, come attesta la parola greca per “grazie” (*eucharistò* – “dare il bene”); non a caso, il più grande sacramento nel quale Dio ci fa vivere è chiamato proprio Eucaristia. Le divisioni tra le confessioni cristiane, le ferite del passato sono fatti indiscutibili, che tuttavia dovrebbero essere riconosciuti in modo sobrio e collocati in questo contesto di accoglienza del dono del Signore, che dà significato, direzione e speranza agli sforzi che facciamo per superare le difficoltà nei nostri rapporti. Lo sguardo di fede e di accoglienza del dono ci porta pertanto a riconoscere il dono del fratello. Mi sembra che questa potrebbe essere la cornice per inquadrare le iniziative che hanno costellato le relazioni tra la Santa Sede e le Chiese ortodosse dell'Europa centro-orientale nell'anno appena passato.

La prima, dall'11 al 13 febbraio a Mosca, è stata la celebrazione dell'anniversario dell'incontro di Cuba del 12 febbraio 2016 tra Papa Francesco e il Patriarca Kirill di Mosca e di tutta la Russia. In questa occasione, il Cardinale Koch ed il Metropolita Hilarion di Volokolamsk hanno co-presieduto un convegno internazionale su “*La morte e il morire in una società tecnologica: tra biomedicina e spiritualità*”, a cui hanno partecipato anche Mons. Vincenzo Paglia e il Vescovo Panteleimon di Orekhovo-Zuyevo, presidenti rispettivamente della Pontificia Accademia della Vita e del Dipartimento sinodale per la carità ecclesiale ed il servizio sociale della Chiesa ortodossa russa. Riferendosi a quella circostanza, il Papa ha sottolineato la responsabilità pastorale che spinge a non restare inerti di fronte alle sfide che richiedono una risposta comune. Ora, è proprio il contesto della comunione che dà un senso alla totalità dell'esperienza e della prospettiva, che quindi permette alle parole che insieme possiamo dire sulla morte e sul morire di essere un indicatore dell'autenticità della vita, orientato alla salvezza delle persone e non semplicemente all'affermazione di qualche verità astratta.

La visita compiuta dal 5 al 7 maggio in Bulgaria e nella Macedonia del Nord da Papa Francesco, accompagnato dal Cardinale Kurt Koch, è stata un viaggio guidato dai santi Cirillo e Metodio. Il Santo Padre ha ricordato, nella visita al Patriarca Neofit della Chiesa ortodossa bulgara e al Santo Sinodo, che i santi fratelli di Tessalonica hanno sempre declinato insieme la missione e la comunione, in quanto la comunicazione di chi è Dio traspare necessariamente dall'atteggiamento dei cristiani tra di loro. In questa stessa occasione, il Papa ha ricordato tre dimensioni dell'ecumenismo a lui care: *l'ecumenismo del sangue*, cioè la commemorazione e la celebrazione comune dei martiri che, particolarmente in epoca recente, di fronte alla persecuzione totalitaria, hanno te-

stimoniato la loro fede in Cristo; *l'ecumenismo del povero*, dove, prendendo cura dei poveri, le Chiese oltrepassano i loro confini confessionali e scoprono il significato dell'amore nei suoi strati sempre più complessi e profondi, in relazione ai rapporti interumani e alla vita sociale; e *l'ecumenismo della missione*, perché soltanto insieme possiamo testimoniare il Signore.

Sempre in questa prospettiva, un particolare significato assume il viaggio apostolico che Papa Francesco ha effettuato in Romania, dal 31 maggio al 2 giugno, sempre accompagnato dal Cardinale Koch. Il Papa ha menzionato la "fraternità del sangue" che lega la Chiesa di Roma con la Chiesa ortodossa di Romania, a motivo del legame che univa Pietro e Andrea, che secondo la tradizione portò la fede al popolo dei Daci, fratelli di sangue, ma anche fratelli nel versare il proprio sangue per il Signore. Questa "fraternità del sangue che ci precede e che, come una silenziosa corrente vivificante, lungo i secoli non ha mai smesso di irrigare e sostenere il nostro cammino", diventa un impegno a camminare insieme con la forza della memoria, non la memoria dei torti subiti o inferti, ma *la memoria delle radici e la memoria della comunione*, che va nutrita e rafforzata con nuovi gesti e nuove parole che guariscono la nostra cattiva memoria gli uni degli altri.

Significative di questo atteggiamento di accoglienza e di gratitudine del dono di essere figli sono state le parole che il Santo Padre ha pronunciato durante una meditazione sul Padre Nostro nella nuova cattedrale ortodossa di Bucarest: "Aiutaci, Padre, a prendere sul serio la vita del fratello, a fare nostra la sua storia. Aiutaci, Padre, a non giudicare il fratello per le sue azioni e i suoi limiti, ma ad accoglierlo prima di tutto come figlio tuo. Aiutaci a vincere la tentazione di sentirci figli maggiori, che a forza di stare al centro, dimenticano il dono dell'altro".

In questo sforzo di ampliamento della memoria della comunione, il Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani ha accolto per la quarta volta consecutiva, dall'8 al 15 giugno, una delegazione di dodici giovani sacerdoti del Patriarcato di Mosca per una visita di studio volta ad approfondire la conoscenza della Chiesa cattolica. La delegazione, guidata dal Vescovo Feoktist di Pereslav-Uglic, ha assistito alla Liturgia di Pentecoste presieduta dal Santo Padre, ha visitato alcuni Dicasteri della Curia Romana, alcuni monumenti cari alla fede nella città di Roma e alcuni luoghi di formazione. Anche questa è un'iniziativa che ha preso il via dopo l'incontro del 12 febbraio 2016 tra il Santo Padre ed il Patriarca Kirill di Mosca a L'Avana, affinché queste visite favoriscano una reciproca conoscenza, utile a superare i pregiudizi, e la possibilità di uno scambio sulle rispettive preoccupazioni pastorali.

Dal 23 agosto al 1 settembre, si è svolta la quinta visita di studio in Russia di giovani sacerdoti cattolici su invito del Patriarcato di Mosca. La delegazione era composta da dodici sacerdoti cattolici provenienti da diversi paesi, studenti presso le Pontificie Università romane. La visita, che si è svolta a Mosca, Novgorod e San Pietroburgo, ha incluso numerosi incontri con rappresentanti ufficiali, sacerdoti, monaci e monache, seminaristi e studenti della Chiesa ortodossa russa, partecipazione alle liturgie, visite dei dipartimenti del Santo Sinodo, degli istituti d'istruzione, dei monasteri, dei luoghi santi ortodossi e dei monumenti del patrimonio culturale russo.

Il 28 agosto, la delegazione ha assistito alla liturgia patriarcale presso la cattedrale della Dormizione del Cremlino e ha poi incontrato Sua Santità il Patriarca Kirill di Mosca. Si sono poi susseguiti gli incontri con il Metropolita Hilarion, Presidente del Dipartimento delle relazioni ecclesiastiche esterne, il Vescovo Dionissij, primo Vicario

del Patriarca a Mosca, il Metropolita Lev di Novgorod e il Vescovo Siluan, Rettore dell'Accademia teologica di San Pietroburgo.

Un altro evento importante è stato l'incontro dei Vescovi orientali cattolici in Europa sul tema "La missione ecumenica delle Chiese orientali cattoliche in Europa oggi", che si è svolto dal 12 al 14 settembre a Roma, presso il Pontificio Collegio Ucraino di San Giosafat. Il programma dell'incontro è stato preparato dal Consiglio delle Conferenze Episcopale d'Europa (CCEE) e dalla Chiesa greco-cattolica ucraina, in collaborazione con il Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani. Oltre ai Vescovi orientali cattolici, hanno preso parte all'incontro il Cardinale Pietro Parolin, Segretario di Stato, il Cardinale Angelo Bagnasco, Presidente del CCEE, il Cardinale Leonardo Sandri, Prefetto della Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali, il Cardinale Kurt Koch, Presidente del PCPUC, e l'Arcivescovo Maggiore Sviatoslav Shevchuk di Kyiv-Halič. Nella sua conferenza, il Cardinal Koch ha sottolineato la particolare responsabilità ecumenica delle Chiese cattoliche orientali nel promuovere l'unità della Chiesa, apprezzando, come segno incoraggiante, il fatto che i Vescovi orientali cattolici in Europa riflettono in tale occasione sul tema della missione ecumenica delle loro Chiese.

L'ultima delle iniziative dell'anno 2019 da segnalare è un messaggio del Cardinale Kurt Koch alla conferenza internazionale "Il Metropolita Nicodemo: la via del servizio alla Chiesa", svoltasi nei giorni 15-16 ottobre a Minsk e presieduta dal Metropolita Pavel di Minsk e Zaslavl, Esarca patriarcale di tutta la Bielorussia. La conferenza, dedicata al 90° anniversario della nascita del Metropolita di Leningrado e Novgorod Nikodim (1929 -1978), era organizzata dalla Chiesa ortodossa bielorusa - Esarcato bielorusso del Patriarcato di Mosca, dal Centro di formazione cristiana dei Santi Metodio e Cirillo, dal Comitato esecutivo della città di Minsk e dall'Istituto di teologia dell'Università statale bielorusa.

Il Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio ha "ringraziato il Signore per l'opportunità che questa Conferenza ci offre di trarre ispirazione ancora una volta da un uomo di Dio che, unito così radicalmente a Cristo, è stato capace di mostrare che la vita al servizio della Chiesa è sempre un servizio all'unità, che è già realizzata in Cristo".

Tutte queste iniziative ci spingono a riconoscere che, come cristiani e come Chiese, occorre ripartire dalla consapevolezza che solo l'apertura al dono di Dio suscita in noi il desiderio di vedere il suo Volto nel volto dei fratelli. Questo ci rende capaci di riconoscere nella persona del fratello che ci è posto accanto il riflesso vivente di Dio e nello stesso tempo ci abilita a prendere sul serio la vita del fratello e a fare nostra la sua storia.

* Parole del saluto del Santo Padre Francesco nella Nuova Cattedrale Ortodossa a Bucarest, venerdì, 31 maggio 2019.

(L'Osservatore Romano, 24 gennaio 2020)

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EREDITÀ COMUNE, VALORI CONDIVISI

*Rev.do Padre Norbert Hofmann, SDB
Segretario della Commissione per i Rapporti Religiosi con l'Ebraismo*

La “Giornata dell’ebraismo” che la Chiesa in Italia celebra oggi, 17 gennaio, è segno del grande apprezzamento da parte della Chiesa cattolica nei confronti del giudaismo. Questa giornata intende offrire ai cristiani l’opportunità di ricordare con gratitudine le radici ebraiche della loro fede, come pure di sensibilizzarli al dialogo attualmente in corso con l’ebraismo. La “Giornata dell’Ebraismo” si celebra il 17 gennaio oltre che in Italia anche in Polonia, in Austria e nei Paesi Bassi, introdotta dalle rispettive Conferenze episcopali. Questa giornata è una buona occasione per passare in rassegna gli eventi più significativi del dialogo ebraico-cattolico.

L’anno scorso ha avuto luogo un evento interreligioso di particolare rilievo che ha lanciato un messaggio importante: le tre religioni monoteiste condividono gli stessi valori. Lunedì 28 ottobre 2019, in occasione del 54° anniversario della Dichiarazione *Nostra aetate*, è stata firmata da rappresentanti della tradizione cristiana, ebraica e musulmana una dichiarazione comune, che si esprime in maniera decisa contro l’eutanasia e il suicidio assistito. La vita umana è un dono di Dio e, dall’inizio alla fine, deve essere protetta dagli interventi manipolatori dell’uomo. Questa è la convinzione comune di ebrei, cristiani e musulmani, firmatari del documento. L’incontro interreligioso è stato organizzato dalla “Pontificia Accademia per la Vita”, il cui direttore, S.E. Mons. Vincenzo Paglia, ha firmato il testo come rappresentante della Santa Sede. Da parte ebraica, la dichiarazione congiunta è stata ratificata da delegati del Gran Rabbinato di Israele; da parte musulmana da rappresentanti di un’organizzazione indonesiana e dal massimo giurista islamico degli Emirati Arabi Uniti. La dichiarazione condanna categoricamente l’eutanasia e il suicidio assistito come immorali e religiosamente riprovevoli. Nessuna pressione dovrebbe essere esercitata sulle istituzioni mediche affinché mettano termine in maniera artificiale alla vita umana, anche nel caso in cui ciò non contravvenisse la giurisdizione. Si dovrebbero rispettare le credenze religiose degli interessati e rafforzare le cure palliative. Ebrei, cristiani e musulmani, condividendo tali credenze di fondo, hanno mostrato chiaramente che le tre cosiddette religioni abramitiche hanno valori comuni, tra cui la protezione del fine vita. Il rabbino Abraham Steinberg, uno dei massimi esperti di bioetica in Israele, è stato il promotore dell’idea di questa dichiarazione congiunta. Egli è membro di una delegazione del Gran Rabbinato di Israele che dal 2002 intrattiene un dialogo con la Commissione per i Rapporti Religiosi con l’Ebraismo della Santa Sede, con riunioni che si svolgono in alternanza a Roma e a Gerusalemme. Nel novembre del 2018 il dialogo ha avuto luogo a Roma; in tale occasione, le due delegazioni sono state ricevute in udienza privata da Papa Francesco, il quale si è detto favorevole alla proposta di una dichiarazione comune, ed ha incoraggiato il rabbino Steinberg e S.E. Mons. Paglia a farsi carico della preparazione del relativo documento. È occorso un anno per la stesura del testo, che naturalmente ha coinvolto anche i partner musulmani. Dopo aver firmato la dichiarazione, Papa Francesco ha ricevuto tutti i partecipanti nel Palazzo Apostolico per esprimere il suo sostegno e la sua solidarietà.

Ebrei e cattolici hanno spesso riflettuto insieme, ad alti livelli, sul valore della vita umana. Il Gran Rabbinato di Israele è in costante dialogo con la Commissione per i Rapporti Religiosi con l’Ebraismo. Sin dall’inizio di questo dialogo nel 2003, fu affron-

tato come tema quello della “santità della vita”. In una dichiarazione congiunta, si afferma quanto segue: “La vita umana nel nostro mondo ha un valore unico e d’eccezione. Qualsiasi tentativo di distruggere la vita umana deve essere rifiutato. Occorrerebbe inoltre sforzarsi di promuovere insieme i diritti umani, la solidarietà fra tutti gli essere umani, il rispetto per la libertà di coscienza. ... La nostra comune motivazione religiosa per questa affermazione centrale è fondata sull’affermazione biblica, che l’essere umano è creato a immagine del Dio vivente, a Sua somiglianza (cf. *Genesi* 1,26). Dio è l’Unico Santo e il Creatore della vita umana, e l’essere umano è benedetto e chiamato a corrispondere alla Sua santità. Di conseguenza ogni vita umana è santa, sacrosanta e inviolabile. Secondo il libro del Levitico (19,2), la santità di Dio fonda l’imperativo essenziale del comportamento umano: ‘Voi dovete essere santi perché Io, il Signore Dio vostro, sono Santo!’ ... La difesa della vita umana è una evidente conseguenza etica di questa convinzione. Tutti i credenti, e in particolare le autorità religiose, dovrebbero collaborare per la protezione della vita umana” (n° 4, 26 febbraio 2003). La difesa della vita in tutte le sue fasi rappresenta quindi un valore comune sulla base di una stessa convinzione religiosa. In maniera più specifica, il 28 febbraio 2006 è stata tematizzata la protezione del fine vita, sulla quale si è giunti ad un’altra affermazione comune: “Noi affermiamo i principi delle nostre rispettive tradizioni religiose secondo le quali Dio è il Creatore e Signore di ogni vita, e la vita umana è sacra perché, proprio come insegna la Bibbia, la persona umana è creata secondo l’immagine divina (cf. *Gen* 1,26-27). Per il fatto che la vita è dono divino da rispettare e preservare, noi ripudiamo decisamente l’idea di un dominio umano sulla vita, e del diritto di decidere del suo valore o della sua durata da parte di qualsiasi persona o gruppo umano. Conseguentemente ripudiamo il concetto di eutanasia attiva (il cosiddetto *mercy killing*) in quanto illegittima pretesa dell’uomo sull’esclusiva autorità divina nel determinare il momento della morte della persona umana” (n° 2).

Ebraismo e cristianesimo, essendo particolarmente vicini dal punto di vista teologico, possono riconoscere facilmente valori comuni. Già in *Nostra aetate* (n. 4) si fa riferimento al fatto che ebrei e cristiani hanno un patrimonio comune per l’intrecciarsi della loro storia e delle loro radici: “essendo perciò tanto grande il patrimonio spirituale comune ai Cristiani e agli Ebrei, questo Sacro Concilio vuole promuovere e raccomandare loro la mutua conoscenza e stima, che si ottengono soprattutto dagli studi biblici e teologici e da un fraterno dialogo”. Il cristianesimo ha senza dubbio radici ebraiche, che costituiscono la nostra base spirituale comune, sia oggi che ai tempi di Gesù. Gesù nacque ebreo, visse nella tradizione ebraica della sua epoca e morì sulla croce come ebreo. Sua madre, i suoi più intimi compagni, che rese partecipi della sua missione come apostoli, erano tutti ebrei e provenivano dallo stesso ambiente, ovvero dall’ebraismo della Galilea nella prima metà del I secolo d.C. In virtù delle stesse radici, tra ebraismo e cristianesimo esistono molti punti in comune che possono essere esplorati nel dialogo ebraico-cristiano e che possono rivelarsi utili per una feconda collaborazione. Per i cristiani, il dialogo con gli ebrei non è un semplice passatempo per conoscersi e capirsi meglio; è piuttosto una questione di identità. Solo guardando alle proprie radici ebraiche, i cristiani potranno comprendere in maniera più approfondita le proprie origini e il proprio futuro e potranno rapportarsi in modo adeguato con l’ebraismo. Papa Francesco ha spesso sottolineato che un cristiano, per natura, non può essere antisemita, perché il cristianesimo ha radici ebraiche. Se un cristiano fosse antisemita, segherebbe il

ramo su cui è seduto, rinunciarebbe alla sua identità originaria, si sradicherebbe e fluttuerebbe in uno spazio indefinito.

Il giudaismo e il cristianesimo poggiano soprattutto su una base etica comune che ha il suo fondamento ultimo in Dio stesso. Dio rivela all'uomo come relazionarsi in maniera corretta con se stesso e con gli altri, in modo che la sua vita possa essere feconda. L'insegnamento di Dio rivolto all'uomo non è un vincolo di assoggettamento, ma una linea guida per una convivenza vissuta nella libertà e nella responsabilità reciproca. L'essere umano diventa essere umano nel pieno senso della parola solo se ascolta Dio, se si fida di lui e alla fine si aspetta tutto da lui. Sia l'ebraismo che il cristianesimo conoscono l'imperativo etico di fondo, che è l'amore e il rispetto per Dio e per il prossimo. La base di ciò risiede nei valori comuni espressi nei "Dieci Comandamenti". Il fondamento etico del cristianesimo, dunque, ha le sue radici nell'ebraismo, come ha osservato esplicitamente Papa Benedetto XVI nel discorso pronunciato durante la visita alla sinagoga di Roma il 10 gennaio 2010, con riferimento ai Dieci Comandamenti: "Il *Decalogo* – le 'Dieci Parole' o Dieci Comandamenti (cfr *Es* 20,1-17; *Dt* 5,1-21) – che proviene dalla *Torah* di Mosè, costituisce la fiaccola dell'etica, della speranza e del dialogo, stella polare della fede e della morale del popolo di Dio, e illumina e guida anche il cammino dei Cristiani. Esso costituisce un faro e una norma di vita nella giustizia e nell'amore, un 'grande codice' etico per tutta l'umanità. Le 'Dieci Parole' gettano luce sul bene e il male, sul vero e il falso, sul giusto e l'ingiusto, anche secondo i criteri della coscienza retta di ogni persona umana". ... Le 'Dieci Parole' chiedono il rispetto, la protezione della vita, contro ogni ingiustizia e sopruso, riconoscendo il valore di ogni persona umana, creata a immagine e somiglianza di Dio. Quante volte, in ogni parte della terra, vicina e lontana, vengono ancora calpestati la dignità, la libertà, i diritti dell'essere umano! Testimoniare insieme il valore supremo della vita contro ogni egoismo, è offrire un importante apporto per un mondo in cui regni la giustizia e la pace, lo 'shalom' auspicato dai legislatori, dai profeti e dai sapienti di Israele" (n° 6). I "Dieci Comandamenti", che Dio ha rivelato per la prima volta al suo popolo Israele, sono dunque diventati un codice di condotta universale che avrà sempre validità. Se solo i "Dieci Comandamenti" venissero rispettati, avremmo sicuramente un mondo migliore in cui regnerebbero giustizia e pace.

(L'Osservatore Romano, 16 gennaio 2020)

MISC

In memoriam

Maria Vingiani

(1921–2020)

Maria Vingiani, who passed away on 17 January 2020, the eve of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, was a pioneer from the very start of the ecumenical engagement of the Catholic Church as well its dialogue with Judaism. As early as during the course of the Second Vatican Council, she established in Rome the SAE (Secretariat for Ecumenical Activities), a lay interconfessional organization that has continued to the present time. Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, President of the Italian Bishops' Conference and member of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, reflected that her death meant the loss of a passionate witness of the ecumenical journey, one of its most courageous and dynamic pioneers.

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In memoriam

Sister Monica Cooney

(1927–2020)

Sister Monica Cooney, of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, passed away on 7 March at the age of 93. For over forty years, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity seconded a religious sister from a missionary congregation to the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Originally from New Zealand, Sister Monica was appointed by the PCPCU as a consultant to the CWME from 1990 to 1996. During that time, she made a most appreciated contribution to the work of the CWME and, through the Joint Working Group of which she was also a member, also to relations between the Catholic Church and the WCC. Her theological reflection and spiritual insight were particularly valued in dialogue on challenging issues such as proselytism.

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In memoriam

Father Waław Hryniewicz, OMI

(1936–2020)

Father Waław Hryniewicz, OMI, ecumenist, academic and expert theologian of Orthodox theology, passed away on 26 March 2020, at the age of 84, in Lublin, Poland. Father Hryniewicz took his religious vows with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1953 and was ordained in 1960. He was the co-founder of the Ecumenical Institute of the University of Lublin in 1983, and its director from 1997 to 2005. Consultor with the then Secretariat for Christian Unity from 1979 to 1984, he was member of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church from 1980 to 2000. In Poland, he was a member of the Episcopal Commission for Ecumenism from 1980 to 2005. Author of many scholarly articles and books on ecumenical theology, Father Hryniewicz was the recipient of many ecclesial and civil awards. The President of the Pontifical Council sent the letter of condolence below to his Provincial Superior.

Con dolore ho appreso la notizia della morte di Padre Waclaw Hryniewicz OMI, che si è spento dopo una malattia cristianamente vissuta.

Padre Hryniewicz è stato Consultore del Segretariato per l'Unità dei Cristiani dal 1979 al 1984 e membro della Commissione mista internazionale per il dialogo teologico tra la Chiesa cattolica e la Chiesa ortodossa negli anni 1980-2000. Nei suoi vari interventi durante gli incontri ecumenici, egli non solo si dimostrava preparato, informato e preciso, ma era in grado di trasmettere con carisma la sua passione per l'unità della Chiesa di Cristo. Autore di numerosi articoli e libri di teologia ecumenica, era un teologo coraggioso, a volte provocatorio, aperto alla ricerca di nuove vie di approfondimento della dottrina cattolica in sintonia con le altre tradizioni cristiane, ma sempre fedele al Magistero della Chiesa. La comunità ecumenica e accademica che lo conosceva ne ammirava l'entusiasmo ecumenico e l'amore per le tradizioni cristiane non-cattoliche, e in particolare per quella ortodossa di cui era uno dei maggiori esperti nel mondo cattolico.

Io stesso e alcuni dei collaboratori di questo Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani abbiamo avuto il piacere di incontrare Padre Hryniewicz a Roma, in Polonia e in altri paesi, in occasione di incontri ecumenici e di eventi accademici. Tutti serbiamo il ricordo di un uomo generoso, di un acuto interlocutore e di un grande teologo-ecumenista.

In profonda unione spirituale davanti al Signore risorto, a nome mio personale e a nome di tutti i collaboratori di questo Pontificio Consiglio, La prego di porgere il nostro sincero cordoglio alla comunità dei Missionari Oblati di Maria Immacolata, ai famigliari del Defunto e alla comunità dell'Università cattolica Giovanni Paolo II di Lublino.

Gesù, che ha detto «Io sono la risurrezione e la vita» (Gv 11, 25), conceda a Padre Waclaw Hryniewicz il riposo dei giusti e la pienezza della vita eterna.

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In memoriam
Bishop John Basil Meeking
(1929–2020)

Bishop John Basil Meeking died in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 11 June 2020, aged 90, after a short illness. Ordained in 1953, he studied from 1963 to 1966 at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome. He was later appointed to the Secretariat for Christian Unity (1970–1987), eventually becoming its Under-Secretary. He was named Bishop of Christchurch by Pope John Paul II on 30 March 1987 and resigned the see on 15 December 1995. Throughout his ministry Bishop Meeking took a keen interest in ecumenical relations, being active in particular in relations with the World Council of Churches, and for many years a member of the Catholic-Disciples of Christ international dialogue. When leaving the Pontifical Council to become Bishop of Christchurch, in a memorable speech to friends and staff, he had this to say of his experience: "To leave the quite unique company of the Secretariat, to part from friends and colleagues, to leave Rome will rank as one of the more difficult things I have had to do in my life. One can accept it and rejoice in it in faith, realizing that in life it is necessary to make new beginnings. In the words of Meister Eckhart: 'There is no stopping place in this life. No, nor was there ever one for any man, no matter how far along his way he has gone.'"

In memoriam
Cardinal Adrianus Johannes Simonis
(1931–2020)

Cardinal Adrianus Johannes Simonis passed away on 2 September at the age of 88. Born in Lisse, Diocese of Rotterdam, he was ordained in 1957. From 1959 to 1966 he studied in Rome at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) and later at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. Appointed Bishop of Rotterdam in 1970, he became Archbishop of Utrecht in 1983, succeeding Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, President of the then Secretariat for Christian Unity. Created a Cardinal in 1985, he was a member of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity until 2011.

In memoriam
Professor Dr Heinrich Reinhardt
(1942–2020)

Professor Dr Heinrich J. F. Reinhardt, who died on 21 October 2020 at the age of 78, was professor emeritus of the Ruhr University Bochum, where he held the chair of Canon Law from 1992 until his retirement in 2007. He was a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Johann Adam Möhler Institute for Ecumenics in Paderborn and an advisor to the Ecumenical Commission of the German Bishops' Conference. In the letter of condolence below to the Dean of the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Ruhr University Bochum, Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council, paid tribute to the ecumenical commitment of Professor Reinhardt, recalling in particular his contribution as a member of the International Roman Catholic–Old Catholic Dialogue Commission.

Sehr geehrter Herr Dekan,

zum Tod von Herrn Prof. em. Dr. Heinrich J. F. Reinhardt möchte ich Ihnen meine herzliche Anteilnahme bekunden.

Der Päpstliche Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen trauert mit Ihnen um einen profilierten Kirchenrechtler, der in Forschung und Lehre immer auch den ökumenischen Auftrag der Kirche im Blick hatte.

Nicht nur im Wissenschaftlichen Beirat des Johann-Adam-Möhler-Instituts für Ökumenik und als Berater der Ökumenekommission der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, sondern auch in seiner Aufgabe als Mitglied der Internationalen Römisch-Katholischen/Alt-Katholischen Dialogkommission war er ein geschätzter Ökumeniker, der sich nicht zuletzt durch ihm eigene „humanitas“ auszeichnete.

Wir werden ihm ein dankbares Gedenken bewahren. Möge er ruhen in Gottes Frieden.

In memoriam
Reverend Father Professor Stephan Haering, OSB
(1959–2020)

Reverend Father Professor Stephan Haering, OSB, holder of the chair of Canon Law at the University of Munich, died suddenly at the age of 61 on 16 November 2020. Among the many academic and ecclesiastical responsibilities of Professor Haering was membership of an ecumenical project group commissioned by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation. Just one week before his death, he completed a paper on the question of Martin Luther's excommunication. In the letter below to the abbot of the monastery of Metten, the home abbey of Professor Haering, Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council, expressed his condolences.

Hochwürdigster Herr Abt,
zu dem so plötzlichen Tod Ihres Mitbruders Prof. P. Dr. Stephan Haering OSB möchte ich Ihnen und Ihrem Konvent meine herzliche Anteilnahme bekunden.

Der Päpstliche Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen trauert mit Ihnen um einen hoch angesehenen Kanonisten, der seine vielfältigen akademischen und kirchlichen Aufgaben in benediktinischer Herzensweite ausübte.

Noch zuletzt war Pater Stephan im Auftrag unseres Päpstlichen Rates und des Lutherischen Weltbundes Mitglied einer internationalen ökumenischen Projektgruppe, in der er seine rechtliche und rechtshistorische Expertise einbrachte.

Sein nach menschlichen Maßstäben so früher Tod hinterläßt eine schmerzliche Lücke.

Möge „die geistliche Sehnsucht und Freude“ (Regula Benedicti 49,7) seiner klösterlichen Berufung nun ihre österliche Erfüllung finden.

In memoriam
Bishop Rubén Tierrablanca González, OFM
(1952–2020)

Bishop Rubén Tierrablanca González, OFM, passed away on 22 December 2020. Professor of Sacred Scripture at the Antonianum University, becoming Rector in 1992, he was appointed in 2003 to serve as guardian of the convent in Istanbul and of the International Fraternity for Ecumenical and Inter-Faith Dialogue in Turkey. Nominated by Pope Francis in 2016 as Apostolic Vicar in Istanbul, Apostolic Administrator of the Exarchate for Catholics of Latin Rite and Titular Bishop of Tubernuca, he became President of the Episcopal Conference of Turkey in 2018. The Pontifical Council expressed its heartfelt condolences to the faithful of the Apostolic Vicariate in Istanbul and of the Exarchate for Byzantine-Rite Catholics on the passing of their pastor.

EDITOR

Reverend Father Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP

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