



# A Church in Dialogue

*Towards the restoration of unity among Christians*

**Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964–2014**



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Apostolic journey of his Holiness Pope Francis to the Republic of Korea on the occasion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Asian Youth Day, 2014.

Pope Francis recently noted: “When leaders in various fields ask me for advice, my response is always the same: dialogue, dialogue, dialogue.”<sup>1</sup> From Paul VI to Francis, successive popes have actively called the People of God to be a Church in dialogue: with other Christian communities, with other world religions, and with the cultural worlds in which we live. The universal Church has fostered dialogue through diverse means, especially through the pontifical councils for culture, for ecumenism, and for interfaith relations. In Canada, too, over the past 50 years, we have become a church that is increasingly in dialogue; for the promotion of justice, peace, and the common good; in evangelization; with other Christian Communities; and with other religions.

In November 2014, we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio* [UR]). We also prepare to celebrate in 2015 the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*), including relations with Jewish people. We do so with gratitude for the many ways that those documents have enriched our Church, and we take time to reflect on how dialogue has become constitutive of how, as Catholics, we live our faithfulness to God in the contemporary world.

From a faith perspective, the source and inspiration of all of this dialogue comes from our understanding of who God is and how God has entered into relationship with the human race and the Church through history. God's word brings the world and all created things into being (Gen 1; Jn 1:1-3). God speaks to the people of Israel through the prophets; then, in the fullness of time, the Father speaks to us through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Heb 1:1-2; *Dei Verbum* [DV] 2). From the fullness of his love, God “addresses men and women as his friends and lives among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company” (DV 2). The Church comes into being as a result of the Incarnation and Paschal

<sup>1</sup> Address to leaders in Brazil during World Youth Day (WYD), July 27, 2013.

Mystery, and the unity it is called to is a unity in God, exemplified in the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (UR 2). God draws us into this unity by initiating and establishing a saving dialogue with us, “a dialogue of fervent and unselfish love”, which is to founda-



“The Creation of Adam” by Michelangelo, c. 1512, forms part of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

tionally shape the Church’s dialogue with the human race (*Ecclesiam Suam* 73; cf. 71-72). Everything in the Church is intended to serve, and be a sign of, the saving dialogue of God with the world, in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are called to be a Church in dialogue because the Triune God has entered into dialogue with us, and has shared with us the mission of the Incarnate Word in the world.

In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* [EG] (*The Joy of the Gospel*), Pope Francis wrote at length on dialogue (238-58), contextualizing ecumenical and interfaith dialogue within a broader invitation to be a Church in dialogue. Following his lead, Part I of this document looks at how recent popes have increasingly called us to dialogue with the world in which we live. Part II then addresses dialogue with other Christian Communities, introducing the principles that are to govern that dialogue and the fruitful outcome it is to bring forth. The results of international dialogues and the challenge to grow together ecumenically are interwoven with text boxes on the ways the Catholic Church in Canada has sought to take up this dialogue with other Christian Communities over the past 50 years. In 2015, a companion document will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, tracing the way in which the Church is called to enter into dialogue with adherents of other religious traditions, and attending in a focused way to our dialogue with the Jewish people.



Photo: © L'Osservatore Romano

Blessed Pope Paul VI, 1963 - 1978.

## ■ Part I: Dialogue with Culture and the World

Dialogue was not foreign to the Church prior to the Second Vatican Council, but in the conciliar period, dialogue was named as and became the predominant way of engaging with the world around us and with our fellow citizens. In August 1964, in the midst of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, in which he identified dialogue as a foundational means by which the Church is to carry out its

apostolic mission and calling.<sup>2</sup> Dialogue “is found in the very plan of God”, who initiates and enters into conversation with the human race. Pope Paul speaks of salvation history as a “long” and “many-splendoured” conversation between God and humanity, culminating in the eternal Word taking flesh in Jesus Christ (70). As the Body of Christ, the Church in turn “should enter into dialogue with the world in which it exists and labours” (65). Pope Paul develops this notion at length, noting that the Church’s dialogue with the world “excludes the *a priori* condemnation, the offensive and time-worn polemic and emptiness of useless conversation”. Rather, it is to be characterized by clarity, humility, trust (both in God’s word and in the dialogue partner), and pedagogical prudence, which summons us to find ways to speak the Gospel such that it can be understood and received (81). Dialogue is to be carried out in a spirit of friendship, respect, and service, open to all; never compromising the truth; requiring wisdom, learning, discernment; built on freedom and guided always by hope and love (70-108).

Pope Paul’s vision of the Church’s relationship with the world was reflected in the Council, and became enshrined in the opening lines of its Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*: “The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ” (1). *Gaudium et Spes* proceeds to summon the faithful to establish dialogue with the world and with people “of all shades of opinion”, and identifies “sincere and prudent dialogue” as an intrinsic key to “the rightful betterment of this world in which all alike live” (43, 21).



Saint John Paul II apostolic visit to Mexico, 1990.

Following the Second Vatican Council, successive popes have deepened and expanded the place of dialogue in the life of the Church. In particular, Pope John Paul II’s lengthy and influential pontificate was marked by a profound engagement with the world. He viewed dialogue as “an indispensable step along the path towards human self-realization, the self-realization both of each individual and of every human community.” Dialogue is a deeply human act, “involv(ing) the human person in his or her entirety” (*Ut Unum Sint* [UUS] 28). His many travels involved dialogue with political and religious leaders. He told religious leaders gathered in Madras in 1986 that “by dialogue, we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God”. At the dawn of a new millennium, in an address entitled “Dialogue between cultures for a civilization of love and peace”, he invited believers and all men and women of good will to ponder the theme of dialogue between

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2 While *Ecclesiam Suam* is much in the spirit of Pope John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris* of just over a year earlier, Pope John doesn’t use the word ‘dialogue’, whereas the word appears 66 times in *Ecclesiam Suam*, and serves as the governing theme of the second half of the encyclical.

cultures and traditions, saying that “this dialogue is the obligatory path to the building of a reconciled world”.<sup>3</sup> In a world marked by violence and war, dialogue offers a prophetic witness and nourishes “a lively sense of the value of life itself”.<sup>4</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI in turn identified the world’s urgent need for dialogue, stressing the value of conversation grounded in a quest for the truth. Identifying a danger in the West’s tendency to detach and separate reason from faith and morals, Pope Benedict indicated that faith and reason both have to find their rightful place for us to “become capable of that genuine dialogue of cultures and religions so urgently needed today”.<sup>5</sup> He spoke about how new digital technologies have extraordinary potential to promote dialogue between people from different countries, cultures, and religions, and he called forth a dialogue that is grounded in a genuine and mutual search for what is true, good, and beautiful.<sup>6</sup> With the assistance of the Pontifical Council for Culture, he launched an initiative entitled “Court of the Gentiles”, designed to cultivate a respectful and friendly dialogue between believers and non-believers about the great questions of human existence.



Photo: © L'Osservatore Romano

While Pope Francis certainly stands in continuity with his predecessors, his pontificate has begun with a particularly enhanced emphasis on the place of dialogue in the life of the Church, summoning Catholics to put their faith at the service of “an authentic culture of encounter”.<sup>7</sup> Dialogue “is the only way for individuals, families and societies to grow,

the only way for the life of peoples to progress .... Today, either we stand together with the culture of dialogue and encounter, or we all lose, we all lose.”<sup>8</sup>

Pope Francis notes that there should be an essential bond between dialogue and proclamation in our relations with non-Christians (EG 251). “Interreligious dialogue and evangelization do not exclude one another, but nourish one another mutually.”<sup>9</sup> Dialogue is a form of witness, a way in which the Church respectfully walks alongside others, helping them to encounter Christ.<sup>10</sup> Genuine dialogue does not entail giving up one’s identity,

3 Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2001, 3, 10.

4 Ibid., 19; cf. 10.

5 Regensburg Lecture [Benedict XVI, Meeting with the Representatives of Science in the Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg], September 12, 2006.

6 Message for the 43<sup>rd</sup> World Communications Day: “New Technologies, New Relationships: Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship”, May 24, 2009.

7 Message for the 48<sup>th</sup> World Day of Social Communications, January 23, 2014.

8 WYD 2013 address to Brazilian leaders.

9 Address to Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City, November 28, 2013.

10 Message for the 48<sup>th</sup> World Day of Social Communications, 2014.

compromising one's faith and morals, or falling into relativism.<sup>11</sup> While bringing to bear all our experience and intelligence, there is a Gospel simplicity about entering into dialogue. "We do not impose anything, we do not employ any subtle strategies for attracting believers; rather, we bear witness to what we believe and who we are with joy and simplicity."<sup>12</sup> Jesus entered into dialogue with those around him, radiating joy and good news as he did so; in his name we are called to do likewise (cf. EG 137-43).



Planting a tree of hope, Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew meet at the Vatican with Israeli President, Shimon Peres, and Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, praying for peace in the Holy Land, 2014.

Pope Francis describes dialogue as requiring that we make room for the other's point of view; that we genuinely listen – and not simply to those who would tell us what we want to hear – with a willingness and even expectation to learn from the other.<sup>13</sup> In his message for World Communications Day 2014, he wrote: "We are challenged to be people of depth, attentive to what is happening around us and spiritually

alert. To dialogue means to believe that the 'other' has something worthwhile to say, and to entertain his or her point of view and perspective. Engaging in dialogue does not mean renouncing our own ideas and traditions, but the claim that they alone are valid or absolute." Elsewhere, he refers to the value of lowering one's defences to open doors, and of the virtue of "social humility" in dialogue.<sup>14</sup> It involves a sharing of deepest convictions in a sincere, respectful way that can be mutually enriching and renewing (EG 251, 29, 142).

Pope Francis has pointed to three key areas of dialogue for the Church (EG 238): dialogue with states and political institutions, at the service of peace and the common good; dialogue with society – including with the sciences and with culture (here he speaks of entering with courage "into the Areopagus of contemporary cultures" to initiate dialogue);<sup>15</sup> and dialogue with other believers who are not part of the Catholic Church, distinguishing in various ways between dialogue with other religious traditions and with other Christians and Christian Communities. It is this last area that will occupy us in the remainder of this document.

11 Ibid.; Address to Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 2013; Address to *Civiltà Cattolica*, June 14, 2013; EG 251.

12 Address to Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 2013.

13 WYD Address to Brazilian leaders, 2013; cf. Address to *Civiltà Cattolica*, 2013; Message for the 48<sup>th</sup> World Day of Social Communications, 2014; EG 31.

14 WYD Address to Brazilian leaders, 2013; cf. Address to *Civiltà Cattolica*, 2013;

15 Address to the Congregation for Catholic Education, Vatican City, February 13, 2014; cf. WYD 2013 Address to Brazilian leaders, where he speaks of engaging in dialogue with "popular culture, university culture, youth culture, art, technology, economic culture, family culture and media culture", and "dialogue between generations".

In concluding Part I, we can say that recent popes have called the Church to be engaged in dialogue with the world around us for multiple reasons: because God is in dialogue with the world in human history, and summons us to share in this redemptive dialogue; to witness to God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit in a way that can be heard and understood; to build up the common good, drawing special attention to those in need, and laying foundations for peace; to benefit from the mutual enrichment that comes from genuine dialogue; and to build a culture that addresses its tensions and conflicts – and the great challenge of living together – through dialogue. The Catholic Church continues to be a community with strong structures of leadership and teaching authority, and a confident ecclesiology. These ecclesial strengths are not diminished by or in contradiction to a basic commitment to dialogue, but rather, through such dialogue, become gifts not only for the Church, but also for the world in which we live.

## ■ Part II: Dialogue Between Christian Communities



Photo: Superstock / Album Oronoz

The world's Catholic bishops assembled in St. Peter's Basilica for the Second Vatican Council.

In November of 1964, the Second Vatican Council launched the Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement with the approval and promulgation of the Decree on Ecumenism. Pope John XXIII laid the foundations of this decree by identifying the restoration of unity among Christians as one of the principal aims for calling the Council, and inviting ecumenical observers from other Christian Churches and ecclesial Communities to attend. Over the past 50 years, the vision, principles and directives set forth in the Decree on

Ecumenism have stood the test of time, and have been deepened by continuing magisterial teaching – most notably the *Ecumenical Directory* [ED] (1993)<sup>16</sup> and Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (1995) – and by the experience of five decades of dialogue and ecumenical relations.

16 Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993).

The heart of the Church's commitment to Christian unity has always been Jesus' prayer the night before he died: "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21). It is Christ's will and profound desire that his disciples be one. When Abbé Paul Couturier revitalized prayer for Christian unity in the 1930s, it was by inviting prayer for the "unity that Christ wills, as he wills and when he wills". Unity in the Church is a gift from God, and is the work of the Holy Spirit in us; it is for us to be open to Christ's will and to find a home in it. Our divisions, by contrast, "openly contradict Christ's will" and are a scandal, undermin-



**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

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

ing our efforts to witness to Christ and to carry out his mission (UR 1-2). As Pope John Paul II put it, "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" (UUS 48).

As we seek to put ourselves at the service of Christ's desire for unity and to address the divisions that wound the Body of Christ, we find a road map and directions in the Decree on Ecumenism and subsequent authoritative teaching. These directives articulate how we are to understand other Christian Communities and how we are to build relationships with them, including entering into dialogue, witnessing to and learning from them, and joining together in common prayer, witness, and mission.

One of the principal gifts of the Decree on Ecumenism is the language it gave us to speak of other Christians and Christian Communities. Rather than speaking of heretics or schismatics, the Decree on Ecumenism confirmed that all those baptized into Christ, and who believe in God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – are our brothers and sisters in Christ (UR 3; cf. UUS 13, 42); through baptism, they are "members of Christ's body" (UR 3), "truly incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ, and reborn to a sharing of the divine life" (UR 22). The communities to which they belong are *ecclesial* communities, who live in a *real* but *incomplete* communion with the Catholic Church (UR 3, UUS 11). In *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II noted that our broadened vocabulary to speak of each other "is indicative of a significant change in attitudes. There is an increased awareness that we all belong to Christ" (42).

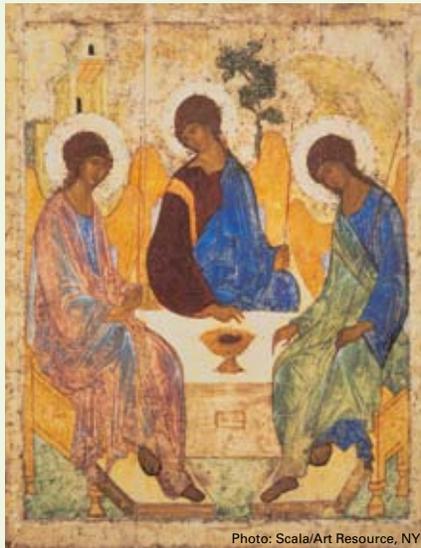
Without losing sight of the reasons why our communion remains incomplete, the Decree on Ecumenism and subsequent Church teaching have helped us to name how and where that communion – which varies from one Christian Community to another – is real. Most Christians profess their faith in the Triune God by professing the Apostles’ and Nicene creeds. We believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. We are challenged by the same prophetic writings, are consoled by the same psalms, and by God’s grace seek to model our lives on the same Gospel with faith, hope, and love. In ways that vary due to their respective histories and theological traditions, we recognize the sacramental and liturgical actions of other churches to be sources of grace and sanctification, “capable of giving access to the community of salvation” (UR 3). We open ourselves to the same interior gifts of the Holy Spirit and sources of spiritual life, and recognize the riches of liturgy, spirituality, and doctrine proper to each communion (UR 3, 21-23; ED 63, 76b; cf. LG 15). In the Eastern Churches in particular, the Catholic Church recognizes a common understanding of the priesthood, apostolic succession, and sacramental life (UR 15). Through theological dialogue between Christian Communities, addressed below, we have increasingly come to understand that we hold in common many of the elements that we believe Christ wills for the Church (cf. UUS 49).



Motto and Logo for Pope Francis’ visit to the Holy Land with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople.  
Embrace of Saint Peter and Saint Andrew under the banner: “So that they may be one”

The Catholic Church has rejoiced to discover these elements of the Christian patrimony of truth and holiness in other Christian Communities (UR 3; cf. ED 61b, 76a). Where found, they “constitute the objective basis of the communion, albeit imperfect, which exists between them and the Catholic Church. To the extent that these elements are found in other Christian Communities, the one Church of Christ is effectively present in them” (UUS 11). These many and important elements of the Church come from Christ and lead back to him. They provide an impetus to unity and can be a real gift to the Catholic Church, “bring[ing] about a more perfect realization of the mystery of Christ and the Church” (UR 4; cf. ED 61b).

What is Christ asking of us when he prays for the unity of his disciples? What are the implications of recognizing other Christians as brothers and sisters in Christ, and other Christian Communities as being in real but incomplete communion with the Catholic Church? What flows from acknowledging authentic elements of the Church in other Christian Communities? As we continue to grow as brothers and sisters in Christ, called to full unity, we are summoned to commit ourselves to grow together in love, to seek the truth together, and to share together in Christian life and witness. This commitment is embodied in the practice of dialogue, which we will explore under three categories: ‘a dialogue of love’, ‘a dialogue of truth’, and ‘a dialogue of life’.

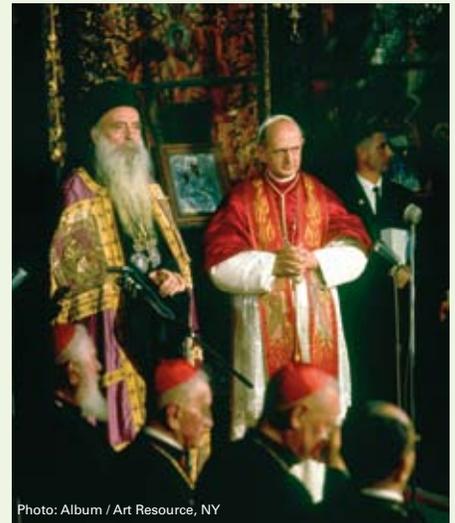


The Holy Trinity by Andrei Rublev  
(1360-1430).

## 2.1 A Dialogue of Love

When Christ came to dwell among us, when he gave his life for us, he revealed the face of God as the face of a boundless love. In his teaching, Jesus called his followers above all else to love: love of neighbour, love of enemies, love revealed in deeds and in mercy. We are called by the Lord to love as God loves us. It is not surprising, then, that the first step towards each other is a step of love. For many centuries, divided Christians have lived in separation, often viewing the other with suspicion, fear, and distrust; at times, it was as though divisions within Christianity somehow exempted us from loving those on the other side of the wall.

A dialogue of love reaches in friendship past the fracturing and the suspicions, to encounter other Christians as brothers and sisters in Christ. Fifty years ago, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople met in Jerusalem, the first meeting of the leaders of these Churches after nine centuries of separation. They prayed together and embraced as brothers. A year later, at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, they “condemned to oblivion” the excommunications of the past and were united in mutual forgiveness of past offenses. Both gestures invited a dialogue of love between Orthodox and Catholic Christians. Likewise, the visit of Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey to the Vatican three months after the end of the Second Vatican Council, and Pope Paul VI’s action of giving the Archbishop the ring he himself had worn as Archbishop of Milan, called forth a dialogue of love between Anglicans and Catholics. However, the dialogue of love is not principally between church leaders. Every act of kindness, every bond of friendship across denominational lines, is an example of the dialogue of love that is needed to heal our divisions.



Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch  
Athenagoras in Jerusalem, 1964.

The Decree on Ecumenism urges that every member of the Church has a role to play in helping the Catholic Church grow in unity with other Christians, each according to his or her talents and abilities (UR 4-5). All Catholics are encouraged to take an active and intelligent part in the work of promoting Christian unity, beginning with a fundamental attitude of hospitality to those from whom we are divided. We are to make the first approach to others, and to avoid expressions, judgments, and actions that are not truthful or misrepresent the faith and practice of other Christians (UR 4). All are encouraged to pray for unity and to yearn for the reconciliation Christ wills (UR 1, 7-8).

In speaking of a 'dialogue of love', Pope John Paul II picks up on the Decree on Ecumenism's call to "joyfully acknowledge and esteem" Christian endowments in other communities and to "recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood" (UR 4). He proceeds to speak about this as the discovery of "what God is bringing about in the members of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities" (UUS 48). A dialogue of love encourages us to come to know others as they truly are, and to rejoice in the life in Christ that is in evidence in their lives.



Pope Benedict XVI at a "day of reflection, dialogue and prayer for peace" in Assisi, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

One of the gifts of getting to know other Christian Communities is that the relationship can lead us to a re-examination of our own faithfulness to Christ's will and to the conscientious "renewal and reform" of our own Christian Communities (UR 4; cf. UR 6). Constructive engagement in relationships with other Christians does not invite compromise, but it does require humility, generosity, concern for the other, and

repentance (UR 4, 7). The Decree on Ecumenism recognizes that the responsibilities for divisions within Christianity are shared by Catholics and other Christians alike (UR 3), and does not hesitate to ask pardon of other Christians for our sins against unity (UR 7). While we believe that the Catholic Church has been endowed with all the means of grace and truth necessary for salvation, we recognize that we do not always live by them as we should (UR 4). Pope John Paul II noted that "the entire Decree on Ecumenism is permeated by the spirit of conversion" and that our ecumenical relations are to become a "dialogue of conversion" that serves "as an examination of conscience" (UR 34-35). He included in the

events marking the 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jesus' birth a service of repentance, where he led the Catholic Church in asking pardon for offences against other Christians over the centuries.

As Christians and Christian Communities renew their fidelity to the Gospel, and as they grow closer to Christ, they also grow closer to each other (cf. UR 6). Addressing ecumenical dialogue in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis writes: "We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God's face. Trusting others is an art and peace is an art" (244). This is the art of the dialogue of love.

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## 2.2 A Dialogue of Truth

In *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II wrote that dialogue “has become an outright necessity, one of the Church’s priorities” (31). He is referring in the first instance to what the Decree on Ecumenism had called for: “dialogue between competent experts from different Churches and Communities. At these meetings, which are organized in a religious spirit, each explains the teaching of his Communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features” (UR 4). This is the dialogue of truth.

It begins with a need to get to know the other, and requires study so as to adequately understand “the respective doctrines of our separated brethren, their history, their spiritual and liturgical life, their religious psychology and general background” (UR 9). Such dialogue seeks initially to overcome misunderstandings, clarify terminology, and find consensus in the basic truths of the faith, recognizing that there is much we hold in common. It eventually must turn to a search for convergence on the disputed matters of doctrine, particularly those that have been the occasion of historic condemnations or disputes (cf. UUS 36, 48). In this task, the Scriptures and the apostolic tradition are essential points of reference (cf. UR 21; UUS 16, 39). Such dialogue must be frank and robust. Catholic participants are expected to hold fast to the Church’s teachings, presenting doctrines clearly and avoiding “all forms of reductionism or facile ‘agreement’” (UUS 36, cf. UR 11; UUS 16). But teachings should also be presented in a way the dialogue partner can understand, with opportunity for dialogue partners to question and explain their positions to each other (UUS 38).

The unity sought in dialogue is not a uniformity. The Catholic Church itself is a communion of diverse churches, including the Latin (Western) Catholic Church as well as 22 Eastern Catholic Churches rooted in the Byzantine, Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian, and Chaldean traditions – each having its own liturgical, spiritual, theological, and canonical traditions (cf. LG 23; UR 15-17). Dialogue distinguishes between legitimate diversity and contradictions that need to be addressed so that unity be maintained or restored.

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Churches not in full communion with each other do have genuine differences. The Catholic Church does see, to varying degrees, a lack of essential elements of the Church in its dialogue partners (UR 4), just as other Christian Communities have their criticisms of Catholicism. But dialogue requires reciprocity and is to be carried out “on an equal footing”, “where each party recognizes the other as a *partner*”, and



Photo: © L'Osservatore Romano  
Pope Benedict XVI meets with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, at Lambeth Palace, September 2010

Catholics understand that Jesus founded the Church, and intended that there be only one Church, fully united in doctrine, church order, and sacramental life. Local or particular churches (dioceses or eparchies) are understood to be held together in the bonds of full communion within the universal Church. Catholics have a close communion in matters of faith with the Eastern Orthodox Churches, recognizing that they have preserved a structure of ministry that is in continuity with the apostles, the first witnesses to the resurrection and founders of the early churches, and thus they are referred to as 'Churches' in the proper sense (ED 122) and as sister churches.

In safeguarding Jesus' vision of unity for the Church and our confession that the Church is 'one', Catholics are not comfortable speaking ecumenically about the Church being divided into many different 'churches', though this at times causes hurt for our dialogue partners in the West. While in dialogue we choose to refer to other Christian Communities the way they name themselves, for instance as the Anglican Church of Canada or the United Church of Canada, and we therefore speak of 'dialogue between churches', we believe that 'church' in its full sense implies all the elements Christ wills for the Church. Communities lacking some of those elements are more accurately referred to as 'ecclesial Communities', having a churchly character, and living in real but incomplete communion with the Catholic Church.

We in turn recognize that other ecclesial Communities view the Catholic Church as having deficiencies or errors. In dialogue we seek to address our differences in order to fully recognize in each other the Church Christ wills us to be.

"must presuppose in the other a desire for reconciliation, for unity in truth" (UR 9, UUS 29). A sincere spirit of charity, "respect for the demands of one's own conscience and of the conscience of the other party, ... profound humility and love for the truth" should characterize efforts to address differences (UUS 39; cf. UR 11).

At its heart, such dialogue is a joint quest for truth. "Love for the truth is the deepest dimension of any authentic quest for full communion between Christians". It is love for the truth that allows dialogue participants to persevere amidst the significant challenges faced in the search for reconciliation (UUS 36; cf. UUS 32-33; *Dignitatis Humanae* 3). Dialogue of truth is not negotiation; it is a means of standing together before Christ, he who is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). In *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II noted that dialogue can help Christian Communities "to discover the unfathomable riches of the truth" and to embrace for themselves the gifts that the Spirit is bringing about in others; "authentic ecumenism is a gift at the service of truth" (38).

The Second Vatican Council, aided by the presence of ecumenical observers and the relationships that developed there, helped to bring about the conditions for a dialogue of truth, and communicated the Catholic Church's readiness for such dialogue (cf. UUS 30). The time was ripe, and as the Council ended, theological dialogues with other Christian traditions were initiated at international, national, regional, and local levels, demonstrating what *Ut Unum Sint* called "a sign of the widespread practical commitment of the Catholic Church to apply the Council's guidelines on ecumenism" (UUS 31). Furthermore, the dialogue of truth takes place not only in theological conversations, but wherever Christians of different denominations gather to study the Scriptures together, to reflect jointly on agreed statements produced by dialogue commissions, or to study other aspects of the faith or each other's teachings together.



World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit with Pope Francis in an audience at the Vatican, 2014.

At an international level, under the direction of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Catholic Church has been engaged over the past 50 years in official dialogue with Eastern Orthodox Churches, Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Anglican Communion, Lutheran World Federation, World Methodist Council, World Communion

of Reformed Churches, Baptist World Alliance, Christian Church–Disciples of Christ, Mennonite World Conference, Classical Pentecostals, World Evangelical Alliance, and the World Council of Churches (through a Joint Working Group). It has also participated in multilateral dialogues (which involve several ecumenical partners), most notably those coordinated by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches and the Global Christian Forum.

These dialogues have sought to overcome disagreements in matters of doctrine, discipline, and church structure that continue to be a source of separation. They have borne fruit in numerous agreed statements registering consensus or convergence and mapping out the extent to which our understanding of Christian faith is held in common. Some of these documents are multilateral (such as *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* of 1982 and the more recent *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* of 2013), while the large majority are bilateral (between two Communion). The Decree on Ecumenism had anticipated that such dialogue would allow us to name with increasing clarity “what the situation of the Catholic Church really is” (UR 9) in relation to other Christian Communities, and that has indeed come about. The dialogues have produced “positive and tangible results” that have allowed us see more clearly what it means to be in real but incomplete communion (UUS 2; cf. UUS 17). In some cases, we have discovered that due to misunderstandings and polemics in the past, we had misjudged one another. There have been times of surprising discovery that different formulations reflect “two different ways of looking at the same reality”, or that existing differences are complementary rather than conflicting (UUS 38; cf. UR 11; UUS 36). The dialogues have registered significant levels of common understanding and convergence in faith, and have contextualized remaining differences within the framework of what is held in common.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church in Canada has found eager ecumenical partners in the other Christian Communities in Canada. Although early ecumenical visions were overly optimistic, the past 50 years have been a time of considerable

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church in Canada has found eager ecumenical partners in the other Christian Communities in Canada. Although early ecumenical visions were overly optimistic, the past 50 years have been a time of considerable maturation in the ecumenical quest.

maturation in the ecumenical quest. Connecting to the work of the worldwide ecumenical community, Christian traditions in Canada have engaged in dialogue at numerous levels. At a national level, Canadian Catholics engage in a number of theological dialogues under the sponsorship of the CCCB's Episcopal Commission for Christian Unity, Religious Relations with the Jews, and Interfaith Dialogue. For some 50 years, Canadian Catholics have been engaged in this spiritual journey in partnership with Orthodox, Anglicans, Baptists, Evangelicals, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Presbyterians, and members of the United Church of Canada. These dialogues have been highlighted in text boxes through the remainder of this section. Catholics have also



Pope Francis and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, in Jerusalem, May 2014.

participated in dialogues initiated by the Faith and Witness Commission of the Canadian Council of Churches.<sup>17</sup> At the national level, these dialogues have frequently contributed to the work of international dialogues, as well as addressing issues in the Canadian ecumenical experience. In local settings, individual bishops have initiated or authorized dialogues with neighbouring Communities and entered into covenantal relationships with ecumenical partners. At parish and diocesan levels, dialogues tend to focus on ecumenical education, common witness in areas of social concern, and shared ministry and mission. Two centres of ecumenism (in Montreal and Saskatoon) foster ecumenical initiatives and work for Christian unity at the regional and national levels. Theological faculties too have been important places of ecumenical encounter.

<sup>17</sup> Twenty-five denominations come together in the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), one of the broadest and most inclusive church councils in the world, encompassing Anglican, Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Catholic, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Quaker, and Reformed traditions. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is a full member. The CCC, which uses a consensus model of decision-making, was founded in 1944; its current denominational membership represents 85% of the Christians in Canada. The consensus model allows member churches to speak together, but also raises significant challenges in finding appropriate language to do so.

### **Dialogue with Orthodox Churches**

Nearly all of the Eastern Orthodox traditions are found in Canada, though they continue to have close ties to their homelands. These Churches have North American bishops, many of whom are in the United States. For this reason, the North American Orthodox–Catholic Theological Consultation began in 1965 under the sponsorship of the US Catholic bishops and the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of America (SCOBA). The Canadian Catholic bishops now appoint two delegates. Since its establishment, this Consultation has issued 23 agreed statements on various topics. In 2003, its members considered the issue of the ‘filioque’ clause, a Latin phrase meaning ‘and the Son’ that was added to the *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed* in the early Middle Ages; in 2009, the North American dialogue issued a response to the international Catholic–Orthodox study of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, known as the Ravenna document; and in 2010 they produced a road map entitled “Steps Towards a Reunited Church: A Sketch of an Orthodox–Catholic Vision for the Future”.

There are also two Orthodox–Catholic bishops’ dialogues. The Roman Catholic–Orthodox bishops’ dialogue has four bishops on each side and has studied agreed statements from the international and the North American dialogues. A Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox bishops’ dialogue includes Canadian and US members and meets annually. Topics include matters of theological interest as well as cultural projects related to the preservation of Ukrainian heritage.

Internationally, the great achievements of theological dialogue include a resolution of the dispute since the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD about the nature and person of Christ. Common Declarations with the Coptic and Syrian Orthodox patriarchs have established a resolution of the oldest division in Christianity. The division with Eastern Orthodox churches over the authority of the pope and his ministry in service to the communion of the churches continues, yet we have been able to articulate a consensus on sacraments, ordained ministry, and the nature and mission of the Church. Pope John Paul II’s gesture of inviting Church leaders and their theologians to engage in a conversation about the Petrine ministry (UUS 96) was appreciated by all of our ecumenical partners.

With other Christians, we have discovered a broad consensus about the meaning and form of baptism. This has led to agreements on the mutual recognition of baptism in many countries, including in Canada since 1975. Baptism establishes a foundation for recognizing Christian life and discipleship in each other as well as establishing a basis for dialogue about the forms and practices of ministry. Although our dialogues have not achieved the goal of mutual recognition of ordained ministry with our Anglican, Protestant, Anabaptist, or Pentecostal partners, we have discovered a remarkable convergence about the content of Christian ministry.

A key agreement that set many of the disputes within Western Christianity in a new context was the Lutheran–Catholic agreement on the doctrine of justification by faith. In 1517, Martin Luther’s

objection to the Catholic practice of indulgences led to the central Reformation teaching that the sinner is justified by God not on account of works, but by faith. In 1999, we were able to celebrate the signing of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, in which Lutherans and Catholics “confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ” (25). This agreement affirms that the 16<sup>th</sup> century condemnations do not apply to the contemporary teaching of either community. In 2006, the

## Dialogue with Lutherans

Lutherans in North America represent differing historical and cultural streams of Lutheranism. In the past century, a series of mergers have brought together many 'synods' of this key Reformation tradition, resulting in the founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) in 1986 and the Lutheran Church Canada (LCC) in 1988. The Catholic dialogue with the ELCIC was established in 1986 and resulted in a report on ministry-related issues, published in 1992. In preparation for the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, a study process was undertaken in various parts of Canada in 1997-98. These experiences were collected in a study guide for local congregations. The dialogue has not been resumed at the national level, although the ELCIC remains a regular ecumenical partner for Catholic parishes and dioceses.

In 2013, a new dialogue was established with the Lutheran Church Canada. This much smaller church, which is related to the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, has a more confessional interpretation of the Lutheran tradition and has not been a participant in many ecumenical projects, dialogues, or councils. The LCC is not a member of the Lutheran World Federation and has not endorsed the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. This new dialogue with the CCCB has as its goals deepening understanding, fostering charity, and promoting common witness. Current topics are the sacredness of marriage and a study of the international Lutheran–Roman Catholic statement on the history of the Reformation, *From Conflict to Communion*.



October 31 2009 – Celebrations in Augsburg, Germany, marking the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

World Methodist Council adopted the positions of this historic agreement. Another ecumenical achievement of note has been the consensus on the doctrine of the Eucharist between Catholics and Anglicans. While continuing questions about ordained ministry and episcopal authority have inhibited a move towards full recognition of sacramental orders and the sharing of eucharistic communion, agreement on eucharistic doctrine is an important step towards reconciliation.

In each of these examples, the process of dialogue has culminated in a formal process of authoritative reception by the participating Churches and ecclesial Communities. Other dialogue reports with these same ecumenical partners and with other partners in the West have not received a formal response, but have nonetheless helped our communities to grow in mutual understanding and have strengthened our relations. Meanwhile, the task of ecclesial reception of these dialogues

remains, so that their potential for transforming our relations through the power of the Holy Spirit can be fully realized (cf. UUS 80).

While the dialogue of truth has left much reason for hope, there are points of difference that seem for the moment intractable, where we cannot see a way forward. But the Holy Spirit is ever creative in drawing us together, never closing us in, always encouraging us to attend to the openings before us in truth and love. Perhaps the greatest opening before us comes in the form of allowing the life of our communities, in all aspects, to be shared to the extent that a common faith has been articulated. The dialogues of truth and love need to be complemented by a dialogue of life, to which we now turn.

## 2.3 A Dialogue of Life

The *Ecumenical Directory* notes that what Christian Communities are able to do together is a direct reflection of the extent to which they hold common elements of faith: “the only basis for such sharing and cooperation is the recognition on both sides of a certain, though imperfect, communion already existing” (36). But it is not simply a matter of *being able*



Photo: © L'Osservatore Romano

to do certain things together because of common elements of faith; those elements contain an inner dynamism towards unity, towards what *Ut Unum Sint* called “application to real life” (74). “To live our Baptism is to be caught up in Christ’s mission of making all things one” (ED 22). The real but incomplete communion articulated in the agreed statement of a dialogue shows itself to be authentic when it is visibly translated into common prayer,

### **Dialogue with the Anglican Church of Canada**

The Catholic Church in Canada has developed an innovative dialogue with Anglicans, led by two distinct commissions. The theological dialogue, established in 1971, is paired with a dialogue of bishops, established in 1975, whose task is to consider practical issues in our relations and in the pastoral response to issues facing both of us. While the theological dialogue has explored the historical and doctrinal issues that divide us, the bishops’ dialogue has offered guidelines for pastoral care of marriages between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, on the reception of clergy from the other church, and on sharing the sacrament of the Eucharist. Over the years, other topics have included interchurch marriages, approaches to lay ministry, clergy formation, the Gospel and inculturation, and aspects of native spirituality. The bishops’ dialogue has also permitted Anglicans and Catholics to work together in responding to human trafficking, in addressing the abuses that occurred in Indian Residential Schools, and in promoting reconciliation and healing together with Aboriginal people.

The theological dialogue with the Anglican Church of Canada has included study of agreed statements of the international dialogue and formulation of responses to these documents. At the request of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), the Canadian dialogue has conducted studies on pertinent issues such as eucharistic doctrine, ministry, authority, communion, and Mary, and has contributed reports and personnel to the international dialogue. The dialogue gives considerable energy to the reception of ARCIC’s work in the life of our churches, seeking ways to “tangibly express that unity in mission together.” Currently, the national ARC dialogue is working on a “Common Witness” project, producing brief texts and videos aiming to give a joint account of our Christian hope in a secular world. A shared task of both dialogues is the promotion of ecumenical relations between Anglican and Catholic dioceses and parishes.

witness, and mission. The *Ecumenical Directory* articulates an important ecumenical principle when it notes that the contribution that Christians can make in responding to the world's needs "will be more effective when they make it together, and when they are seen to be united in making it. Hence they will want to do everything together that is allowed by their faith" (162).<sup>18</sup>



Photo: Courtesy of The Catholic Register by Michael Swan

Dr. Margaret O'Gara (1947 -2012), eminent Canadian Catholic Ecumenist. Professor of Theology at the University of St. Michael's College, Faculty of Theology.

It was in this same vein that Cardinal Walter Kasper, while serving as President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, proposed that ecumenism's dialogue of love and dialogue of truth needed to be accompanied by an ecumenism or dialogue "of life".

If we live in a period of real but incomplete communion, it is clear that we need to find a way to live deeply and faithfully in the midst of that transition, to endow and fill that period with *real life*.... The churches did not only diverge through discussion, they diverged through the way they lived, through alienation and estrangement. Therefore, they need to come closer to each other again in their lives; they must get accustomed to each other, pray together, work together, live together....<sup>19</sup>

A dialogue of life compels us, as appropriate, to move out of our separate compartments, to learn to live our Christian life and mission together. The fact is, Christian Communities do not "do everything together that is allowed by their faith"; it is indeed more the case that we act separately except where extraordinary circumstances move us to act together. There is much room for growth here. While we continue to feel the sting of our incomplete communion and of restrictions that keep us from eucharistic communion around the Lord's table,<sup>20</sup> there is much more that we can do together. Furthermore, doing what we can do together will deepen our desire for full visible unity and our commitment "to build anew a communion of love" (ED 19; cf. UR 12). 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 (EG 246; UUS 48).

18 This is a Catholic restatement of the Lund Principle, formulated at a gathering of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in 1952, namely that "churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately."

19 Walter Kasper, "Ecumenism in a Changing Situation," in *Priests and People* 17 (1), January 2003, 6. This article was a shortened form of the *Prolusio* given by Cardinal Kasper at the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in November 2001 ([www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20011117\\_kasper-prolusio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20011117_kasper-prolusio_en.html)).

20 Ibid.; cf. ED 129-31.

What shape does the dialogue of life take? Where are its principal spheres of action? We look briefly here at seven areas of ecclesial life: prayer, worship, and spiritual life; communication and structures of growing together; common witness of our faith; mission at the service of the common good; formation and study; interchurch couples and families; ecclesial learning and the exchange of gifts.



Photo: © Daniel Abel - photographe Basilique-cathédrale-Notre-Dame-de-Québec

Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Lacroix (left), Roman Catholic archbishop of Quebec and Bishop Dennis Drainville (right) of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec stand together in friendship and prayer.

### **Prayer, worship, and spiritual life**

The Decree on Ecumenism identifies ‘spiritual ecumenism’ – including a change of heart, holiness and prayer for Christian unity – as “the soul of the ecumenical movement” (UR 8). Spiritual ecumenism is generally understood as a field of ecumenical engagement distinct from dialogue, but they are closely interrelated. Prayer is of course a deep personal and communal dialogue with the Lord, in which “concern for unity cannot be absent” (UUS 27). Prayer is essential to authentic dialogue between Christians, and dialogue in turn should lead to a bridging of the gap between the elements of faith we hold in common and the tangible expression of that shared belief in our spiritual and liturgical lives (UUS 33; cf. *Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 Years of Anglican–Roman Catholic*

*Dialogue* 10). In the dialogue of life, Christian faithful and Communities are encouraged to seek out appropriate ways to pray and worship God together, including prayer for unity. Together and in their own worshipping communities, they are to pray for one another as brothers and sisters in the one Lord, and to grow in faithfulness to Christ and his desire for unity as they do so (UR 8; UUS 34). They are also invited to learn from each other in the spiritual life, sharing resources and experiences, attentive to how God has been at work in the other.<sup>21</sup> In the slow healing of divisions, Christian Communities are called to walk with and carry each other, in times of celebration and amidst ecumenical difficulties and disappointments. They can only walk this journey together upheld by prayer and centred on the crucified and risen Lord.

<sup>21</sup> For specific suggestions in this regard, see Walter Kasper, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2007).

## Communication and structures of growing together



The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Toronto, Cardinal Thomas Collins, at an ecumenical reception in Toronto. Welby visited the Anglican Church of Canada, April 7 to 8, 2014.

A dialogue of life invites Christian Communities to move towards reconciliation by learning to communicate frequently and effectively with one another, and by creating structures that allow us to grow together. The initial causes of separation between our communities have been exacerbated by being out of communication with each other for centuries, during which time we have grown further apart. Divisions tend to ossify.

### **Sacramental Sharing**

Perhaps no area of ecumenical relations causes more tension than differing norms regarding the reception of communion in each other's eucharistic celebrations. When the *Ecumenical Directory* treats the subject of "Sharing Sacramental Life with Christians of Other Churches and Ecclesial Communities" (129-32), it draws on two basic principles articulated in the Decree on Ecumenism (UR 8) which must be taken into account together: namely, that the celebration of sacraments in a community is a sign of its unity, and that sacraments are also a means of building up the unity and spiritual life of the community (ED 129). Mindful of the real but incomplete communion between members of other Christian Communities and the Catholic Church, the Directory notes that in general, participation in the sacraments of the Eucharist, reconciliation, and anointing is limited to those in full communion, but 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). The conditions specified are that a person be in "grave and pressing need" of receiving the sacrament (ED 130), and that "the person be unable to have recourse for the sacrament desired to a minister of his or her own Church or ecclesial Community, ask for the sacrament of his or her own initiative, manifest Catholic faith in this sacrament and be properly disposed". Norms may be established by episcopal conferences or by the synods of Eastern Catholic Churches to assist with discerning situations of "grave and pressing need", and diocesan bishops are strongly encouraged to "establish general norms for judging situations of grave and pressing need" in their respective dioceses (ED 130). The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has not issued norms beyond those of the *Ecumenical Directory*, but some dioceses in Canada have more specific directives for interpreting the norms of the Directory. Pastorally, work could be done so that the universal norms would be better known, because of the pastoral good made possible by permitted exceptions, and in order to deepen both the clergy's and the lay faithful's appreciation of the underlying principles which shape our teaching. The *Ecumenical Directory* also notes that Catholics who find themselves in the circumstances identified above (n.b. ED 130-131) may only ask for these sacraments "from a minister in whose Church these sacraments are valid or from one who is known to be validly ordained according to the Catholic teaching on ordination" (132).

### ***Dialogue with the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC)***

The Polish National Catholic Church has its roots in disputes over parish property in Roman Catholic dioceses in the United States. The PNCC has a small 'Diocese of Canada'. In 2001, the CCCB began a dialogue with the PNCC in Canada, with the aim of re-establishing full communion. Since 1984, there has been a similar Roman Catholic–Polish National Catholic dialogue in the United States, which the CCCB joined in 2008. The PNCC is recognized by the Roman Catholic Church as having valid sacraments, including ordination and the Eucharist. Differences needing to be addressed include the role and authority of the papacy, the level of involvement of the laity in church governance, and practical matters pertaining to the ministry of former Roman Catholic clergy within the PNCC.

Now that we are being led by the Holy Spirit towards the unity for which Christ prayed, it is vital to find means of communicating with each other on all levels of our ecclesial lives, especially when addressing developments within our respective communities that could create new obstacles in our relations. Structures and



Photo: Kiply LukanYaworski © Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

practices that foster communication and growing together include the establishment of councils or committees to facilitate relations; inviting observers to participate in important ecclesial gatherings; and the regular gathering of church leaders to share information and to grow in a visible friendship that invites a deepening relationship between their respective communities (ED 163, 166-71).

### **Common witness of our faith**

When Jesus prayed that his disciples would be one, it was "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21). Pope Francis has recently highlighted "the seriousness of the counter-witness of division among Christians," pleading instead that we "concentrate on the convictions we share" in order to progress towards common witness. "Signs of division between Christians in countries ravaged by violence add further causes of conflict on the part of those who should instead be a leaven of peace. How many important things unite us!" (EG 246). His words echo a frequent call over the past 50 years for common witness, a call set forth strongly in the Decree on Ecumenism: "Before the whole world let all Christians confess their faith in the triune God, one and three, in the incarnate Son of God, our Redeemer and Lord. United in their efforts, and with mutual respect, let them bear witness to our common hope which does not play us false" (UR 12). Common witness is called forth in ways as diverse as public expressions of our faith (such as an ecumenical Way of the Cross held at civic locations on Good Friday); joint statements or interventions on moral questions; and bringing the Christian spirit to the world of science and of the arts (UUS 74). There is also a witness value in ecumenical dialogue itself, with its pursuit of reconciliation and the resolution of past conflicts through patient and persevering conversation rather than confrontation.

### **Dialogue with the United Church of Canada**

The United Church of Canada was formed through a union of Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist churches in 1925. This has given it a continuing desire for ecumenical relationship and dialogue, particularly with the other mainstream churches in Canada. Catholics and members of the United Church are frequent partners in ecumenical justice projects. Despite our considerably different public positions on numerous social and ethical questions, our dialogue has explored a broad range of topics since it was established in 1974. This dialogue has addressed cultural attitudes, as well as theological and doctrinal issues. Studies have focused on authority, evangelization, Trinitarian belief, and marriage. In 2001, it issued a report entitled *In Whose Name? The Baptismal Formula in Contemporary Culture*, which looked at United Church proposals to use inclusive Trinitarian language in the baptismal formula and attempted to suggest a pastoral solution that would be doctrinally sound. Subsequent discussion on *Sin, Reconciliation, and Ecclesial Identity* looked at the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools operated by the churches. In 2012, the dialogue completed an eight-year study on the theological understanding of marriage. This last topic was chosen because in 2004, the Catholic Church and the United Church took opposing sides in addressing the Supreme Court of Canada about proposed same-sex marriage legislation. The dialogue has now turned its attention to a consideration of creation, ecology, and the environment.

One of the principal means by which Christian Communities give healthy witness is in their engagement in common mission at the service of those in need; common mission, just as common prayer, is an important form of witness. *Ut Unum Sint* calls for “every possible form of practical cooperation at all levels: pastoral, cultural and social, as well as that of witnessing to the Gospel message” (40).<sup>22</sup>

### **Mission at the service of the common good**

As Catholics, we look to cooperate with others with different philosophical or religious perspectives in working towards the common good and in striving to respond to the suffering and need of our time. Among those with whom we should expect to be able to cooperate to a significant degree are our fellow Christians, brothers and sisters baptized in Christ with whom we share Trinitarian and Christological foundations of faith, foundations that summon us to share in Christ’s own mission to the world. In reading and being fashioned by the same prophetic summons to integrity and the same life-giving Gospel, all Christians are called to service, applying Gospel principles to social life by actively promoting peace and working at the service of healing and reconciliation in our communities and nations. In our commonly held conviction that the human person is created in the image and likeness of God and has an inherent dignity, we hear the Lord himself calling us to defend human

life and dignity, reaching out to those in greatest need, to the most wounded and vulnerable members of the human family. The degree to which we share common faith convictions should translate into a corresponding degree of common mission in response to human need and at the service of the common good; this is fertile ground for practical cooperation (cf. UR 12, 23; ED 50, 162; UUS 74). Standing and acting together on justice issues enhances our efforts, given that the united voice of Christians can have “more impact than any one isolated voice” (UUS 43). Catholic social teaching stresses that “the

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East: *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 12, 1994, 1. Cited in *Ut Unum Sint*, no. 40.

## Dialogue with Evangelicals

One of the most recent and hopeful dialogues is that with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). Evangelical churches have many different forms, and are not themselves in full agreement on all matters of faith, but stand in a common tradition. These communities have only just begun to discover their own common witness and mission in the past decades, and are now seeking opportunities to engage in dialogue with Catholics. The EFC functions in a manner similar to the Canadian Council of Churches, as a national body representing diverse communities of Christians. The CCCB and the EFC have collaborated in the past on a number of social statements and interventions before Parliament and the Supreme Court of Canada.

The dialogue with Evangelicals was established in 2010 with initial discussions on Scripture and salvation. The focus of the dialogue was on mapping the place of the Word of God in our respective communities and histories. The dialogue members hope to produce some form of educational brochure to assist Catholics and Evangelicals to better understand each other.

Catholic Church cannot fail to take part” in the joint effort of Christians to foster respect for the rights and needs of all, especially the poor, the lowly, and the defenseless (UR 43).<sup>23</sup> Divergences that still exist between us and keep us from full communion do set limits to what we can do together (ED 162), but we are nowhere near living out our common mission in the world to the extent that is appropriate and responsible.

The foundation of common mission is the recognition that we have been given that mission by the Lord, and it has been given for us to carry out together, as his body in the world. As the Decree on Ecumenism put it, “cooperation among all Christians vividly expresses that bond which already unites them, and it sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant” (UR 12). Such cooperation is “a form of proclamation” and “a manifestation of Christ himself” (UUS 40, 75). It also serves to overcome barriers between us; as we come to know one another better, we prepare the path to full reconciliation (UR 12; ED 162; UUS 43, 75).



From left to right: Bishop Donald Bolen, Dr. Catherine E. Clifford, Dr. Darren Dahl, and Nicholas Jesson, Saskatoon, at the new Program in Ecumenical Studies and Formation, June 2014

## Formation and study

Reconciliation happens on all levels of our ecclesial lives, and can only happen with well-formed leaders and disciples. In 1995, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity published a study document entitled *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Those Engaged in Pastoral Work*, highlighting “the necessity of ecumenical formation

for all Christ’s faithful” so that every Christian might make their particular contributions to Christian unity, before offering a detailed description of the desired ecumenical formation for future priests and bishops (EDF 1-2; cf. UR 10). Such formation has important

23 Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), 32.

doctrinal and cognitive components: cultivating a knowledge of Catholic ecumenical principles and how they apply to a wide range of pastoral situations; providing an acquaintance with ecumenical organizations and structures; fostering an awareness of the results of ecumenical dialogues; and teaching an understanding of elements Christians hold in common and of remaining disagreements (EDF 16, 29). Furthermore, an ecumenical dimension is to be introduced to every subject taught, and when appropriate, professors from other Christian Communities are to be called upon “to present their ecclesial traditions of Christian faith and ways of living it out” (EDF 10, 20; cf. ED 81, 191-95). But ecumenical formation also aims to foster “an authentically ecumenical disposition” and to “enliven the ecumenical *conversion* and *commitment*” of future leaders, and is to be accompanied by practical ecumenical experience (EDF 9, citing ED 70; EDF 5, 22).

While the ecumenical formation of church leaders is vital, it also needs to reach our families and schools, parishes and organizations (EDF 5). An essential starting point is getting to know other Christians and Christian Communities. This happens through friendship, praying and acting together in mission and witness. But it also requires ongoing learning, and not only in seminaries or on theological dialogue commissions. Adult faith formation can include bringing Christians of different traditions together to deepen their knowledge of the faith and of each other.



### **Interchurch couples and families**

Interchurch families are formed when two baptized Christians from different churches marry with a mutual commitment to live, worship, and participate in their spouse’s church to the extent that the discipline of their two Communities permit. Bridging the division between their churches, interchurch couples are united in the sacraments of baptism

and marriage and so “live in their marriage the hopes and difficulties of the path to Christian unity”.<sup>24</sup>

Pope John Paul II teaches us that “the fostering of authentic and mature communion between persons within the family is the first and irreplaceable school of social life, and example and stimulus for the broader community relationships marked by respect, justice, dialogue and love.”<sup>25</sup>

Encounter with each other’s church life and worship leads interchurch couples to discover, in their respective ways of worship, church life, doctrine, spirituality, authority, and ethics that not all differences are church-dividing, but many are complementary and can lead to the enrichment of diversity. “This immersion in the ethos of a partner’s community can

24 Pope John Paul II, Address at York, England, 1982.

25 Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), 43.

enable a spouse to evaluate the other church in terms of its own language and ways of thought, action, and being."<sup>26</sup> Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the positive contribution of interchurch couples that can become "a practical laboratory of unity." This requires "mutual goodwill, understanding and maturity of faith in both partners, and also in the communities from which they come." He called for "reciprocal trust and cooperation between the Churches" while "fully respecting the rights and responsibilities of the spouses for the faith formation of their own family and the education of their children."<sup>27</sup>



Pope Francis receives a book from Dr. Nikolaus Schneider, the head of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, 2013.

### **Ecclesial learning and the exchange of gifts**

We noted above that a dialogue of love invites us to recognize and rejoice in the authentic elements of church in other Christian Communities. A dialogue of life encourages that we not only acknowledge but also learn from these gifts of the Spirit in our dialogue partners as we seek to renew the life of the Catholic Church in fidelity to the Gospel. This ecclesial learning

has its foundations in the basic Catholic principles of ecumenical engagement, and in our understanding that while all essential elements of the Church are found in the Catholic Church, "certain features of the Christian mystery have at times been more effectively emphasized" in other Christian Communities (UUS 14; cf. UR 4, 17). Pope John Paul II gave the Church a language for the notion of learning from other Christian Communities when he noted that ecumenical dialogue "is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an 'exchange of gifts'" (UUS 28). He expressed confidence that an exchange of gifts has already been taking place in recent decades, and spoke of how ecumenical dialogue "works to awaken a reciprocal fraternal assistance, whereby Communities strive to give in mutual exchange what each one needs in order to grow towards definitive fullness in accordance with God's plan", providing an "ecumenical expression of the Gospel law of sharing" (UUS 87).

Pope Francis has taken this a step further, inviting an active attentiveness to gifts in the other or potential areas of learning that 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).

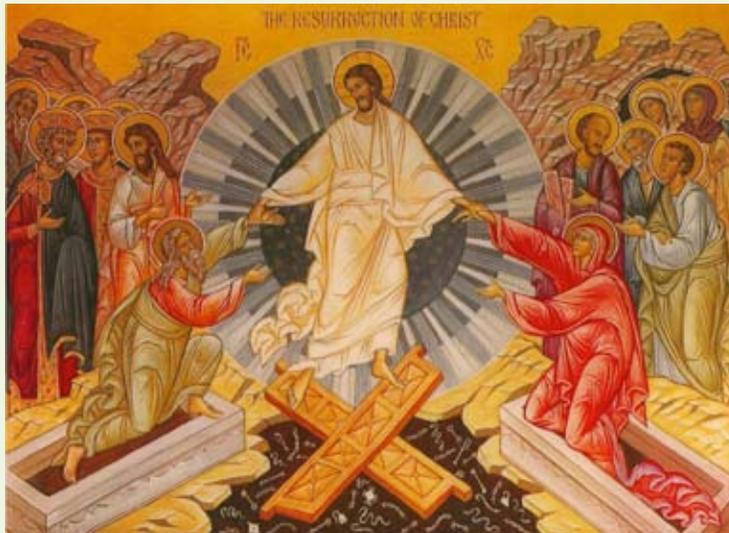
<sup>26</sup> *Interchurch Families and Christian Unity*, a paper adopted by the Second World Gathering of Interchurch Families in Rome (July 2003), C2.

<sup>27</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Encounter with representatives of the Polish Council for Ecumenism, May 25, 2006, Warsaw, Poland.

Commenting on materials prepared in Canada for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, he noted that it is good “to find in other Christians something which we need, something we can receive as a gift from our brothers and sisters.”<sup>28</sup> Addressing the Orthodox delegation in Rome for the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, he gave the example of learning from the Orthodox tradition about episcopal collegiality and the tradition of synodality.<sup>29</sup> Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis have both stressed that there is much room for growth in this area of ecumenical learning and the exchange of gifts (UUS 48; EG 246).

## ■ Conclusion

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians that in Christ, “God was reconciling the world to himself”, and has given us the ministry and message of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-19). Unity is the work of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, yet God entrusts us with a share in this work, summoning us to be artisans of reconciliation, ambassadors for Christ and the unity he came to bring. “Those who identify deeply with Christ must identify with



Resurrection of Christ - Harrowing from Hades Icon

his prayer, and especially with his prayer for unity” (ED 25). To be committed to reconciliation with other Christians goes hand in hand with a deep faithfulness to Christ. It is to be preoccupied with what God is preoccupied with, to yearn for what God yearns for. We are called to be a Church in dialogue because God has entered into a redeeming life-giv-

ing dialogue with the world, and sends us forth in his name. The disunity and dissension within the Body of Christ is a contradiction and undermining of the message we proclaim. That is why there is no overstatement in the words of *Ut Unum Sint*, namely that “ecumenical dialogue is of essential importance” (32).

The anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the ways that we have grown together in these five decades, and to consider how we are being called to deepen our commitment to journey together with other Christians today on the path to full ecclesial unity. There is much reason to rejoice. We have rediscovered each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, and have felt and seen traces of the Holy Spirit at work in our fruitful conversations and our growing relations.

28 General Audience, January 22, 2014; cf. “A Big Heart Open to God”, *America*, September 30, 2013: [www.americamagazine.org/pope-interview](http://www.americamagazine.org/pope-interview).

29 Address to the Orthodox delegation, June 29, 2013; cf. “A Big Heart Open to God”.

Successive popes have given passionate leadership at the service of unity, and dialogue commissions have produced texts of reconciliation that hold much promise. But the path of reconciliation has proved to be longer, more circuitous, and more multi-faceted than many had anticipated. Christian unity is the work of the whole Church, and it requires nothing less than learning to walk the path of discipleship and live our Christian mission together. Pope John Paul II noted that “ecumenical relations are a complex and delicate reality which require study and theological dialogue, fraternal relations and contact, prayer and practical co-operation. We are called to work in all fields. Being limited to one or another of them while neglecting the others can never produce results”.<sup>30</sup> While our theological dialogues have at times reached dead ends where we cannot see a way forward, the biggest challenge facing us is the demanding task of learning to give real flesh to all that we do hold in common in all areas of our ecclesial lives.



Pentecost by Jean II Restout, 1732.

The Holy Spirit does not corner us, but always leaves us openings where we can move forward in trust, and will continue to open doors as we walk through those open to us at present. And we need never lose hope. Just as the Risen Christ walked through barred doors and breathed the Spirit on disciples wrapped in fear and doubt, so too will the Spirit of Christ lead us past what seem to be intractable barriers and bring us to ever greater communion in him. Trusting the Holy Spirit who has been at work sowing seeds of unity over these past five decades, let us bring fresh and untiring energy to our part in the great reconciling work of God in Christ.

<sup>30</sup> EDF 7, quoting Pope John Paul II, Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, February 1, 1991, published in *Information Service* 78/III-IV (1991): 140.

## ■ Abbreviations

- DV** *Dei Verbum*, Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, November 18, 1965
- ED** Ecumenical Directory, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity's *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, March 25, 1993
- EDF** *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Those Engaged in Pastoral Work*, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, March 16, 1995
- EG** *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world, November 24, 2013
- LG** *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, November 21, 1964
- UR** *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism, November 21, 1964
- UUS** *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II's encyclical on commitment to ecumenism, May 25, 1995

This document of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, prepared in conjunction with its Episcopal Commission for Christian Unity, Religious Relations with the Jews, and Interfaith Dialogue, marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*). It provides an overview of Catholic principles in the work of Christian unity, gives a brief account of what has been achieved ecumenically over the past 50 years both internationally and in Canada, and charts out ways in which the Church is being led by the Holy Spirit in promoting Christian unity. It is our hope that it will serve as a resource and formative guide for those engaged in pastoral and ecumenical work: on diocesan and eparchial ecumenical commissions; in parishes and educational institutions; in local or regional dialogues; and for Catholics engaged in other ecumenical initiatives fostering common witness, mission and prayer for unity. It is hoped that it will also be of service to our dialogue partners, who should find here an accessible overview of the Catholic Church in its ecumenical engagement. Its publication coincides with that of a more introductory resource, *A Church in Dialogue: Catholic Ecumenical Commitment*. The shorter version works towards these same ends, but is intended for a broader readership in parishes and schools. In both, we unite ourselves to Jesus' prayer that his disciples may be one, so that the world may believe (Jn 17:20-21).

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