

VU: Visible Unity

Ecumenical Newsletter of the Diocese of Owensboro

Summer 2011

INSIDE VU

VU (pronounced view) is the quarterly newsletter of the Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations of the Diocese of Owensboro. VU is itself witness to the Visible Unity of the People of God, the Church of Jesus Christ. VU also reports on current events within the Diocese of Owensboro that manifest and promote Christian unity. VU also offers timely articles on the status of Christian unity from the national perspective. Informative and instructive, VU is published quarterly and offered at no cost through the diocesan website.

RE: VU

GRASSROOTS p. 2 Useful information for anyone seeking the visible unity of the Church.

FROM THE TOP p. 3 A summary report from the numerous ecumenical dialogues the Catholic church has held with other Christian communions. This quarter's summary is from the Catholic-United Methodist dialogue.

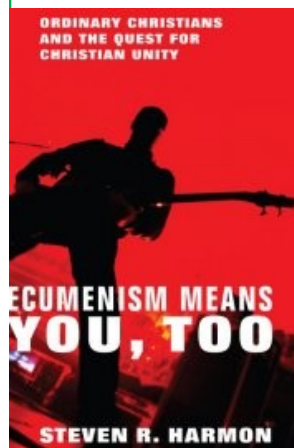
E-TRENDS p. 4 This last page feature is an in-depth summary of ecumenical trends.

1st Annual Summer Reading Book

ECUMENISM MEANS YOU, TOO

By Steven R. Harmon

A popular introduction to the ecumenical movement that draws on the music of Irish



rock band U2 to cast artistic light on various aspects of the quest for Christian unity. Whether one is a U2 fan or not, and whether one thinks the ecumenical movement is a good thing or a bad thing for the church, everyone who reads this book will

learn something about the Christian theological framework apart from which neither the modern ecumenical movement nor the meaning of U2's music can be understood. The book includes an annotated bibliography of resources for ecumenical engagement and a glossary of key ecumenical terms for readers who want to learn more about the Christian practice of seeking the unity of the church. The author is a Baptist theologian.

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GRASSROOTS

Intercessions and Quotes for Parish Bulletins

JUNE

That the Sacred Heart of Jesus will increase our desire for greater unity among all Christians: We pray to the Lord.

AN ECUMENICAL CATHOLIC:

The concern for restoring unity involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. In fact all Christians are called to commit themselves to the search for unity. Indeed to be a Catholic is to be ecumenical.

JULY

That the Precious Blood of Jesus will draw all Christians Together in the Body of Christ: We pray to the Lord.

CHRIST PRAYED FOR UNITY:

Ecumenism is based first of all on Jesus' own prayer on the eve of his death. Jesus prayed for his disciples that they may all be one. The Catholic Church committed herself irrevocably to ecumenism at the Second Vatican Council.

AUGUST

That the Blessed Sacrament, the source of the Church's unity, will lead us to that oneness for which Christ prayed: We pray to the Lord.

ECUMENISM IS NOT AN OPTION:

Pope John Paul II declared that "the ecumenical task is not optional or a mere "appendix" to the Church's mission. Rather, it is integral to the nature of the Church, an organic part of her life and work that must pervade all that she is and does".

SEPTEMBER

That Christ sacrifice on the Holy Cross will lead us to seek greater unity among all Christians: We pray to the Lord.

CHRISTIAN UNITY:

Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that ecumenism is not an option for Christians but a sacred obligation.



Rooted in Faith



The opportunity for catechesis in ecumenical/interfaith issues presents itself in many aspects of parish life. We need to develop a "catechetical consciousness" to recognize and respond to these opportunities. In this and other issues of the VU, you will find a number of logical entry points for ecumenical/interfaith formation for adults, youth, and children. May our renewed commitment to ecumenism and interfaith dialogue be a source of many blessings for the parishes of our diocese!

Event-Centered Ecumenism

Pentecost: Vigil &/or Novena -- 9 days between Ascension and Pentecost are especially recommended for ecumenical gatherings

- Environmental Sabbath: weekend nearest June 5th
- Baccalaureate Service: for Graduates
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day: July 4th or nearest Sunday
- Vacation Bible School
- Day of Prayer for Peace: e.g. Aug. 6 (Hiroshima anniversary), Sept. 11, (E.g., 8:46 A.M.), 10/4 (St. Francis – as did Pope John Paul II), Jan. 1 (World Day of Prayer for Peace)
- Oct. 4 (St Francis): an ecumenical pet blessing could be done on or near this date
- Reformation Sunday: nearest Oct. 31st
- Election Eve: Prayer Vigil
- World Community Day (1st Fri. in Nov.) /CWU/*

FROM THE TOP

The United Methodist-Catholic Dialogue

A current summary

The Dialogue was established in 1966. Since that date the Dialogue partners have met twice each year. In the United States the membership of the United Methodist Church is 8 million. The key issues discussed in recent years have included the Church as communion, episcopal authority, Baptism, and Eucharist. Recently, religious leaders have spoken about global climate change and its impact on people in poverty. The National Religious Partnership on the Environment has called particular attention to the hardships that will burden the poor if policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are not carefully structured. Representing the Partnership as a guest speaker, Walter Grazer said that it is incumbent that policies “create new well-paying, climate-friendly jobs and assist workers who lose their jobs as a result of new climate regulations and other policies.”

The dialogue draws expertise from scholars whose specialties are in either ethics or sacraments. Their conversation hopes to produce an adult education instrument to enable laity from both churches to respond to the current ecological crisis from the vantage point of believers who celebrate God’s gift of creation in every Eucharistic liturgy.

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Two presentations were given by Msgr. Kevin W. Irwin, Dean of the School of Theology at

Catholic University of America. In the first, Msgr. Irwin traced developments in Eucharistic doctrine found in papal documents from Pius XII to Benedict XVI. Later, Msgr. Irwin explored the symbolic language of the Eucharist to show the connection between the work of making bread and wine and the work of redemption. “The very bread and wine themselves are human gifts through which we receive the richest of divine gifts,” he said.

Kendall Soulen, Ph.D., of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, spoke on Methodist sources for connecting sacraments and ecology. The writings of John Wesley, along with the hymns of his brother Charles Wesley (sung in both Catholic and Methodist communities), presuppose a theology of creation that emphasizes the glorification of God in the natural world.

Father Francis Tiso, Associate Director of the USCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, explored environmental themes in the monastic tradition. Monks and nuns always have emphasized the harmony between the natural beauty surrounding their settlements and the life and worship that takes place within the monastic enclosure, he said.

“The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.”
John Wesley

In addition to Bishop Skylstad, Catholic participants also included Father James Massa (staff); Jesuit Father Drew Christiansen, Editor, America Magazine; John Hart, Ph.D., Boston University; and Angela Russell Christman, Ph.D., Loyola College in Maryland. Other Methodist participants included Rev. Betty Gamble (staff); Edgardo Colon-Emeric, Ph.D., Duke University, and Karen Westerfield-Tucker, Ph.D., Boston University.

E-TRENDS

Renewing the Ecumenical Spirit

Despite the new stress points which have more recently surfaced within some ecclesial communities, giving rise to concern with the Catholic community, it remains an essential priority to stay focused on the common pursuit of the unity of all Christians. We deem it important that we continue to remind one another that “division openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage to the most holy cause of proclaiming the Good News to every creature. (**Unitatis redintegratio**, November 21, 1964)

As Pope John Paul II reminded all Catholics “It is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of ‘appendix’ which is added to the Church’s traditional activity. Rather ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does.”

Through **Unitatis redintegratio** the Church has taught, and we are continually being reminded that “prayer is the soul of the ecumenical movement.” While new forms of ecumenical prayer and outreach ought to be encouraged, we wish to call attention especially to the value and importance of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and urge a new expression of enthusiasm within our Catholic parishes for participation in this worthy and indispensable practice.

In the spirit of **Ut Unum Sint** we do well to further remind ourselves that the work of ecumenism is not a choice we arbitrarily make but rather a responsibility we must necessarily assume

Pastors are encouraged to exercise leadership in the gathering of neighboring Christian communities to unite in prayer and fellowship, especially but not only, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as well as the World Day of Prayer. “Along the ecumenical path to unity, pride of place certainly belongs to common prayer. Despite their divisions, Christians can grow ever more united in common prayer around Christ, and grow in the awareness of how little divides them in comparison to what unites them. (**Ut Unum sint**)

Our ecumenical achievements in the past and those yet to be realized can only be measured as a result of the primacy of prayer, so essential to the pursuit of Christian Unity. Every baptized Christian is called to be a spiritual ecumenist, seeking to intercede so the prayer of Jesus to the Father, “that all may be one... as we are one” (Jn 17:2) may be fulfilled.

Pope Benedict XVI, building upon the ecumenical legacy of his venerable brother, Pope John Paul II, gave a determined focus to his pontificate when he acknowledged that “ as a primary commitment [he would] work without sparing energies for the reconstitution of the full and visible unity of all the followers of Christ.”

Adapted from a statement prepared by the Ontario Diocesan Catholic Directors of Ecumenism