

## **Ecumenism: That We All May Be One**

The word *ecumenical* comes from the Greek meaning “whole inhabited earth.” This definition is perfect for it refers to the collaboration of all Christians in prayer. Through this collaboration, we are also called to search for full reconciliation of our churches in Christ. Ecumenical formation is essential if Catholics are to know our fellow Protestant brothers and sisters and how to relate to them. We must recognize the gifts that the Catholic Church brings to the ecumenical movement. To insure a proper understanding of ecumenism in our modern context, there have been several modern day texts written by Pope Leo XIII and Pius XII called *Decree on Ecumenism*. Saint Pope John Paul II issued a longer and deeper document on the subject, *Ut Unum Sint (That They May Be One)* in 1995. Ecumenism involves the practice of learning about particular churches, their history, their relationship to us and their spiritual life. When this occurs, we in turn learn more about our own spiritual growth and have a better appreciation of the Catholic faith. We have to remember that the practice of ecumenism is a two-way street. Unity has always been a principal aim of the Catholic Church. It is about both sides coming together to improve the relationships between all Christian practices. Here are some examples that this can be accomplished: 1.) Identifying and correcting misleading stereotypes. 2.) Find ways of removing suspicion and resentment. 3.) Develop respect for the religious freedom and integrity of others. 4.) Recognize those things that already unite us through some common prayers and Scripture. 5.) Continue to pray to Christ that we may all be one as we grow in peace and patience. 6.) Be open to the realization that ecumenism gives a deeper understanding of the faith and an interest to study it in greater detail.

Pope Francis I has clearly demonstrated his commitment to ecumenism. In his first ecumenical meeting in March 2013, the new pope greeted representatives from Christian Churches and other religions, including Jewish and Muslim leaders. Pope Francis stated that he intends to follow “on the path of ecumenical dialogue” set for the Catholic Church by the Second Vatican Council. When we fully understand that our spirituality is based on hope and courage, it is then that ecumenism can flourish. In our world today, we truly need that peace and harmony.

*(Sherrie Clutts – D.R.E.)*