

## Pastor's Notes: Interview with Kevin Doerge on Ecumenical Outreach - Part 2 of 2

May 30, 2021

On May 1, 2021, I interviewed Kevin Doerge, a Basilica parishioner who is involved in ecumenical outreach among friends. The second and concluding part of our interview is presented here. You can watch the video of the interview on our website.



**Fr. Carter:** As a Catholic, what were you able to share with this group, this Bible study, that you were the only Catholic in?

**Kevin Doerge:** I hope, plenty. They really didn't have too much interactions with Catholics before that. And the first session that I went to, as God's providence would have it, the middle of a study of the Book of Isaiah took us to John Chapter Six. And I didn't have any intention of speaking up that first session. But as they're talking about John Chapter 6, for 5, 10, 15 minutes, I kind of just - I perk up and I posed the question: What do you think Jesus means when he says, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you shall have no life within you. My flesh is true food, my blood is true drink. He who eats of my flesh and drinks of my blood shall have eternal life. I shall raise him on the last day."? And to my surprise, most of them actually weren't familiar with the Catholic Church's teaching on the True Presence in the Eucharist. And I saw that as a great opportunity. And before long, I was already preparing 50-, 60-, 70-slide PowerPoint presentations on the Eucharist, before they even knew I was doing it. And fortunately, the topic came up. They asked me to lead a discussion. To their credit, they were very docile, open to it. They gave me the platform. They were very respectful. We had dialogue for three straight nights talking about the Eucharist. I used Brant Pitre's *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* as a structure for that dialogue. We talked about how the Eucharist as the Last Supper is the fulfillment of the Passover meal. Jesus, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Eucharist is the fulfillment of the manna. We talked at length obviously about John Chapter 6. So we've had some of those discussions and they've been open to it. They've been respectful. They've been curious. They've asked good questions. And they've even recently had a discussion about Mary, which is usually a sticking point for a lot of Protestants. And it was again another fruitful discussion. Tyler Ross and Jimmy Olson of the parish joined us, and we had very fruitful dialogue and they asked good questions. It spurs a lot. The beauty of our Catholic faith is that it's all so beautifully woven together. And when you start having questions on some part, it all fits together with others. So it's starting the dialogue. There's many things that it covers and many barriers to get over, but it's been great.

**Fr. Carter:** Fantastic. How has your interaction with this group that are fellow brothers and sisters in our Christian faith - but not in the fullness of the Christian faith found in the Catholic Church - how has your interaction with them changed you?

**Kevin Doerge:** First and foremost, they really walked with me. I was broken when I went there, and they just loved me and they walked with me. Once we established that relationship, we had these open dialogues. I mean, they challenged me. It's not just, you have your belief, we have ours. They'll really question things, and it's helped me to better understand my faith. If I give a response to something that's not satisfactory, they'll poke out any holes in it. And many times they ask me questions that I just don't have a response to. I certainly don't want to just start ignorantly spewing heresy. So it always leads me to research and understand and ultimately just better see the wisdom in our certain Church teachings. Ironically, probably the number one fruit of my interaction with the Protestant friend group is a greater devotion to the Eucharist and to Mary, through those topics, through prayer, and through study, and just immersing myself in studying those. Because of their questions, it really helped me grow in my own Catholic faith.

**Fr. Carter:** Wow, that's awesome. Protestants definitely have that gift of gathering people together. But also in I hear you saying, in apologetics, you have to lead with the heart, in relationship. The heart leads to the to the head because the heart has to be formed by the will, or the intellect. But you have to have compassion and empathy and accompaniment. I think that's fantastic.

**Kevin Doerge:** Yeah, nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care.

**Fr. Carter:** Is it worthwhile, then, that we interact and have relationships with our brothers and sisters in the Protestant faith?

**Kevin Doerge:** Absolutely. Iron sharpens iron. I'll just turn to the Catechism, Articles 820 and 821. It says: "*Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.*" *Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. This is why Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his Passion, and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: 'That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, . . . so that the world may know that you have sent me.'* *The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit.*" And then it talks in the next section about how we go about doing that. It talks about prayer in common. Because the change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement and merits the name, spiritual ecumenism. It talks about fraternal knowledge of each other, of spending time. And so it's vital to our faith, and that's certainly not to embrace some form of relativism or reductionism of our faith. I mean, that section right before talks about the wounds of disunity and some of the terrible damage that's been caused by the separation...but we believe we have the fullness of faith in the Catholic Church. And we must be firm in that. But we do so with charity.

**Fr. Carter:** We should desire that our neighbor should know Jesus, and that our neighbors should know Jesus in His fullness. We should desire that all people be Catholic, not to browbeat, but to elevate. Kevin, thank you so much for all your work in that area, your inspiration, and following the lead of the Holy Spirit. And thanks to God for His grace, which you have responded to.