

A Jubilee for the Future Church (2/2)

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Celebrating the New

Common preparation for the Jubilee will include common study of the ecumenical progress made among the churches and our common hopes for the future. There are a number of specific programs that can be worked on with particular churches in studying together the results of ecumenical progress and ecumenical hopes.

The Lutheran Catholic *Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith* will be an important text that can be studied in collaboration with Lutherans and other interested Protestants, showing how central is our common faith in God's freely given grace in Jesus Christ. This *Declaration* can also be an opportunity to study other developments with Protestants, on the Eucharist, Mary and the Saints, or even the papacy and authority.

It will be important to situate the Catholic understanding of indulgences, including the emphasis on the Jubilee indulgence which some have heard about through distorted press reports, within our common faith, Lutheran and Catholic, in the centrality of grace, faith and our dependence on Christ's merit for all we do. As the indulgence bull itself notes most forcefully: "Christ is truly our forgiveness and the expiation of our sins (cf. 1 Jn 2:2). By pouring into the hearts of the faithful the Holy Spirit who is the 'remission of all sins,' he guides each individual towards a filial and trusting encounter with the Father of mercies. From this encounter springs a commitment to conversion and renewal, to ecclesial communion to charity towards our brothers and sisters." (*Conditions for Gaining the Jubilee Indulgence*)

In the *Joint Declaration* with Lutherans, Catholics "Confess together that good works — a Christian life lived in faith, hope and love — follows justification and are its fruits...According to Catholic understanding, good works, made possible by grace and the working of the Holy Spirit, contribute to growth in grace...justification always remains the unmerited gift of grace." (#37, 38) Thus, when we talk about the sacrament of reconciliation, to which indulgences

are related, it is always in the context of God's first loving us and providing the grace of forgiveness out of which any work of ours flows.

Schools should be the place, as the Holy Father says, that the results of these dialogues can be studied, celebrated and become a "common heritage," building for a more united Christianity in the third millennium.

This Jubilee year is also a time when repentance and reconciliation can take on specific forms according to the needs of the community. "First of all, the sign of *the purification of memory*; this calls everyone to make an act of courage and humility in recognizing the wrongs done by those who have borne or bear the name of Christians." (*Incarnationis Mysterium*. #11) For example, the Holy See has sponsored programs on Catholic approaches to science — which was at one time persecution, the Inquisition and even the papacy, with the intent of taking account of those areas where we have caused pain or violence to others in the name of Christ. In many places in the world Christians are still at odds with one another, even to violence. The Crusades, Inquisition, religious wars and persecution are still vivid memories for some. Schools can be centers for ceremonies of repentance, reconciliation, study and acts of forgiveness among Christians.

Pilgrimage Toward Full Communion

The pilgrimage theme is central to the planning Catholics have to offer in the ecumenical preparation for the Jubilee. Since the Bull of Indictions notes that the bishop may designate the Cathedral and other shrines for pilgrimage, may not the ecumenical community wish to prepare pilgrimage opportunities for adults and young people to the Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic churches in the community? This may be an opportunity for groups, together, to visit for the first time communities different than their own, both religiously and ethnically.

In some communities there may be particularly important churches: the first church of a particular tradition in the city, the Episcopal cathedral, a minority church that was once persecuted, an ethnic Protestant, Anglican or Orthodox church, and the like. In each church there could be opportunities for prayer, for a presentation about the particular church and its hopes for communion among Christians, the history of the community and, for sharing of Jubilee hopes for the next millennium by the pilgrims.

A litany or prayer book could be prepared, possibly drawing on the prayers used in the World Council of Churches, praying for the unity of the Church; for the particular churches of the community; for jubilee themes like relief of the debts of the poor, sensitivity to God's creation, peace among peoples; and for specific needs of the community. In each situation we can celebrate the gifts we have received from one another, and the pilgrims may leave gifts and take away a token of the visit as a souvenir and remembrance to pray for that community.

While few will be traveling to the Holy Land, Lasallians can encourage those who do to visit not only the historic sites of the faith, Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem, but also the living Christian communities there. Lasallians have the good fortune of the Brothers and their colleagues at Bethlehem University who can advise pilgrims on how best to understand Palestinian Christians and even provide hospitality for some groups. If a visit to the holy places do not

provide opportunities for ecumenical encounter, prayer and work for peace and commitment to reconciliation, the Jubilee theme outlined by the Holy Father is missed.

Pope John Paul emphasizes our common heritage of martyrs and holy people from our different Christian traditions. It is possible that each church visited may have pictures of holy persons and those who have died for the faith from their particular traditions. The pilgrims can light a candle and possibly hear the stories of heroism of individuals in other churches who have shared the common pilgrimage in Christ. This is an opportunity to learn about those who have died at the hands of Catholics in our history. It is also an opportunity to share with Catholic parishes and ecumenical colleagues the lives of our Brother martyrs from Guatemala, France, Spain and elsewhere.

Contemporary, as well as historic witness should be considered, as the Holy Father recommends: "This century now drawing to a close has known very many martyrs, especially because of Nazism, Communism, and racial or tribal conflicts. People from every sector of society have suffered for their faith, paying with their blood for their fidelity to Christ and the Church, or courageously facing interminable years of imprisonment and privations of every kind." (#13) Brothers and Lasallians have given their life in service to the Gospel around the world, and there are those suffering disabilities today. All of these experiences can become part of our educational programming for the Jubilee year.

Pilgrimages are finally not about tourism, or even about receiving some special privilege from God. "From birth to death, the condition of each individual is that of *homo viator*. Sacred Scripture, for its part, often attests to the special significance of setting out to go to sacred places...Pilgrimages have always been a significant part of the life of the faithful, assuming different cultural forms in different ages. A pilgrimage evokes the believer's personal journey in the footsteps of the Redeemer: it is an exercise of practical asceticism, of repentance for human weakness, of constant vigilance over one's own frailty, of preparations for a change of heart." (#7)

A local or more extended ecumenical pilgrimage is a marvelous spiritual discipline and teaching tool. It is a useful image of the pilgrimage of the churches together toward that full communion for which Christ prayed.

Planning Formation For the New Millennium

The ecumenical teams formed to prepare for Jubilee 2000 can use the opportunity to plan a decade of ecumenical formation for our people, preparing them for the new century. Pope John Paul has urged us to begin the work of receiving the results of thirty years of dialogue into the mainstream of Catholic life. If we are to make these relationships a "common heritage" we are challenged to work with our fellow Christians to devise catechetical resources and educational programs that can contribute to our learning together and deepening our faith.

As the Holy Father speaks of the New Evangelization he includes the priority for ecumenical education, working together to spread the Gospel, and deepening our zeal for the

unity of the churches. In our planning for the ecumenical formation that will be necessary in the new century, Catholics bring rich resources. We will need to know these resources, but we will also be enriched by knowing what other churches have developed to help us move more deeply into communion with one another.

The new *General Directory for Catechesis, The Ecumenical Dimension of the Formation of Pastoral Workers*, Pope John Paul's 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* are all resources Catholics provide in this work of planning for the future. There are also a multiplicity of dialogue resources from the World and National Councils of Churches and bilateral dialogues between particular churches. Study guides may be available from some dialogues. Local groups can develop their own catechetical materials.

It is an opportunity, at the General Chapter and in Lasallian communities and ministries around the world, to recommit ourselves to shared mission in service to the poor, in the new evangelization and in the zeal for promoting the unity of the Church.

All Christians can pray with the Holy Father "Let the praise of the Church rise to God the Father in the Holy Spirit for the gift of salvation in Christ the Lord, both now and evermore." (# 14)

Resources

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