

**By Grace Alone Are We Made Whole**  
Toward Full Communion in Faith, Life and Witness

When the World Council of Churches (WCC) was founded in 1948 late Orthodox Church in America ecumenist Alexander Schmemmann objected that someone else decided the Orthodox should be seated with the High Anglicans because of their ecclesiology, rather than the Society of Friends because of their pneumatology.<sup>1</sup> He undoubtedly looked down with favor as the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council moved from a parliamentary approach to decision making so dear to the Reformed tradition of the North Atlantic churches, to a discernment method under the advice of Quaker members.<sup>2</sup> The journey to the unity for which Christ prayed is a long, often idiosyncratic, pilgrimage in God's good providence. We never know whose gifts will be precious to all of us, or when a quip will be recalled as authentically prophetic. Praise God, for the gifts we have received from one another, and finally from the Holy Spirit in the Church.

I come here first of all to offer a word of appreciation for the leadership done by local ecumenists gathered here each year and across the country. The real link between the biblical call for the full visible unity of the Church in faith, sacramental life, worship and witness; the careful theological work and institutional advances; and the grassroots collaborative and educational task that brings Christ's prayer for unity alive for all of our people, is the vocation which brings most of you here today. In this talk I would like to focus briefly on two things: 1) our gratitude to God for new developments, and 2) some current challenges.

**Gratitude**

Briefly, there are five among the many things for which I would like to express gratitude to God.

1) To God we can be grateful that this summer the World Methodist Council joined itself with Lutherans and Catholics, according to its own spiritual and theological emphases, in affirming together the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ)<sup>3</sup>. For Methodist leadership we can be grateful.

I am particularly grateful, since I am teaching a course at Memphis Seminary, on the 16<sup>th</sup> century entitled "Is the Reformation Over?" stealing a title from Geoffrey Wainwright<sup>4</sup> and Mark Noll's<sup>5</sup> books by that name. Now I have an ecumenical text that can link my Methodist, Pentecostal and Holiness students into the discussion which focuses on the contribution of contemporary ecumenical scholarship which helps us reinterpret the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is a course that uses these contemporary ecumenical texts to understand the classical 16<sup>th</sup> century confessional texts of Trent and the Reformation churches, using the *Joint Declaration* as the interpretive grid.<sup>6</sup>

It is a fascinating course, in which I use 15 of the contemporary texts to context the historical debates and 16<sup>th</sup> century texts; 15 documents on Reformation issues that were not available the last time I taught the course 25 years ago. In 2017 we commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. How will we use the event to educate our people...?

I have yet to find the right seminary text. Writing this common history and preparing for this common commemoration is not the task of Faith and Order or any

specific bilateral. Nevertheless, it is an opportunity and challenge for our historically formed ecumenical community.

2) To God we can be grateful that in March of last year, five families of churches: historic Protestant, Orthodox, Pentecostal & Evangelical, African American/ethnic, and Catholic; initiated a moment on the pilgrimage toward building an instrument of dialogue, consultation and common witness: Christian Churches Together in the United States.<sup>7</sup> This decision by our churches is as much a challenge as a pledge.

The Orthodox, historic Protestant, and Catholic churches have a particular responsibility with our years of experience and confessional commitment to unity. The African American Churches rightly come to this new configuration with a hermeneutic of suspicion, wondering if this is the best way to stretch their modest ecumenical resources, in the context of commitments to the World Council, the National Conference of Black Churchmen, or the National Council of Churches. The Pentecostal and Evangelical churches are inherently cautious and many will watch closely to see what the next decades bring before warming up to the idea.

Will the more ecumenically experienced partners relate from the center of their church identity, or will we relegate the relationships to ecumenical offices and staffs as though it was some sort of external relationship to our life? We can pray for this new and fragile vehicle for communication and testimony, hoping that we may learn from one another and contribute to the reconciling witness of Christians in our fractious land. For the leaders who have nurtured this sign along our pilgrimage we can be grateful to God.

3) To God we can be grateful that in this year we celebrate 25 years of the reception of the World Council text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.(BEM) The study of this text at every level of Church life, from congregations and ecumenical communities across the world, to the focus of decision making bodies within our churches; has contributed to both deeper levels of communion and even full communion agreements among some churches;<sup>8</sup> and to a clarification of the further work that is necessary for fostering full communion where it once seemed unattainable.

The continuing World Council work on Baptism, on the Church, and on principles of interpretation, hermeneutics, continue to provide resources for our local study and our deepening of the bonds of communion that we already share. I can only be amazed at how far we have come in these short 25 years. For these developments we can be grateful to God. The new World Council texts on *The Nature and Mission of the Church* and on Baptism are particularly suited to local study, response and feedback in our local situations.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, we are not naïve about the challenges we face. Unity is a grace from God, not a good work of our own doing. As we move forward we expect, if not welcome, new challenges. It is no surprise that the ordination of women, for example, has been one of these challenges. After the 1992 decision of the Church of England, US bishops from Episcopal and Catholic churches pilgrimaged to Canterbury and Rome. Pope John Paul and Bishop Frank Griswold agreed that this delicate issue was one of ecclesiology, the nature of the Church, in both traditions, though with differing conclusions. Pope John Paul was emphatic in his response, saying that we should be neither surprised nor deterred from our goal of full unity, by these new challenges.<sup>10</sup>

For me it was clear in 1971, when the House of Bishop said that no theological obstacle remained, that the Episcopal Church and probably the Anglican Communion

would move in this direction; and it was similarly clear that the Catholic Church was not at all prepared to take up the issue, though the arguments that would be used would not become clear for a few more years on. The ecumenical commission of the Episcopal diocese of Tennessee had voices and diocesan bishops, on both sides of the issue. However, the final decision nearly a decade later, did not diminish the quality of our relationships.

Bonds of affection and history must thicken as we move toward more visible and sacramental communion. I think Archbishop Williams in meeting Pope Benedict this fall had it just right when he said some have expected too much too soon.<sup>11</sup> We need to give the Holy Spirit time to help us know one another better and deepen the bonds of communion and affection now in preparation for the sacramental bonds for which we pray in the future.

4) To God we can be grateful that some of the most polarizing issues in our society have begun to be discussed between our churches in the context of a most uncivil environment. We can be particularly grateful for those local situations which have initiated dialogue on contentious ethical issues. The dialogues of the 1970s on abortion<sup>12</sup> and euthanasia<sup>13</sup> are still resources for local communities divided by these issues...they remain available on the Catholic bishops' website and in the volumes of US documents. We can be grateful for local councils, like New Mexico<sup>14</sup> and Massachusetts,<sup>15</sup> which have developed pioneering protocols to bring churches with different positions on contentious issues into serious dialogue grounded in our common Christian faith.

We can also be grateful for the initial pioneering work of Faith and Order US on homosexuality<sup>16</sup> and the Vatican World Council reflections on dialogue on sensitive ethical issues.<sup>17</sup> It is my contention, differing from John Thomas General Minister of the United Church of Christ, that sexuality is or can be a church dividing issue. It is also my conviction that we are about at the stage of talking about the religion and science on this issue, where we were in the 1920s in talking about evolution and the bible. Faith and Order is considering an anthropology or moral discernment study, but I am not convinced that we have formulated the questions with sufficient clarity for fruitful worldwide theological dialogue.

Homosexuality is particularly difficult for at least three reasons, I would suggest:

a) None of our churches have come up with a confessional position on homosexuality that substantively attempts to give an alternative to the traditional position on marriage, a position that divided the churches since the Reformation as to sacramentality and divorce.

b) In dialogues on the subject the ecumenists sent by their churches are more often advocates than ecumenically informed representatives of the tradition. Fortunately, in the 1983 National Council of Churches' study of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, seasoned ecumenists like the late John Long, SJ and Robert Welsh were able to remind the churches of their commitments and understandings out of the 1951 basis of the World Council of Churches.<sup>18</sup>

We can be grateful that the Porto Alegre WCC statement of last year "Called to Be One Church," which is also a rich resource for our local study and feedback, recalls to us:

In God's grace, baptism manifests the reality that *we belong to one another*, even though some churches are not yet able to recognise others as Church in the full

sense of the word. We recall the words of the Toronto Statement, in which the member churches of the WCC affirm that “the membership of the church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own church body. They seek, therefore, to enter into living contact with those outside their own ranks who confess the Lordship of Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

When my nonsacramental ecumenist friends ask if Catholics will call off dialogue with churches that differ with us on human sexuality or different public policy approaches on the life issues, I try to remind them that the ecumenical movement is about our common baptism, or as I say to my students “It is Christ! Stupid!” not the culture wars.

c) Finally homosexuality is difficult to discuss because it is so internally divisive among our people. We stand in prayer and solidarity with our partner churches when there is polarization, but we dare not take sides on unresolved issues, even when one position or another corresponds with the understanding of the faith in our own church.

I was happy to see Archbishop Brunett remind the Catholic bishops, after the Robinson ordination that i) our dialogue is with the Anglican Communion and not one of its particular members, and ii) that the common 1994 text<sup>19</sup> on marriage needs to be tested in all of the churches of the Anglican communion, and in the Catholic community. Likewise, (now) Cardinal Levada stressed the importance of intensifying rather than backing away from dialogue with local Episcopal counterparts, especially in the light of our different understandings and agreements articulated in *Gift of Authority*.<sup>20</sup>

5) To God we can be grateful for a host of ecumenical texts which can become rich resources for local dialogue and evaluation, and personal spiritual nurture. The Lutheran Catholic, Reformed Catholic and Methodist Catholic new international texts,<sup>21</sup> the Lutheran Methodist full communion proposal,<sup>22</sup> are all fresh examples and resources.

My students have found Anglican Catholic *Mary Grace and Hope in Christ*<sup>23</sup> and Mennonite Lutheran *Right Remembering*<sup>24</sup> particularly helpful in parish programming; the former by a Pentecostal student for women’s day in her church, the latter in a rural United Methodist congregation with their local Mennonite neighbor.

Among the texts most interesting for the local context would be two offerings by the churches of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC): *Mutual Recognition and Reconciliation of Ministries* and *Call to Christian Commitment and Action to Combat Racism*.<sup>25</sup> The Ministries text may not be the formula which God has called the nine churches to affirm at this moment in history. However, it proposes a discussion which includes an incredible diversity of churches in dialogue on this central issue of urgency in each of our congregations and judicatories.

To me it was delightful to see one of my students develop a 3 hour power-point on this text, in the context of the Lutheran Episcopal *Called to Common Mission*<sup>26</sup>, and the ministry section of BEM. I hope it serves her well as she moves on to Sewanee, but I know it has been a challenge in a class with 5 of the CUIC churches represented.

However, even more heartening to me as a southerner, is my students’ witness to how far God has blessed the ecumenical movement in CUIC and other contexts, with the project on racism. Actually on the day allotted for student reports on ecumenical racial reconciliation, we didn’t get to the CUIC *Call to Christian Commitment and Action to Combat Racism* because the reports on the Cumberland Presbyterian/Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America (post civil war amicable parting, like the Christian [then Colored] Methodist Episcopal/Methodist Episcopal Church, South separation) failed

union attempts; the pan-Methodist repentance and reconciliation initiatives; and the 1994 “Memphis Miracle,”<sup>27</sup> (which is the white and black formation of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Fellowship of North America), so energetically presented by a Church of God in Christ student; filled up the whole 3 hour class. It was most remarkable that there was no African American blaming syndrome, nor White denial...all common ecumenical work on serving the unity to which we are called in Christ, and finding strategic ways of calling congregations to conversion and action.

To God we can be grateful for many signs of reconciliation which point us to that ultimate goal of union together in his Son, and to the penultimate goals of full communion by stages as we move forward in human history.

### **Some Challenges**

I am going to limit my challenges to four in addition to the challenges inherent in all of the gifts God has so richly lavished upon us since the beginning of the ecumenical movement. The first is the ecumenical formation imperative, second the global picture; third the continuing call to conversion; and finally the Hispanic presence.

#### *A) The Ecumenical Formation Imperative*

We are challenged by both an ecumenical overload of agreements to integrate into the mainstream of Christian piety and consciousness; and a looming religious illiteracy in our churches. I would like to illustrate our opportunities and responsibilities with three stories.

1) When I was in Singapore in 2004, visiting a Methodist colleague, she shared her enthusiasm for the United Methodist text of that year *This Holy Mystery*<sup>28</sup> on the Eucharist, used in an annual conference study process there. In my Memphis Seminary class two years later 2006, United Methodist students were elated with the text, and frustrated with their District Superintendents for not having exposed them to it before this class. Our magisterial and ecumenical texts serve for very little if they do not become source for the spiritual and pastoral formation of our people, especially our leaders.

This text is particularly important as a demonstration of how a return to the sources of the Tradition – patristic and biblical; and the tradition – Charles Wesley’s hymnody; can be coupled with reception of ecumenical formulations to solidify the gains, for example in BEM and Methodist bilaterals, in a statement which serves as close to authoritative teaching as is appropriate in Methodist ecclesiology.

Furthermore, it is a great help to those of us who want to assure non-Methodists that there are theological warrants for certain ecclesial practices, even when not our own and quite unfamiliar. Of course, as an ecumenist and as a Catholic, I will want to debate and possibly come to a corrective consensus on some of the points of this text, but I can only be grateful that we have it, as I try to help United Methodist students witness to their tradition at its best, and to help the rest of us look in on these debates.

2) The new Archbishop of Washington, one of our gracious hosts this week, puts his finger on one of our common ecumenical challenges, the growing religious illiteracy among our people, even those committed to the piety and heritage of our churches as they think they understand it:

For nearly two decades we have witnessed an increasing diminishment of the church in two clearly verifiable areas: participation in the sacramental life of the church and catechetical preparation sufficient to grasp the central mysteries of the Christian faith.

One of the most significant differences between the 1960s, '70s and '80s, and the '90s and this decade is found in the attitude of so many young people. They often do not contest what the church teaches. They simply do not know it.

The context of our proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ is caught up in what is increasingly described as "the American mind-set." That way of looking at life is arguably more individual than communal, more competitive than cooperative and generally more self-focused than other-directed. It finds expression in the difficulty of many of our faithful to feel comfortable with the church that identifies itself as a community that pre-exists the decision of individual members to bring it into being, a church that claims to bind conscience and a church that expects more from Sunday worship than a warm sense of being comfortable.

Concomitantly, we also witness to some extent the disintegration of the community and social structures that once supported religious faith and encouraged family life. The heavy emphasis on the individual and his or her rights has greatly eroded the concept of the common good and its ability to call people to something beyond themselves. This impacts strongly on our capacity to bring people to accept revealed teaching that cannot be changed by democratic process and to follow an absolute moral imperative that is not the result of prior popular approbation.<sup>29</sup>

Of course, religious illiteracy and individualism include ecumenical illiteracy. This situation challenges us to work together, and not to retreat from our commitments to one another in sectarian isolation. Such withdrawal gives the lie to our faith in our corporate Christian identity, the formal commitments to one another in our doctrine of the Church, and our understanding of the bonds of communion that bind us together.

3) For Catholics we have the urgency given to us, in these decades of the ecumenical movement, by the late Pope John Paul II when he says:

80. While dialogue continues on new subjects or develops at deeper levels, a new task lies before us: that of receiving the results already achieved. These cannot remain the statements of bilateral commissions but must become a common heritage. For this to come about and for the bonds of communion to be thus strengthened, a serious examination needs to be made, which, by different ways and means and at various levels of responsibility, must involve the whole People of God. We are in fact dealing with issues which frequently are matters of faith, and these require universal consent, extending from the Bishops to the lay faithful, all of whom have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is the same Spirit who assists the Magisterium and awakens the *sensus fidei*.

Consequently, for the outcome of dialogue to be received, there is needed a broad and precise critical process which analyzes the results and rigorously tests their consistency with the Tradition of faith received from the Apostles and lived out in the community of believers gathered around the Bishop, their legitimate Pastor.

81. This process, which must be carried forward with prudence and in a spirit of faith, will be assisted by the Holy Spirit. If it is to be successful, its results must be made known in appropriate ways by competent persons. Significant in this regard is the contribution which theologians and faculties of theology are called to

make by exercising their charism in the Church. It is also clear that ecumenical commissions have very specific responsibilities and tasks in this regard. The whole process is followed and encouraged by the Bishops and the Holy See. The Church's teaching authority is responsible for expressing a definitive judgment.

In all this, it will be of great help methodologically to keep carefully in mind the distinction between the deposit of faith and the formulation in which it is expressed, as Pope John XXIII recommended in his opening address at the Second Vatican Council.<sup>30</sup>

These two paragraphs will provide those of who are catechists by vocation with a life time – or five – of opportunity for filling our vocation is service to the church, the whole people of God.

So far, for our Catholic constituency we have provided many resources, among them a short volume for parish volunteer catechists,<sup>31</sup> a guide for administrators of Catholic schools and parish religion programs,<sup>32</sup> and an ecumenical guide to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>33</sup> My hope would be to see ecumenical guides to *Luther's Small Catechism* and the dozen other program pieces used for parish religious education and new-member classes in all of our churches.

This latter volume, which we had hope to call *Why it Matters?* has not a word from the *Catechism*, but is a selection of texts from the ecumenical results, material which the catechist and the those writing teachers guides and texts for them, should know to present the Catholic faith properly in its ecumenical context, making the results, as Pope John Paul admonishes us, a “common heritage.”

3) Having started with some Methodists stories of disconnection let me witness that Catholics also have such challenges. In religious education, there are three options as to where to place the ecumenical instruction in the process of handing on the faith.

a) The Vatican's *Ecumenical Dimension of the Formation of Pastoral Workers*<sup>34</sup> suggests an ecumenical course early in formation, with integration in all course, and electives later. Theologically, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* treats ecumenism with the nature of the Church, ecclesiology, because of its roots in our common baptism and the real, if imperfect, communion we confess as integral to Catholic understanding of the relationship between churches.<sup>35</sup>

b) A second option would be to follow Pope John Paul's emphasis on ecumenism as integral to the new evangelization, because of the Gospel imperative to unity and the need for a common ecumenical witness, especially in the reevangelizing of secularized Europe. (Pope John Paul, Germany, June, 1996)<sup>36</sup> There the decline in belief and the Enlightenment anti-religious bias grew from disillusionment with Christian tensions, and Church endorsed violence.<sup>37</sup>

c) However, there is a third perspective in Catholic catechesis which places ecumenism as an appendix, part of the outside context of catechesis, along with interfaith dialogue.<sup>38</sup> This position, of course, would not be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, but often becomes the dominant mood of Catholic and other Christian educators as they face the rising religious illiteracy of our culture.

We have a common task of translating our ecumenical achievements into educable components, teachable content and methodology. Educational methodology is different than the formats of the theological dialogues even when the content is the same.

We as ecumenical officers on the local level are called to be knowledgeable and up to date on the ecumenical documents, in order to serve our busy leadership and decision makers, and the active educators who hand on the faith to our people. Fortunately we have a rich harvest to draw from, as Christ leads us forward in this pilgrimage of hope and promise.

#### B) *Global context*

As a Catholic I sometimes get discouraged by local dioceses or even our Catholic Church in the United States. However, when I do I look at the gradual process of the reception of other councils like Nicea (325) and Chalcedon (451), or Trent (1545 – 1563) I take heart – and patience. This summer in cycling around Provence, I ran into a diocese where the bishop was still fighting to get the Tridentine Mass “innovations” accepted as late as 1880. As you probably know France never promulgated the reform decrees of Trent until the Napoleonic concordat (treaty) in 1801, some 238 years after the end of the Council...history teaches us patience.

Most of my text books anachronistically attribute papal centralization to Trent, when a real case can be made for the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, ironically, signing the death knell to Gallicanism, conciliarism, and other countervailing understandings of the Church.

When US Catholicism is slow, or partners seem uninterested, I only have to recall that US Catholics are only 6% world wide and haven't half the growth rate of Christianity in Africa or Latin America.

In editing *Growth in Agreement III*, I have found three new types of documents. They are global harvests of the diversity so rich that four of the texts now are surveys of Lutheran/Anglican, Anglican/Baptist, and Reformed/Lutheran developments around the globe, something hardly imaginable or needed a few decades ago.<sup>39</sup> As some Reformation traditions break out of their nationalist identities, so also does the specificity of their local ecumenical development become more diverse, interesting and instructive.

They say that Anglican Catholic relations in the US are somewhat strained, but when I see all of the bishops, Anglican and Catholic, meeting together in England, or watch the progress of Anglican Catholic dialogue in Papua New Guinea,<sup>40</sup> or run into Rowan Williams and Cormac Murphy-O'Connor of Canterbury and Westminster and other church leaders in common witness in Bethlehem<sup>41</sup> as I did a couple of weeks ago; it is clear that the Gospel of unity is surging forward whatever the local ebbs we might experience in our own particular backwater...!

#### C) *Conversion*

Continual conversion is needed among our people. As I work on a book on the Declaration on Religious Liberty I am edified by: a) the worldwide revolution of Catholic approaches to the subject, with 115 new concordats (treaties) with the Vatican and various states since 1965, b) the rich harvest of dialogues on proselytism, religious liberty and common witness, and finally c) the amazing engagement of ecumenical colleagues at the time of the Council, like the late United Methodist Albert Outler. Clearly there are segments of the Catholic Church that are still early on in reception of the ecumenical movement, like Latin America where pluralism, not to mention a personal catechetical appropriation of the faith beyond popular piety, or ecumenical outreach; are radical new aspects of their life, culture and Catholic identity.



We have worked diligently to build the bridges with our Evangelical, Holiness and Pentecostal fellow Christians. The conversion among many of the academic elements is nothing short of miraculous, and often at more cost to their Gospel ecumenical witness than for us Orthodox, Protestant or Catholic ecumenical leaders. We can be grateful to the Glenmary Home Missioners for their initiatives with the Southern Baptists over four decades. We are glad to see that the dialogue has picked up internationally even when the US Convention has pulled back since 2001. We can be grateful to the members of the Society for Pentecostal Studies,<sup>42</sup> Catholics and historic Protestants among them, who founded the Society over 30 years ago with an intentional ecumenical openness.

However, there is still conversion necessary for many of us to see that our Christian faith is a challenge, calling us to take initiatives where our political, cultural and theological proclivities would not lead us. Yes, conversion and constant looking again at Christ's demand of us on the ecumenical pilgrimage, is an ever recurring imperative under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

#### D) *The Hispanic Presence*

Finally, the Hispanic ecumenical challenge is a crucial one for the future of our hemisphere, and our small spec of humanity within it. With 70% of Hispanics claiming Roman Catholicism and of the remaining 70% being Pentecostal, or as José Míguez Bonino notes Pentecostalized members of our churches, the ecumenical agenda takes on a different contour, as you will note more fully in my two *Ecumenical Trends* articles.<sup>43</sup>

The Catholic Church needs to be particularly concerned about the ecumenical priority in the US Hispanic community; if it is not to see the 70% Catholic quickly drop to 40% or lower. We all need a strong emphasis on Hispanic catechesis, especially ecumenical catechesis, so folks can deal with the pluralism of our culture; catechesis that includes the 40 years of ecumenical progress; and for our Catholic catechesis one that prepares for the evangelism that is entailed in our US pluralistic context. Studies show 70% of confirmed Hispanic Catholic young people don't even know of the second Vatican Council, and many have a preconiliar understanding of the role of Catholicism in worldwide Christianity.

My Protestant students want to honor the Catholic heritage of the Hispanics that move into their communities. However, when called to the bedside of a sick child, they may call on the local parish or diocese; but if they get no response, or no ecumenical strategy is in place, they are going to comfort the family and minister to the child. When an aging *abuelita* asks for communion, the Methodist pastor may try to find a Catholic colleague, but finally will not leave her to die without communion.

We are working on a handbook for Hispanic ecumenism, based on the case studies and stories you have helped us accumulate. But resources are only as effective as the ecumenical will of the community to which they are offered. I am humbled by the commitment of students willing to travel to the Mexican border to see Catholics and Protestants working together to prevent deaths in the desert, to educate about the rights of all people, and to minister to those in their communities. However, in some places the rise of Hispanic communities leaves our ecumenical leadership with a dearth of common ecumenical strategies for ministry. We as local ecumenists are uniquely called to provide wisdom, resources and build bridges for our common future in ministry together.

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We are in a period of receptive ecumenism, as a recent conference at Durham University coined the moment.<sup>44</sup> Cardinal Kasper has outlined several questions to consider at this moment in our common pilgrimage:

What new measures and what concrete signs and gestures are necessary and desirable in order to build trust?

How can ecumenical formation occur in the congregations, in the seminaries, at the universities etc.?

How can we respond to the phenomenon of Pentecostalism?

How can we encourage and promote common witness in the social and charitable sphere, in ethical questions, in the cultural sphere, in working for peace and above all in the ecumenism of everyday life? To what extent are so-called strategic partnerships helpful?

I think these questions are challenges not only to Catholic leadership, but to all of us in the common pilgrimage to which Christ has called us.

I do not think we can do better than end on the note he set as he initiated the work of the Pontifical Council in Rome last year:

...we are aware that one cannot “construct” or organize the unity of the church. It is a gift of God’s spirit; [God] is the real protagonist of the ecumenical movement. [God] initiated it (*UR I*; 4); so we can confidently trust that he will continue [t]his work and carry it through to fulfillment. When, where and how this will occur is [God’s] concern and not ours. But we must do our part here and now.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For some of his later reflections see Alexander Schmemmann, Juliana Schmemmann (Translator), *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann, 1973-1983* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> WCC 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly, *Consensus Decision Making* <http://www.wcc-assembly.info/en/theme-issues/other-topics/consensus-decision-making.html>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.worldmethodistcouncil.org/files/world\\_methodist\\_council\\_and\\_the\\_jddj.pdf](http://www.worldmethodistcouncil.org/files/world_methodist_council_and_the_jddj.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Is the Reformation Over?* Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Mark Noll, Carolyn Nystrom, *Is The Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey Gros, “Building a Common Heritage: Teaching the Reformation in an Ecumenical Perspective,” *Ecumenical Trends*, May, 2006, 35:5, 11-15.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.christianchurchestogether.org/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/fullcommunion/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission.html>

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey Gros, "Episcopal - Roman Catholic Bishops Pilgrimage Witnesses Commitment and Realism," *Ecumenical Trends*, 24:1 (January, 1995), 1-14. "One in Mind and Heart: a Pilgrimage of Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops," *One in Christ*, 31:2 (1995), 171-184.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/releases/061123.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/seia/chui.shtml>

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- <sup>13</sup> [http://www.usccb.org/seia/umrc\\_holyliving\\_1989.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/seia/umrc_holyliving_1989.shtml)
- <sup>14</sup> <http://www.nmchurches.org/programs/faithorder.html>
- <sup>15</sup> [http://www.masscouncilofchurches.org/docs/doc\\_conflicts.htm](http://www.masscouncilofchurches.org/docs/doc_conflicts.htm)
- <sup>16</sup> “A Call to Responsible Ecumenical Debate on Controversial Issues: Abortion and Homosexuality,” Jeffrey Gros and Joseph Burgess, ed., *Building Unity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 453 – 457. Jeffrey Gros, “The Church, The Churches and the Metropolitan Church”, *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 36, No.1 (January 1984), 71-81; “Faith and Order Commission Report on the Application for Membership in the NCCC of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches,” Joseph Burgess, Jeffrey Gros, eds., *Growing Consensus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 614 – 628.
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- <sup>24</sup> <http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/ecumenicaldialogue/mennonite/RightRemembering.pdf>
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<sup>39</sup> “Conversations around the World: Report of the International Conversations between the Anglican Communion and the Baptist World Alliance,” pp. 319 – 374, Lutheran Anglican “Growth in Communion,” 375 – 425, Lutheran Reformed “Called to Communion and Common Witness,” 449 – 476, for another global account of development see “Inspired by the Same Vision: Roman Catholic Participation in National and Regional Councils of Churches,” 540 – 570 in Thomas Best, Lorelei Fuchs, Jeffrey Gros, eds., *Growth in Agreement III* (Geneva/Grand Rapids: World Council of Churches/Eerdmans, 2007).

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