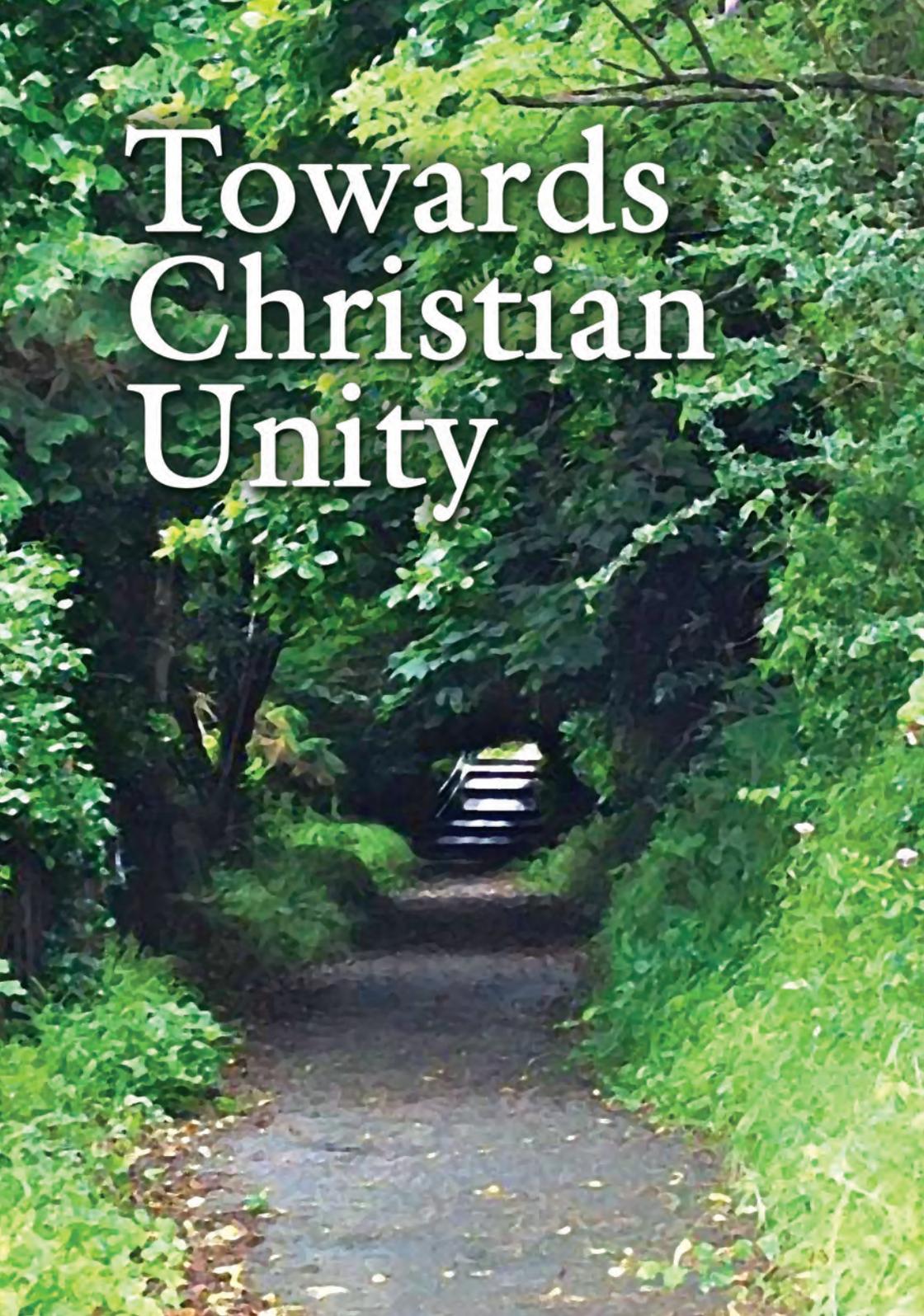


Towards Christian Unity



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A collection of quotations to stimulate discussion
among Christians on our common journey.

Compiled by the Archdiocese of Cardiff Commission for Christian Unity

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We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God's face.

Pope Francis, 2013, *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*

Foreword

The Second Vatican Council, which took place between 1962 and 1965, is one of the defining moments in the life of the Catholic Church. Amongst the many teaching documents which emerged from that Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (*The Restoration of Unity*) has had a profound and ongoing impact on the Catholic Church in its relations with other Christian Churches and Ecclesial Bodies. The prayer of Jesus 'That they may all be one' remains a challenge and commitment to all who follow Him. *Unitatis Redintegratio* charts the path by which this journey towards unity continues in our own day. That journey together is both a blessing and a grace.

I welcome this collection of quotations on the subject of the search for Christian Unity. It has been composed by the Commission for Christian Unity of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and marks the 50th anniversary of *Unitatis Redintegratio*. The booklet will be useful for personal prayer and reflection in addition to helping groups in discussing and praying together in their desire to fulfil the command of Jesus.

The publication of this booklet has been made possible through the generosity of the Association of Papal Knights, the Cardiff Circle of the Catenian Association, the Knights of St. Columba, Cardiff and a number of individuals. I thank Dr Harri Pritchard Jones most sincerely for his work in translating the quotations and enabling us to offer this as a bilingual booklet. I am happy to add my gratitude to that of all those who will use it in the years to come.

+George Stack
Archbishop of Cardiff
August 2014

Dear friends, we are all aware of the challenges, the blessings, the disappointments and the signs of hope which have marked our ecumenical journey... We entrust all of these to the Lord, confident in his providence and the power of his grace.

We know that the friendships we have forged, the dialogue which we have begun and the hope which guides us will provide strength and direction as we persevere on our common journey.

Pope Benedict XVI, 17.09.2010, Ecumenical Celebration, Westminster Abbey

With him the cornerstone
The living stones conjoin;
Christ and his church are one,
One body and one vine;
For us he uses all his powers,
And all he has, or is, are ours.

Charles Wesley

In Principle

To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the Church; to desire the Church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father's plan from all eternity. Such is the meaning of Christ's prayer: '*Ut unum sint*' (May they all be one).

Pope John Paul II, 1995, *Ut unum sint*: encyclical on the Catholic Church's commitment to ecumenism, Catholic Truth Society (CTS)

Christ founded his Church as one and only one... 'We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church'. There is only one Church of Christ, therefore. It is entered by baptism which is 'the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are re-born'.

We know, however, that it is not only enough to be united spiritually in a common baptism. The ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is to re-establish full visible unity among all the baptised.

Chiara Lubich, 2007, *Essential Writings*, ed. Michel Vandeleene, New City Press

Christian unity is not just one more thing among many to busy ourselves with. It is a family affair. By our faith in Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit and our baptism, we are already one family together – God's family. We are in varying degrees of unity (or 'communion') with each other, and there remain serious differences, although we are already brothers and sisters in the same family – the Body of Christ – and that makes 'ecumenism' something we should be passionate about! There will be frustrations and obstacles, as in any family, and it may take a long time, but we rely on the Holy Spirit's gifts of endurance, hope and trust...

Ecumenism is God's work of love among us, but he chooses us to be his co-workers, servants of reconciliation and communion.

***Together in Christ*, 2009, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales**

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; it must be like the fruit borne by a healthy and flourishing tree which grows to its full stature.

Pope John Paul II, 1995, *Ut Unum Sint*, CTS

We need to be reminded that the search for unity is our response to the Grace of God. All Christians are called to:

1. faith in the kind of Church that God wants.
2. the hope that Jesus' prayer, 'May they all be one', will be answered in all its fullness
3. charity, which is the Spirit's gift uniting all believers.

A study guide to The Search for Christian Unity, 2004, Catholic Province of Cardiff, Wales and Herefordshire

Working for the visible unity of all Christian churches is not an optional extra for 'chummy' Christians. Christian unity belongs to the very heart of the Gospel. Unity does not mean uniformity, nor does it mean that we should pretend that our differences do not exist. Working for unity means that we should concentrate our attention on that which unites us, rather than on that which divides, and we should co-operate with each other insofar as we can. If we all worked together for the good of our community, whatever its religious allegiance or lack of it, we would grow in unity because God is the God of compassion. And if we pray together, then the Spirit of Christ will draw us together.

Gerard W. Hughes SJ, 1998 *God of Compassion*: Hodder and Stoughton



How can this essential dimension of Christian discipleship be developed?

In Scripture

May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe that it was you who sent me.

John 17:21, Jerusalem Bible

If the ecumenical movement as a distinct and organised phenomenon is relatively recent, the idea of the unity of God's people, which this movement seeks to restore, is profoundly based in scripture. Such an objective was a constant concern of the Lord¹. It looks to the union of Christians in faith hope and love,² in mutual respect³ and solidarity,⁴ but also and above all an organic union in Christ, after the manner of vine and branches,⁵ head and members.⁶ This union should be perfect, in the likeness of the union of the Father and the Son.⁷ Scripture provides its theological foundation,⁸ the first apostolic community its concrete living model.⁹

Pontifical Biblical Commission 1995,
***The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, edited J . L . Holden, SCM**

If Christians read the Word of God, and do so together, it will strengthen this bond of unity and enable them to be more open to the unifying action of God. Everything should be done to encourage this joint Bible study.

***The Search for Christian Unity*, 2002, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales**

¹John 10,16; 17,11.20-23

²Ephesians 4,2-5

³Philippians 2,1-5

⁴1 Corinthians 12,14-27; Romans 12,4-5

⁵John 15,4-5

⁶Ephesians 1,2-23; 4,12-16

⁷John 17,11.22

⁸Ephesians 4,4-6; Galatians 3,27-28

⁹Acts 2,44; 4,32

The Gospel is to be shared and preached. The common life of Christ is enriched also in joint mission and evangelism. When that mission and evangelism are undertaken by Christians from more than one local church, they are the more powerful, because what is being commended is not membership of a local church, an added person in the congregation, but the good news of Jesus Christ.

Reverend Bill Snelson 2006, *Enriching Communion, Churches Together in England*

Proclaiming the word, celebrating the sacraments and living in charity are [the Church's] fundamental activities as the body of Christ.

Both Catholics and Methodists believe that when the scriptures are faithfully proclaimed and preached, it is Christ himself who speaks, as he expounded the scriptures to the disciples on the road to Emmaus before breaking bread with them; that when the sacraments are celebrated it is Christ himself who is the minister; and that the love that Christians practise is 'the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'(Romans 8:39).

Encountering Christ the Saviour, 2011, Report of the International Commission of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council

Together Christians can:

read and meditate upon particular books of sacred Scripture in small groups, as part of a shared spiritual journey...

reflect upon the New Testament, so as to deepen their understanding of the Lord's reconciling ministry and to make it their own.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, 2007, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism, New City Press*

Veneration of the scriptures is a fundamental bond of unity between Christians, one that holds firm even when the Churches and Communities to which they belong are not in full communion with each other.

Everything that can be done to make members of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities read the Word of God, and to do that together when possible, reinforces this bond of unity that already unites them, helps them to be open to the unifying action of God and strengthens the common witness to the saving Word of God which they give to the world.

Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism,
1993, CTS



*How does the sharing of scripture
contribute to closer relationships
among the Church communities?*

In Prayer

May the Risen Lord strengthen our efforts to mend the ruptures of the past and to meet the challenges of the present with hope in the future which, in his providence, he holds out to us and to our world. Amen

Pope Benedict XVI, 17.09.2010, Ecumenical Celebration, Westminster Abbey

Prayer should always concern itself with the longing for unity and, as such is one of the basic forms of our love for Christ and for the Father who is rich in mercy. In this journey which we are undertaking with other Christians ... prayer must occupy the first place.

Pope John Paul II, 1995, *Ut Unum Sint*, CTS

Because we hope in the bountiful grace of God, we are encouraged to persevere and to face the difficulties of growing together. We give glory to God, 'whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine'. Ephesians 3:20.

***Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, 2007, SPCK**

Prayer enables us to reach deeper levels of ourselves where we begin to discover that at-one-ness with God is also the source of at-one-ness within ourselves and with others. In prayer, and in listening to other people's prayer experiences, it becomes clear that our religious divisions are primarily cultural rather than theological. They are the result of specific conditioning rather than the fruit of mature conviction. Our religious education can lead us to emphasise our differences rather than the reality that unites us: in this way we lose sight of the fact that our unity lies in God, not in specific forms and structures.

Gerard W. Hughes SJ, 2003, *God in all Things*, Hodder and Stoughton

Prayer is as essential to Christian unity as breath is to the body. Attempts to promote Christian unity which are not grounded in and inspired by prayer are like trying to bring a skeleton back to life by rearranging its bones.

Gerard W. Hughes SJ, 1998: *For God's Sake ... Unity*, ed. Maxwell Craig, Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow

Worship is clearly central in the life of every Christian and of every local church. Because of that it must have a key part to play in the pilgrimage to church unity. Corporate prayer has been an important part of the ecumenical movement over the past one hundred years.

Jenny Carpenter, 1998, *Together Locally*, CTE (Publications)

It has been well said that it is almost impossible to quarrel with someone we have just been sincerely praying with. Praying together changes our relationship, because all sincere prayer is God's gift, and brings God with it... Such prayer together is also 'a humble but faithful sharing in the prayer of Jesus, who promised that any prayer in his name would be heard by the Father'.

***Together in Christ*, 2009 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales**

We want to be in communion – one with another. We love each other. We may have divergences in vision, divergences in theological questions ...

Jesus is saying something about communion – how to be with each other with words that are not flowing from our woundedness, our darkness and our need for power and superiority, but from a desire for oneness. And oneness is not exclusion of difference. Oneness is not fusion. Saint Paul says we are all different. It is the recognition of difference. But that doesn't mean to say that we crush difference.

Jean Vanier, 2006, quoted by Reverend Bill Snelson, *Enriching Communion*, Churches Together in England



What is your experience of prayer with other Church communities?

In Practice

Together we can make a difference.

Parishes and local communities have a responsibility to work together in responding to the needs of the contemporary world, seeking to do everything together that is allowed by their faith...This ecumenical cooperation is of vital importance not only for greater effectiveness, but also for the sake of common witness and spiritual ecumenism. It gives tangible expression to the bond that already unites them, and to their shared discipleship in following Christ the Servant. (Mark 10:45; Phill 2: 5-8).

Cardinal Walter Kasper, 2007, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*, New City Press

The unity we seek is the unity of life lived together in love and in compassion. Christians who exercise compassion are thus more likely to experience a sense of unity with compassionate people of whatever belief or disbelief than with members of their own denomination who fail to live compassionately. God is not a set of doctrines, nor a form of worship, but the source of all life and all love. The teachings of our churches, our forms of worship and our laws are important, but they are means to an end, not ends in themselves. They are means to enable us to allow God to be the God of love and compassion to us, and through us, both collectively and individually.

Gerard W. Hughes SJ, 2003, *God in all Things*, Hodder and Stoughton

Discerning a common faith challenges our churches to recognise that elements of sanctification and truth exist in each other's ecclesial lives, and to develop those channels and practical expressions of co-operation by which a common life and mission may be generated and sustained.

***Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, 2007, SPCK**

True dialogue is established where there are not only words but also listening, and where listening leads to encounter, and encounter to relationship, and relationship to understanding, perceived as a deepening and transforming of our Christian being. Dialogue, therefore, does not only concern the field of knowledge and what we are able to do. Rather, it makes the believer, indeed, the Lord himself, speak in our midst.

**Pope Benedict XVI, 2007,
letter to the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, Sibiu**

We can all sit and eat together. We can all do something at our local level by getting neighbours ... to eat, pray and party with each other; to build slowly and over many years relationships of mutual trust and respect; to begin to cooperate together in action for justice and mercy; and to pray together for justice and mercy in our unjust and cruel world.

**Reverend Doctor Inderjit Bhogal, quoted by Reverend Bill Snelson, 2006,
*Enriching Communion, Churches Together in England***

If Christians could then be aware of each others' history, spirituality, traditions of faith and worship, their hurts and their glories they could thus grow closer to each other ... If Christians could imitate each other – not just go to each others' services, but embrace each others' spirituality and traditions for their own – the path to holiness in one church could be adopted and enhance the path to holiness in the others too.

**Bishop Christopher Chessun, 2009, *A talk on spiritual ecumenism,*
Churches Together in South London**



What opportunities present themselves for Church communities to work more closely together at local level and how does this express the journey we already share?

On our journey...

If we concentrate on the convictions we share, and if we keep in mind the principle of the hierarchy of truths, we will be able to progress decidedly towards common expressions of proclamation, service and witness.

The immense numbers of people who have not received the Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot leave us indifferent. Consequently, commitment to a unity which helps them to accept Jesus Christ can no longer be a matter of mere diplomacy or forced compliance, but rather an indispensable path to evangelisation ... How many important things unite us.

If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another. It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us

Through an exchange of gifts, the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness.

Pope Francis, 2013, *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*

