

ECUMENICAL TRENDS

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Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist: A Commentary

By Michael Reid Trice

In October 2015, 498 years after Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses, a new ecumenical document – *Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist* – is clearing ground for Lutheran and Catholic unity. The *Declaration* includes thirty-two statements of agreement that were unanimously affirmed by the ELCA Conference of Bishops and the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The *Declaration* is equal parts topographical assessment of the seismic shifts in the terrain of ecclesial life in the areas of Church, Ministry and Eucharist. It is also a powerful theological cartography through that terrain, with a view to mapping the past, present and future potential advancement of theological exchange in shared Lutheran-Catholic ecclesial life. It is a confluence document, which moves beyond an ecumenical convergence of doctrine as an aggregation of advancements focused on harvesting the fruits of this relationship. Instead, the *Declaration* is a confluence of patterns of theological advances over fifty years of ecclesiological labor that have taken place worldwide. And, the *Declaration* may just prove that Lutherans and Catholics are further along in core theological agreement than anyone imagined.

Each ecumenical advance draws from its historical past. This *Declaration* could only have been drafted at this historical moment in a post-Vatican II world. It draws mightily on the fifty years since Vatican II, where the Church witnessed the

first significant modern steps toward measurable healing between Lutherans and Catholics. The Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* noted the shared sanctity of being Church in the “real but imperfect” union between ecclesial bodies. Other advances would follow, including the Lutheran-Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999), which untangled the contemporary residue of sixteenth century theologies of justification. Later, additional ecumenical agreements outside of the Lutheran-Catholic lens, such as the efforts for restored relation between Lutherans and Mennonites, provided psycho-social impetus for Catholic and Lutheran leaders. A cathartic healing takes place in repenting the sins of one’s forebears, even if the voices and ears that speak and receive apology and forgiveness have become the sacred work of the current generation. The *Declaration* draws from this work in providing both theological clarity for tomorrow’s advances and hope for the future.

The *Declaration*, with this historical lens, is framed in the ecumenical imperatives of the 2013 document, *From Conflict to Communion*. This two-pronged frame is essential

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to bear in mind when one considers the strengths and weaknesses of the *Declaration*; it goes like this: First, the churches must each begin from a perspective of unity and not division; and, second, from this perspective on unity, the churches must be “continuously transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith.” In this manner, the *Declaration* delivers thirty-two statements of agreement and fifteen areas of continued work, which are both followed by an assessment of potential next steps. These steps involve the commendation of the entire document to the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Pontifical Council on Christian Unity at the Vatican.

Declarations are unique documents. They are intended to be read aloud in the public forum. This is a pastoral document in turn, in care of the soul, and is thus meant to be read aloud to the ecclesial community. This is precisely what ELCA bishops did at the urging of one of the Lutheran dialogue partners. In this, the image that comes to my mind is a first century Pauline epistle in Asia Minor. As a living letter in Asia Minor, epistles have declaratory pastoral power whenever they do two things well. First, they must affirm a covenantal lineage of historical relationships between the Church and God. And second, they must provide pastoral encouragement in the present with a prophetic intonation about preparing for a future that must break open to communicate the gospel anew.

In the first case, or the lineage of a real but imperfect and incomplete unity, the *Declaration* includes the following affirmations in the thirty-two points of agreement on Church, Eucharist and Ministry: a) The whole *Church* and its members are a gift from the triune God for the sake of the world; b) The whole *Ministry* of that Church takes place through baptism whereby all Christians are welcomed into the priesthood of Christ, and where lay and ordained members of the priesthood serve in complementary ministries; and, c) the *Eucharist*, as central to the ministry of the whole Church, is a sacrament that invites all Christians to participate, pointing the Church to the heraldry of Christ and the eventual gathering up of the full communion of saints at the end of time.

In the second case, or in terms of pastoral encouragement and breaking open the gospel, the *Declaration* identifies

specific tasks for implementing the thirty-two statements of agreement. Implementation would necessarily include core courses on ecumenism offered in seminaries, joint adult education in parishes and congregations, local and regional covenantal relationships, and manifold service in one another’s ecclesial lives. In my read, this implementation boils down to two foci – building or strengthening relationships, and getting over the hump of doctrinal ambivalence.

Something is unique about a declaratory document that so explicitly positions the Church in the liminal space between the past/present of incomplete unity, and yet anticipates being on the way to the future of the gospel. In both cases, the *Declaration* does not seek to be an exhaustive evaluation of all dialogues; neither does it aspire to be an obligatory mandate for the future. Rather, drawing once more on *From Conflict to Communion*, this *Declaration* is serious about Christian unity already being ours in Christ. It is from this *a priori* unity as a covenantal gift in Christ’s self-giving nature, that *a posteriori* forms of visible Christian unity can transform everyday Lutheran and Catholic lives.

Something is unique about a declaratory document that so explicitly positions the Church in the liminal space between the past/present of incomplete unity, and yet anticipates being on the way to the future of the gospel.

Visible Christian unity is always more than cooperation. Rather, it is rooted in this same covenantal self-giving love of Christ. In this way, the relationship of visible and daily unity requires a conversion of the heart for the neighbor, just as the unity of the Church in Christ is a gift of love for the sake of the whole world.

This *Declaration* intentionally invokes the language of visible Christian unity that is transformed through encour-

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Ecumenical Trends

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tering others. Transformation is an equally serious aspiration, once we shuck off the more recent jargon around this word. In truth, transformation only occurs in the human life when we encounter a new truth in others, which permanently liberates or converts the heart and mind. This is what it means to be indelibly changed, or transformed, to the world. Consider Pope Francis. He washes the feet of Muslim immigrants on Maundy Thursday, celebrates his birthday with the homeless and their dog, counsels a Lutheran woman on the sacrament of the Eucharist, tells reporters in a fuselage that his role is not to judge those in same sex relationships, and recently, while speaking at a vespers service in St. Paul's Basilica in Rome, Pope Francis asked "forgiveness for the un-gospel like behavior by Catholics toward Christians of other Churches." This is a leader modeling visible Christian unity, and great love, through a transformed life, and a heart converted to the needs of others.

If we take this *Declaration* seriously in its invocation to be "continuously transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith," then we can surmise that Christian unity *requires* a conversion that includes at least four markers.

First, visible Christian unity requires a conversion that encounters the humanity of other Christians in a manner that decenters traditionalist ecclesial comfort zones for the sake of the truth of the gospel. Second, visible unity requires a conversion that encourages all in the Church to become aware of how the gospel is breaking open in a way that provides hope to the present and the future. Third, visible unity requires a conversion that encourages all Christians to recognize that they are never born for themselves alone, but for one another and for the world; and finally, visible Christian unity as conversion requires the Church's rediscovery, through every form of mutual endeavor with attention to the mystery of God's dream for our humanity today. Any viable Christian unity today will implement a "mutual witness of faith" and must bear at least these four markers of conversion.

Every Declaration has at least one audience, and this document has at least three discernable audiences. The first audience is intended and the second two audiences appear, curiously, to be unintended.

In terms of the first audience, this *Declaration* is clearly a missive to Lutherans and Catholics, from local to interna-

tional communities, with attention to each of the seismic zones I noted from the start – Church, Eucharist and Ministry. For this audience, areas of continued and very practical concern in these three areas will include at least the following:

First, the *ministry* of the Church involves a distinction between baptized laity and ordained clergy, who do not differ essentially but rather by degree (Catholic) or are not intended to be in competition between the "common priesthood" and "ordained ministry" (Lutheran and Catholic). Both traditions face the shared challenge of the role of the baptized and ordained ministry. For instance, following Vatican II, the general perception of appreciation for competent lay leadership that existed in the early 1980s is diminishing. This is a source of significant existential concern for many Catholic women and men, now in their late 50s and beyond, who devoted their whole lives to a vocation in the Catholic Church. On the Lutheran side, the roles of lay leadership, after the merger in the ELCA in the late 1980s, requires greater clarity and revision. In the future, an emerging challenge for the Church will be assisting young women and men with an interest in non-traditional ministries that exclude ordination. They will return from mission and like-minded experiences, and will give preferential option to local, contextual need with a passion for leadership that will see a re-emergence of both lay conviction toward ministerial recognition *and* ever increasing fast-tracked processes leading to ordination in specialized ministries.

Second, if "differences between the traditions on this point are not church-dividing," then what takes place in response to women's ordination and ministry? The *Declaration* recognizes that Lutherans and Catholics lack foreseeable consensus on this matter. For the LWF, some Lutheran bodies ordain women whereas others do not, and yet this is not a communion-dividing issue within the LWF. The *Declaration* states: "These issues constitute a significant difference in theology and practice." What will be the future of this practice? The numbers of women attending seminary continues to grow in relation to men. The number of ELCA bishops who are women has grown significantly in the past ten years, and this trend will continue. The currently presiding ELCA bishop is one of these leaders. We can anticipate that the needs of the churches for competent leadership from the laity and women seeking ordination, some with M.Div.'s in hand, will become a future concern the power of which is underestimated today.

Third, a daily concern for the Church will come from the existential needs of Lutherans and Catholics who require immediate pastoral response. One prescient example of concern is intermarriage between Lutherans and Catholics, but not only this. When Pope Francis visited the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rome, he appeared to suggest that a

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This Declaration intentionally invokes the language of visible Christian unity that is transformed through encountering others.

Lutheran woman and a Catholic man should ask the Lord, in whom they both trusted to be present in the Sacrament, if they could share Holy Eucharist together within the sanctity of their marriage. This *Declaration* gives the theological underpinning needed for changing the rules so this can happen. Consider for a moment current concerns about intermarriage in light of sharing the Eucharist. Intermarriage rates are the highest they've ever been. If one looks at metropolitan Chicago, which is second only to Rome for the number of seminaries in its expanse, the populace is nearly forty percent Catholic. A much smaller percentage is mainline Protestant. In addition, over 40 percent of the city claims no religious affiliation. This last percentage is not a metropolitan irregularity. Intermarriage not between Catholics and Lutherans, but rather between Catholics, Lutherans and cooperative agnostics, is a more accurate depiction of the future. How will this specific reality color pastoral discourse on marital concerns regarding the Eucharist?

A second audience for the *Declaration* expands beyond Lutherans and Catholics to include all ecumenical partners. I teach at an intentionally ecumenical and interreligious seminary. In the spring I invited students from my core "Theology in an Ecumenical Context" course, to read this document. We read the major agreements aloud, in the round. Lutherans and Catholics were in the circle, but so too were United Methodists, United Church of Christ students, as well as Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Evangelicals, Unitarian Universalists, one Ethiopian Orthodox, and one Pentecostal. They understood the theological stakes of the *Declaration* and viewed themselves as proper recipients of this document too – insofar as they also participate in the life of the Church. They made insightful theological observations on the normative authority of scripture or like-minded contributions. A general oversight in the *Declaration* is the role that ecumenical partners can play as readers and participants in the further healing of a relationship that benefits from their inclusion. If students at an intentionally ecumenical seminary enthusiastically engage this *Declaration*, then such engagement should be encouraged nationally and worldwide. Not to do so misses a genuine opportunity for conversion to greater visible Christian unity for the sake of the world.

It is the world that brings me to the third potential audience. Today, statistics from the United Nations reveal the highest levels of displaced humanity since World War II. This translates first into the abuse of women and children and a commensurate rise in human trafficking. These statistics are predicted to climb much higher in the years to come. We, likewise, live in a global context of serious sectarian strife and ideological demagoguery.

The world today requires the kind of modeling – in method if not content – for how to recalibrate past and present relationships into a viable future, even though unity is imperfect and incomplete. We are wise to remember that

more Christians than we could count went to their graves over one doctrinal conflagration or another, when paired with ideological opportunists of their own historical moment. The Thirty Years war would stand as a glaring example of some of our worst. In today's conflicts, efforts like the *Declaration* are being drafted during an historical window when Lutherans and Catholics mark a half a millennium of both conflict and renewal. The LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Martin Junge voiced a similar sentiment when referencing the joint service between Lutherans and Catholics (which will include Pope Francis), as a service that launches a year of Reformation commemorations, and which is scheduled in Lund, Sweden, on October 31, 2016. "I'm carried by the profound conviction that by working towards reconciliation between Lutherans and Catholics, we are working towards justice, peace and reconciliation in a world torn apart by conflict and violence."¹ This *Declaration* has an audience in that world, with much greater potential amplification.

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The span of five hundred years provides time for a narrative of reconciliation, and it is a tale of the possible and the hopeful. A half millennium can teach a great deal about the trans-generational legacy of religious fracture. If we return to read the dialogues that informed this *Declaration* we would ascertain a clear hermeneutic for hope in visible unity – even in a world ruptured and hemorrhaging.

Sometimes our lessons should come from the past, if it is a gospel message to the future. A friend of mine, Dr. John Borelli suggests that we consider the first session of the Council of Trent in 1546, where Ignatius of Loyola gave his two priests a letter of instruction on proper behavior. Nearly five hundred years later, we see the vestiges of this same advice in the first Jesuit pontiff. The instruction is a recipe for a world that yearns for a better future: Learn the unsurpassed worth of conversation. Be slow of speech. Be considerate and kind especially when deciding on matters under discussion. Pay attention to the whole person. Understand the meaning, learnings and wishes of those who speak. Be free of prejudice. Argue from authority cautiously. Consider the reasons on both sides without showing attachment to your own opinion. Be modest when you are certain. Give conversation the time that it needs. Trust that there is goodness in others that transcends your own limited perceptions.

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The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: Context and Significance of Pope Francis' Encyclical, "On Care of Our Common Home" *Laudato Si'*

By Walter E. Grazer

I deeply appreciate your kind invitation to offer some reflections on Pope Francis' recent encyclical, *Laudato Si'* (*LS'*). I consider this encyclical to be a significant contribution to the global conversation about environmental responsibility. Pope Francis' seeks to foster a greater moral sensibility and response to the urgent cries of the earth and the cries of the poor.

I came of intellectual age during the Second Vatican Council. The Council provided great impetus to the efforts of the Catholic Church to promote closer ecumenical and interfaith relationships. The Council personally affected me deeply. I have never lost my "youthful fervor" for closer ecumenical and interfaith ties. I appreciate all that I learned over the past 25 years working closely with my Protestant, Evangelical and Jewish colleagues of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment.

At the beginning of his encyclical, Pope Francis says: "I would like to enter into dialogue with all people around the world about our common home," namely, the earth. (*LS'*#2). You who are assembled here today are the lifeline of dialogue among Christian churches in the United States. Dialogue is the substance of your mission and ministry. I hope our discussion today contributes to the furthering of ecumenical dialogue on the environment, a topic of extreme importance for the health of the planet, for the human family and for future generations.

At the outset of my comments, I want to acknowledge the remarkable leadership of the World Council of Churches, Patriarch Bartholomew and the Orthodox Church, the efforts of the mainline Protestant churches and Evangelical churches and the Jewish community, all of whom have done significant work and ministry to address environmental concerns.

My remarks today, however, focus on the contribution of the Catholic Church. In reflecting on *LS'*, I want to share three observations: first, the context and continuity between Pope Francis and his predecessors and *LS'* with the tradition of Catholic social teaching; second, the distinctiveness of Pope Francis' contribution to the developing thought about ecology within the Catholic tradition; and third, *LS'* prospects for impacting, influencing and meeting future environmental challenges.

Context and Continuity

Popes build on the work and efforts of their predecessors. Pope Francis is no exception. Pope Francis does not and is

not, as some charge, wandering into tangential areas of concern to the Church, or teaching on a subject matter in which he has no expertise, or that he is on an anti-capitalist vendetta. He is part of a continuum of Catholic teaching and Church leaders increasingly responding to the emerging and urgent concern for the protection of the world's environment.

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Last summer when *Laudato Si'* was released, it was greatly welcomed by many around the world. But the encyclical is not a belated entry of the Church into this topic. It is not a new topic for the Catholic Church. It also is not a new topic for the religious community more broadly. I think it is safe to say that prior efforts to address the environment by the Catholic Church, or even by the wider Christian community, have not received the broader attention they deserve. These efforts have largely flown under the radar of significant public attention. I hope this encyclical helps change that equation.

If we use the United Nations 1972 Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm and the recently completed Conference of the Parties (COP 21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris in December 2015 as historical environmental bookends, the Catholic Church, as have other churches and religious communities over this 40 plus year period, deepened its social teaching commentary and engagement on ecology, development and the environment.

The environment was not a defined topic of the Second Vatican Council. However, the Council's prophetic message in its 1965 document the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*) was a call to the

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Church to acknowledge that “the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the followers of Christ.”¹ The Council called for the Church to read the “signs of the times” to assess what is important to the global common good and to human flourishing at any given moment in history. Pope Francis, who is greatly influenced by the spirit, vision and teachings of Vatican II, no doubt thinks that the Church must address today’s ecological and environmental concerns, if it seeks to identify with the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of today’s world. He sees this effort as an expression of the Church’s compassion with a suffering earth and a suffering humanity.

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In addition to the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI also greatly influences Pope Francis thinking. Paul VI sounds the Catholic Church’s first significant environmental concern in his apostolic letter, *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971). With moral foresight, Pope Paul VI observed that: “Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace – pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity – but the human framework is no longer under man’s control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable.”² Paul VI saw the emerging environmental concern as “‘tragic consequence’ of unchecked human activity: due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation.” (*LS*’#2)

Francis’ immediate predecessors, Pope St. John Paul II and Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI, add substantial depth to the Church’s concern about the environment. Pope John Paul II moved the Catholic Church into a more highly visible and active stance regarding environmental concerns. He places a concern for the environment within a broader context – namely the search for global peace, the need to reduce the excessive consumerism of the industrialized nations, the advancement of science and its misuse, and the responsibility of richer nations to come to the aid of poorer ones. While he

provides an overall moral framework to address these issues and folds into the notion of the common good a concern for the integrity of nature and other creatures in his encyclical, *On Social Concern*,³ it was in his 1990 World Day of Peace Message, *Peace With God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation*, that he issues the first extensive treatment of a concern for the environment by the Church emphasizing the moral nature of the issue of the environment. He puts the dignity of the human person at the center of ecological thinking, calling for a right to a safe environment as a human right that should be included in the International Charter of Human Rights.⁴ Pope John Paul II is prescient when he speaks of global warming and the effects of climate change even before the terms entered into common public use.⁵

Pope John Paul II also begins to more actively involve the Church in public witness. While the Holy See had previously engaged with UN and international meetings concerning the environment, the Church’s first major intervention was at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June, 1992 – also better known as the Rio Conference. At this conference the UN adopted the Framework Convention of Climate Change. The Holy See’s delegation highlighted principles to guide decisions based on the integrity of creation and the moral responsibility of wealthier nations to exercise responsible environmental stewardship and address the environment and development needs of poorer countries.⁶

Pertinent to our gathering here today, Pope John Paul II in 2002 co-signed with the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I the *Common Declaration on Environmental Ethics*, known as the Venice Declaration. This document represents an extremely important development in ecumenical dialogue about the environment in establishing a “core set of principles that could serve as the basis for international dialogue and, perhaps even consensus.”⁷

Pope Francis’ immediate predecessor, Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI, was dubbed the “Green Pope.” He further develops Catholic thinking theologically integrating the linkage among “natural ecology, human ecology and social ecology.” He emphasizes the link between the environment and development, placing energy policy in a more central place of moral and policy concern. He asks a series of tough questions that challenge our collective conscience: “what kind of development or non-development will be imposed on them (poorer nations) by the scarcity of energy supplies?⁸ “Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, ...the pollution of rivers ...the loss of biodiversity ...can we remain passive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources.”⁹ His vision of a more inclusive world of shared resources and call for solidarity becomes for

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Benedict “an opportunity for discernment and new strategic planning.”¹⁰ In the face of these challenges, Pope Benedict reminds us that the “Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere.” (WDP 2010 #51)

Perhaps, one of Pope Benedict’s greatest contributions, and the reason for his appellation as the “Green Pope,” is his recognition that rhetoric alone only goes so far. In 2007, the Holy See became the first carbon neutral country; he supported a reforestation project in Hungary; he replaced the tile roof on the Paul VI auditorium with 2400 solar panels that converts into 300,000 kilowatt hours of power per year. The goal is to supply 20% of the Vatican’s power needs by renewables by 2020. This witness was a major new step for the Catholic Church at the highest level of authority and witness.

Perhaps, one of Pope Benedict’s greatest contributions, and the reason for his appellation as the “Green Pope,” is his recognition that rhetoric alone only goes so far.

Contribution – New Frontiers

If the themes that Pope Francis addresses in *LS*’ resonate and build upon his predecessors – namely that nature has its own integrity not subject to arbitrary human use and defilement; that addressing the plight of the poor and caring for creation go hand in hand; that tackling climate change requires a new development model that calls for a less consumerist way of living – then what is new in Pope Francis’ encyclical? What is the buzz all about?

I believe that Pope Francis significantly advances the concern for the environment into new frontiers of thinking and action. He places this concern directly within the center of Catholic social teaching. In my judgment and experience, I think this encyclical will be a seminal one.

Why? Let me offer what I think are some *key innovative* aspects of *LS*’, but by no means exhaustive ones, that can help energize our concern for the environment.

First, the encyclical is significant because of Pope Francis himself. In so many ways, Pope Francis is the message. He garners worldwide attention, interest, approbation and criticism. The lead up to the release of *LS*’ in June 2015 engendered great interest because of Francis himself. This is a man who seeks to live the Gospel in a visible and unmistakable way. He embraces the refugees and migrants who washed up on the shores of Lampedusa and Lesbos; he shares meals with the homeless; he embraces and encourages prisoners; he

I believe that Pope Francis significantly advances the concern for the environment into new frontiers of thinking and action.

washed the feet of a young Muslim woman on Holy Thursday; he lives modestly. In street parlance, he walks the talk.

The power of his witness is also conveyed through the use of language that is direct and easy to understand. No complicated images.

- The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. #21
- Who turned the wonder world of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of color and life. #4
- We are not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature. #43
- Whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which has become the only rule. #56
- God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil as a physical ailment and the extinction of species as a painful disfigurement. #89

You get the point. The encyclical is full of pithy language that stirs our imaginations and consciences. This type of language is new for Catholic Church documents and teaching. And, Francis himself is a new phenomenon.

Second, Pope Francis elevates the topic of the environment to a very high theological and moral concern. And, he has done this at an opportune historic moment of global concern about ecology and the state of the environment. Timing is everything. For the first time in the life of the Catholic Church, this topic has received this level of authoritative attention – namely an encyclical letter. His message is a sign of hope and many, both Catholic and non-Catholic, have responded with great enthusiasm. While some Catholics are not happy with either Pope Francis’ choice of this topic for his first major encyclical and what he has to say about it, the

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encyclical resonates across religious, secular and political communities.

Third, Pope Francis seeks an integral ecology capable of promoting the common good and flourishing of all life – human and other creatures. In my judgment, Pope Francis goes further than his predecessors by using the term “integral ecology” – a notion that is even more inclusive than the notion of integral development first proposed by Pope Paul VI in 1971 in *Populorum Progressio*. (#14-21)

Pope Francis reminds us that, “we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God’s eyes.” (LS’ #69) The entire tone of his encyclical calls for a deep respect for other creatures who are “not subordinated to the good of human beings, as if they have no worth in themselves and can be treated as we wish.” (LS’ #70). Francis’ tenderness and love for creation and other creatures is a hallmark of his message.

He is also saying that we can no longer achieve integral human development without a simultaneous inclusion of a concern for the environment in which we live and that sustains us. He says: “we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.” (LS’ #139) This is truly an expression of his vision for global solidarity in the spirit of his namesake St. Francis who so genuinely loved the poor and other creatures.

While Pope John Paul II first raised a concern about climate change in his 1990 World Day of Peace Message, Pope Francis elevates climate change to a high level of moral concern. He accepts the science of climate change unequivocally. This is without precedent. No ifs, ands or buts. He understands that addressing this issue is a matter of *intergenerational solidarity*, if we are to achieve the necessary sustainable development to protect the planet. This “...is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice.” (LS’ #159-160) He attributes this lack of solidarity to a “...postmodern world run(ing) the risk of rampant individualism, and {that} many of the problems of society are connected with today’s self-centered culture of instant gratification.” (LS’ #162)

Fourth, because of Pope Francis’ example of having lived among and caring directly for the poor, this encyclical

carries a clear moral message about global inequality and how the plight of those mired in poverty is intimately connected with the degradation of the earth. He sees a direct link between these situations. He believes that we cannot divorce the human social condition from a deteriorating environment, particularly as it affects the poor. Those living in poverty are very dependent on the earth in an intimate way. For Francis, their exclusion from the economy and political power is a scandal as they are often considered “collateral damage” (#48) of a global economy. He sees this attitude reflected even in “green rhetoric” and says that a “true ecological approach...must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*” (48 – Italics in original). His message of love and justice in this encyclical is one of his strongest recurring messages. The plight of the poor is now no longer separable from the responsibility to care for our common home – the earth. We will not solve poverty without attending to the earth and we will not solve environmental problems without addressing poverty.

He believes that we cannot divorce the human social condition from a deteriorating environment, particularly as it affects the poor.

Fifth, Francis not only follows on his predecessors’ ecumenical hopes but he integrates an ecumenical and interfaith approach in a novel manner. While echoing his predecessors’ desires and appeals to “enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” #3, he acknowledges and celebrates “the reflections of numerous scientists, philosophers, theologians and civic groups, all of which have enriched the church’s thinking on these questions.” Further, he highlights the leadership and work “Outside the Catholic Church, {of} other churches and Christian communities and other religions as well...” #7 But what is really novel is Francis’ lifting up in a major encyclical for the first time ever the prophetic leadership of an ecumenical leader by acknowledging the great witness and contribution of Patriarch Bartholomew, highlighting the Patriarch’s contributions over several paragraphs of text. (#7-9). In a further interreligious gesture, he cites an Islamic writer. Both of these inclusions are novel in a major Church teaching document.

In the press conference releasing the encyclical, not only was there the expected Vatican official, in this case, Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace – the first drafter of the encyclical and a key proponent; but also Metropolitan John of Pergamon of the Greek Orthodox Church; Carolyn Woo, head of Catholic Relief

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Services; and Hans Schellnhuber of the Institute for Climate Impact in Potsdam, an atheist and leading international climate scientist. Publicly releasing the encyclical through these leaders, Pope Francis sought to visibly demonstrate his hope for a broad global dialogue and the viability of dialogue across alliances of religion and secular entities.¹¹

Sixth, *LS'* is a view from the ground up and not from the top down. Pope Francis seeks a Church more in touch with the sheep whose pastors listen to their people and in his words “have the smell of sheep.” A more collegial Church is a key reform goal of his papacy. He wants that style of governance to begin with him. Collegiality is on prominent display in *Laudato Si'*. *LS'* reflects the local expression of the church. Francis constantly and consistently cites environmental pastoral statements by local episcopal conferences with over twenty references, highlighting episcopal teaching and activities of the environmental work of the Church all around the globe. This is the first time a Pope has done this in an encyclical. Francis uses their wisdom and local experience to not only advance collegiality but to ground the encyclical in the life of people as they live and experience their environment. This helps the encyclical to resonate more with ordinary people.

Seventh, Pope Francis is deeply concerned about what he calls “the technocratic paradigm.” (*LS'* #106.) This is not a new Church concern. But, he is sharper and more critical in his concern that humanity through its technological prowess has become “confrontational” with nature itself. He is not anti-technology. He praises its development and its contribution to the advancement of society and human well-being. But, he is conscious of a deeper reality that – the technocratic paradigm “tends to dominate economic and political life. The economy accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit, without concern for its potential negative impact on human beings.” (*LS'* #109) He is promoting a balanced view that does not subject humans or nature to a utilitarian experiment elevating technology or the market to a singular salvific role.

Eighth, Pope Francis calls for a serious moral conversion. He decries rampant consumerism that impedes and threatens “a genuine sense of the common good, warning even of “social unrest” and that the “obsession with a consumerist life style, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction.” (*LS'* #204)

Pope Francis seeks a Church more in touch with the sheep whose pastors listen to their people and in his words “have the smell of sheep.”

This is very strong language. In response, he calls for very specific moral and ecological virtues and habits as part of an overall ecological conversion, spirituality and education.

His language is stark and direct. He supports boycott movements of certain products (*LS'* #147); he urges a rapid transition from our current reliance on fossil fuels to a renewable energy path; he implores us to cultivate sound personal ecological virtues like avoiding plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, cooking only what can be consumed, car-pooling. (*LS'* #211) All of these and other actions are aspects of an ecological conversion, whereby the “effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.” (*LS'* # 217)

Ninth, Pope Francis calls us above all else to dialogue. His vision of the Gospel is a call for the church to listen, live among, and be in touch with ordinary people, believers and unbelievers. He wants a church that is a “field hospital” tending to the wounds of humanity, particularly of the most marginal and those living in poverty. Inclusion and reconciliation are key pastoral themes of the church he wants. Key to this pastoral vision and approach is dialogue with other Christians, with other religions, and with all people of good will.

His vision of the Gospel is a call for the church to listen, live among, and be in touch with ordinary people, believers and unbelievers.

In *LS'*, Pope Francis frames his entire encyclical in a dialogical motif. From its opening paragraphs, he expresses his desire “to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.” (*LS'* #2) His recognition of the work in this area by other Christian churches, non-Christian religions, secularists and his special mention of the leadership of Patriarch Bartholomew is a call for the entire human family to engage. Pope Francis desires encounter with the world and all peoples. As my colleague, Fr. Drew Christiansen, S.J. has said: “For Pope Francis, encounter means meeting the whole person, especially as subject with his or her own desires, convictions and choices...” He goes on to say that “an attitude of encounter is essential to dialogue, and dialogue is integral to evangelization.”¹²

In *LS'* Pope Francis calls for specific dialogues around the concern for the environment and to grapple with global poverty. He urges direct dialogue among and between nations, within nations, calling for greater transparency and dialogue in decision-making, between politics and economics, between science and religion and especially among and

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between religions and religious believers. Regarding the later, he says, “The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor and building networks of respect and fraternity.” (LS’ #201)

While I think that there are other reasons for the uniqueness and seminal nature of this encyclical, time does not permit further commentary, but these nine highlights, I hope help demonstrate some of the unique contributions of Pope Francis and this particular encyclical.

In his opening papal inaugural homily, Pope Francis reminds us that St. Francis’ life models what it means by... “respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people,... especially children, the elderly, those in need...”¹³ In *LS’*, Pope Francis notes that St. Francis is both an iconic historical religious figure and the exemplar of hearing the “*cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*,” (#48). St. Francis, the poor man of Assisi, embodied and lived the two of key themes Pope Francis papacy thus far – addressing poverty and caring for God’s creation.

The title of Pope Francis’ encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home*, sums up his thinking. He wants us to become aware and develop the moral aptitude and virtues to become more caring about creation as a whole. He wants us to acknowledge that the earth is one and that we share it with every person, future generations, but also with all other creatures. He wants us to especially care for the poorest, the marginalized and those excluded among us. He wants us to see this earth as our home, not as an entity apart from us but a place that, as Genesis reminds us, is God’s garden and that is integral to the flourishing of all of life – human and non-human. As Pope Francis says “Saint Francis reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.” (LS’ #1)

Impact and Future Challenges

It is too early to assess the full impact of this encyclical. It is not even a year old. However, the timing of the release of this encyclical was publically and deliberately aimed at influencing three international meetings that directly affect sustainable development and the environment: the UN Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa July 2015); the UN General Assembly meeting on Sustainable Development Goals to Replace the Millennium Development Goals (New York, September 2015); and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (November/December Paris 2015). While we will have to await further research and commentary to fully assess the intended impact, Pope Francis certainly evoked a greater awareness and

He wants us to acknowledge that the earth is one and that we share it with every person, future generations, but also with all other creatures.

attention to the challenges that these conferences addressed, calling special attention to the moral dimensions of these global concerns. Anecdotal evidence suggests many leaders and ordinary citizens took note of the moral challenge associated with sustainable development and climate change seriously as the result of Pope Francis’ intervention.¹⁴ He certainly had an influence on elements of civic society in terms of inspiration¹⁵ and on religious communities gathered in Paris.

What about the future? The significant challenges Pope Francis ask us to accept – reordering the global economy to serve people rather than the other way around, seriously addressing global poverty through sustainable development, overcoming excessive consumerism, protecting other creatures and habitats, morally harnessing the economy and technology to serve the common good and protect the earth are challenges for everyone on the planet.

These environmental concerns directly challenge the faith community. Within Catholic circles, there is an increase in the number of conferences, studies and commentary on the encyclical and environmental concerns. I expect this to continue. This encyclical is wide ranging in its biblical, spiritual, theological, and policy implications providing ample material for reflection, dialogue and action.

The National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) is dedicated to improving and fostering ecumenical relationships. It is very much my hope that the (NWCU) can provide a forum for a deeper dialogue and exchange of theological and moral views on these important concerns.

There is already a solid foundation to build upon. The World Council of Churches (WCC) has long been at the forefront of the environmental challenge at least since 1975. The WCC has provided sustained prophetic leadership over these many years. The Ecumenical Patriarch has offered great vision, personal witness and leadership. He stands in a unique place of honor.

Other churches and religious communities (mainline Protestant churches, Evangelicals, Jewish organizations) are addressing environmental issues and have been for years, but often flying under the public’s radar screen. E.g., the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (members include the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,

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Headline: Catholic Priest Admits, “I love Jesus!”

By Frank Lesko

Every once in a while, I hear a talk that is so good that the best I can do is simply get out of the way and let the presenters speak directly to you, the readers.

Such was the case between these two gentlemen and friends at the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU), held this past April, 2016, in Louisville, KY. They shared reflections on how working for Christian unity (i.e. ecumenism) has changed them and has given them a new freedom.

Small edits were made for sentence clarity, and the reflection at the end is mine.

Fr. Don Rooney is a Catholic priest and Pastor of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church in Fredericksburg, MD. He also just “retired” after six years as President of CADEIO, which is the Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Officers.

Rev. John H. Armstrong is an Evangelical minister, and has been a pastor, author and Wheaton College professor. He also is founder of the Act3 Network, which strives to promote missional-ecumenism.

Without further ado...

Fr. Don Rooney (at the National Workshop on Christian Unity 2016, with snippets added from his talk in 2015) *I want to give a witness, because my relationship with Evangelicals has completely changed my particular ministry as a Catholic pastor. It was something very simple that happened the first time I went to an ecumenical conference. Someone sat across from me at one of our meetings and asked me point blank, “Do you mean to tell me, as a Catholic priest, that you love Jesus?”*

I remember my face just went red. I felt ashamed. Where have I failed that somebody wouldn’t know that?

I finally collected myself and said, “Yes, I do love Jesus. Absolutely. That’s why I am a priest – it is not for the pay!” [Laughter ensues from the crowd.]

So that weekend, I went back to my home parish. There are 3-4 times a year where I preach at all the Masses. One of them is called the Parish Life weekend. We have 10 Masses every weekend, as we have a large congregation but a small building.

So to give this homily, I decided I was going to take advantage of this experience. I got up, and I said, “In case you have never heard me say this, I want to start off by saying, ‘I love Jesus,’ and I’m sorry that I’ve never said that to you out loud.”

People don’t know that, because we [as priests] never say it. I learned that by being together [with other Christians].

I learned how to say that in public. Isn’t that strange? We are just not formed like that.

I think we have so much to learn. The Catholic Church writes that we have not just the possibility but obligation to discover the seeds of truth in all peoples, especially other Christians. When we find that truth, it is refreshing and it is restoring, and it causes us to become better people. I am a better priest because I was a participant in this ecumenical process. I probably didn’t think I would ever say that, but here am I saying it in public.

It just doesn’t sound Catholic to say “I love Jesus” out loud, right? And that’s where being part of this ecumenical ministry has changed me.

Now, it has given me so much freedom.

Rev. John H. Armstrong:

I’d like to commend what my friend has just said, by affirming something. That is, if you want to know – Catholics or anyone else – the easiest way to get to the heart of an Evangelical, don’t talk about politics; don’t talk about non-sense, just state one thing: That you love Jesus.

And you’ll find that we may be really messed up folks, but when I meet someone who says they love Jesus, and when they say it with the same humility and truth that we just heard, then I start weeping on the inside, saying, “That’s it!” That’s what we ought to be founded on: Loving Him. From there can do so much that we have never even imagined.

I think that’s the moment that we are discovering in these ecumenical talks. We can do theology, but it’s not just a theological dialogue – we can respect unity in diversity and those kinds of things you hear in the ecumenical dialogue. But do we love Jesus? Can we pray together? Can we talk together? Can we share meals together? Can we walk together?

And of course we pray, Amen.

Reflection

It sounds like a headline right from *The Onion* to read: Catholic Priest says, “I Love Jesus!” It is both tragic and sad that such a statement could be considered worthy of a news headline.

This discussion illustrates how much Christians have lost because of our denominational divisions – we may not realize

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Mr. Frank Lesko is the Director of Catholic-Evangelical Relations for the Glenmary Home Missioners in Fairfield, Ohio. He is the author of *The Traveling Ecumenist* blog - <http://travelingecumenist.blogspot.com>.

it, but we have all given up parts of our own inheritance in order to draw a hard line between "those other folks." We end up thinking things such as:

Reading the Bible is a Protestant thing to do;

Being liturgical is a Catholic thing to do.

Having a personal relationship with Jesus is an Evangelical thing to do;

Valuing the historical tradition is a Catholic thing to do.

And so on and so forth.

Yet, those activities belong to all of us. There is nothing in the Catholic Church which is not steeped in the Biblical tradition. It was unthinkable for early Church Fathers and Mothers not to pour over Scripture in their personal reflections.

In the same way, some Protestants and most Evangelicals may be looser about utilizing liturgy, but even celebrating Christmas and Easter acknowledges a value for the whole community to gather together at a single moment to commemorate a specific part of the faith.

Those are just two examples, but they illustrate a point.

We are so silly that we end up giving up what is rightfully ours just to maintain our divisions. It boils down to cutting our nose to spite our face. Divisions among Christians are ultimately self-defeating: It is very unlikely – if not completely impossible – to put up a wall between another group without also putting up a wall inside of yourself.

We become so invested in these divisions, hatreds and misconceptions that we would rather blow up our own inheritance than acknowledge the legitimacy of someone else. Even people who do not maintain any conscious hostility to other denominations can end up living a more limited expression of their faith along these lines, as Fr. Rooney's example shows.

It should not feel like a person is giving up his Catholic identity to say, "I love Jesus," yet that is what happens when we invest more in our divisions than in our unity.

We are raised to believe that Catholics do "Catholic" things and Protestants do "Protestant" things. We forgot that those other things are often a part of our tradition, too. A Catholic could end up thinking that by reading the Bible he is watering down his Catholic identity. An Evangelical could think she is watering down her Evangelical identity by seeing her faith experience through the lens of Church history.

The ecumenical movement teaches us over and over again that a Catholic often feels more Catholic and a Protestant feels more Protestant when they reach out across denominational lines.

Ecumenism reminds us that the journey out is ultimately

We become so invested in these divisions, hatreds and misconceptions that we would rather blow up our own inheritance than acknowledge the legitimacy of someone else.

a journey in. In reaching out to others in charity, we end up healing a part of ourselves. By opening ourselves up to others, we learn that they hold long lost gifts of our own to give back to us.

It is like visiting an aunt that has been estranged from the rest of family for 50 years. You reach out to build a bridge and attempt to heal an old wound. When you go to her house for the first time, she shows you a shoebox of old photos and letters about you that reveal missing pieces of your past that you never knew.

I am reminded of Abraham trusting God so much he was willing to sacrifice his only son (Genesis 22). Abraham discovered that through trust in God he ended up not having to lose anything at all but in fact gained a lot.

Likewise, when divisions run deep, it can feel like sacrificing your own flesh and blood for a Catholic to reach out to a Protestant, or vice versa. It can feel like you are giving up everything you hold dear. When you base your identity on being opposed to another group or person, then there is some truth in that. Yet, just like Abraham discovered, trusting God did not bring the gloom and doom he imagined. In fact, God just opened up the Promised Land and a perpetual future of abundance for Abraham and his descendants.

The Abraham story is complex, because I wouldn't want to suggest that Christian discipleship doesn't come with its share of sacrifice. But the story does illustrate the importance of trusting God, because what we perceive as an inevitable outcome of misery often does not turn out that way at all when we trust in God. We simply can't see it yet with our limited human vision, which is why faith is so important to help us over that hump.

All enemies hold a key to ourselves in this way, whether they be religious, political or social rivals. This is why when you love your enemy, you heal yourself and find your fullness.


The example of Fr. Rooney shows how entering into the process of ecumenical reconciliation between denominations can help us all reclaim the pieces of the Christian experience that we have either lost or have become afraid to embrace

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HEADLINE: CATHOLIC PRIEST ADMITS, "I LOVE JESUS!", from page 12

because some other group has embraced them so strongly. Saying "I love Jesus" is not a Protestant thing to do – it is something all Christians can and should claim as our birthright!


It is a surprising paradox – in an attempt to reach out to another group, we end up reclaiming a lost part of ourselves. This is why ecumenism is not some nicey-nice icing on the cake, but it is central to the Christian mission.

The Body of Christ is One. Attempting to cut off a member of that body has the same impact as cutting off a limb from your own body. In the midst of our anger and defensiveness, we can lose sight of that. But we all lose on a personal, visceral level, whether we are consciously aware of it or not, when the Body is divided. 

THE CRY OF THE EARTH AND THE CRY OF THE POOR:..., from page 10

the National Council of Churches, USA the Evangelical Environmental Network and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life) has provided historic and unique leadership and witness. Other organizations like Green Faith, Interfaith Power and Light among others are providing wonderful leadership and practical programs for local congregations.

As Pope John Paul II reminds us and Pope Francis urges us to see that ecology and the environment offer an opportunity for a vast field for ecumenical and interreligious cooperation and witness. My hope is that existing ecumenical and interfaith initiatives can be deepened by more official dialogues between Christian churches using the encyclical and statements by other churches as a basis for dialogue. There is a great need to further explore the theological and moral aspects of this issue as well as how to develop shared responsibilities to address integral ecology and problems of poverty. I also hope that these ecumenical dialogues can increase at local judicatory levels and among congregations in a more systematic manner. Finally, I hope that religious leaders can witness to a more collective and visible ecumenical and interfaith leadership on this concern in the United States. This type of witness is needed and could significantly impact public discussion, public morality, and public policy regarding environmental responsibility.

At the end of his encyclical, Pope Francis offers two prayers – one for the earth itself with all who believe in God and other for Christians to pray in unity with creation. I hope we can respond to his prayers and the challenge together to hear the Cry of the Earth, and the Cry of the Poor, to care for our common home and to honor the opening words of the encyclical – "Laudato Si', mi Signore" – Praise to you, My Lord. Thank you very much for your gracious invitation to speak and to dialogue with you today. 

Notes:

1. Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, # 1 and 11.
2. Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, 1971, #21.

Other churches and religious communities (mainline Protestant churches, Evangelicals, Jewish organizations) are addressing environmental issues and have been for years, but often flying under the public's radar screen.

3. Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, December 30, 1987, #34.
4. Lucia Silecchia, Discerning the Environmental Perspective of Pope Benedict XVI, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 4:2, 2007, ps. 227-269.
5. *La Civiltà Cattolica*, "Protecting the Whole of Creation," 2015 II, p. 539.
6. Silecchia, p 231.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
8. Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace Message, "Protecting the Whole of Creation," 2007, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 2015 II, p. 542.
9. Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace Message, "To Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation," January 1, 2010, #4.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 543.
11. *Origins*, Catholic News Service Documentary Service, June 25, 2015, Vol. 45, #8, p.115.
12. Reverend Drew Christiansen, S.J., Talk #4, *Encounter and Dialogue in Social-Pastoral Ministry, Day of Recollection*, Theological College, Washington D.C., November 20-21, 2015, p. 6-7.
13. Pope Francis Inaugural Homily Mass, March 19, 2013.
14. Cardinal Peter Turkson, "Our Common Home: An Ethical Framework to Tackle Climate Change," Boston College, September 28-30, 2015, ps. 3-9.
15. Brian Roewe, National Catholic Reporter, "On Climate, polls begin to show hints of 'Francis effect'," November 7, 2015.

Book Review

Vibrant Grass-Roots Ecumenism

Christian Unity: How You Can Make a Difference,
by Thomas Ryan, CSP, Paulist Press, 2015, \$22.95,
ISBN: 978-15876-8549-1.
Reviewed by Harry Winter, OMI

It would be accurate, to use the American baseball expression, that Father Thomas Ryan, CSP, Founder and Director of the Paulist North American Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, has hit a grand slam with his latest book. The first of several striking features is that he has written in language which the ordinary lay person can understand, but also introduces rich spiritual terms not usually found at the grass-roots. He succeeds remarkably well in showing how every parish and every Christian can, and must, do much more for Evangelization and Ecumenism.

The book's chapters are largely devoted to the contribution to unity among the followers of Jesus that can be made by parishes, interchurch couples, religious communities and lay movements, social action groups, seminary and theology schools, and even professionals in the business community.

Fr. Ryan explains, in blunt statements, several tensions Christians must live with today. Among these tensions is the absolute need for ecumenism if we are to effectively evangelize (Introduction). He calls it the two sides of one coin, Mission and Unity. We might also say that the tendency for Christians to fight each other and split into different groups, visible in the letters of Paul and in the seven letters in chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation, is the first side of another coin. The other of course is the constant plea for unity in Paul's letters and John 17:21.

A second tension is the great grass-roots movement today for unity among Christians, from L'Arche to Taizé which Fr. Ryan describes in chapter 5: they are rebuilding the Body of Christ (83-107). He notes most of these groups were started, and are led, by lay people. One might conclude that ecumenism now is undergoing a significant development. He balances this with the blunt statement: "There are a growing number of persons and groups in the churches who know little or nothing about Christian Unity, its origins, aims and vision. ...Ecumenical apathy seems to be growing" (121, see also 19).

Interchurch couples and the delicate challenge of Eucharistic Hospitality are clearly explored in chapters 3 and 4 (47-48, 62-82) These chapters are clear examples of Fr. Ryan's ability to combine the practical with the spiritual. They were

written during the two Synods on the Family of 2014 and 2015 and before *Amoris Laetitia*, but the way Pope Francis and many bishops are pushing for more access to Communion in case of need, makes these pages all the more relevant.¹

You will want to stop and pray almost in every chapter. I found particularly moving his description of participating in an Outward Bound experience, and the way it was transposed into his spirituality (180-84).

He uses many examples from both the U.S., where he's served as director of the Paulist ecumenical office in Washington, D.C. the last 16 years, and Canada where he served earlier on as director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism for 14 years, and quotes the late, great English ecumenist Rev. Martin Reardon (pp. 78-79).

In the chapter on "Gifts to Share for Our Mutual Enrichment," it is clear Fr. Ryan is not a naive ecumenist, who downgrades membership in one's own denomination. He is quite clear that growing in "confessional loyalty" and appreciating "the strength of the diverse traditions" are two sides of another coin (184).

When Patriarch Kirill took the road from Moscow to Warsaw and signed the epochal Statement of Reconciliation of Aug. 17, 2012, with Archbishop Jozef Michalik, Chairman of the Bishops' Conference of Poland, many were stunned. Some wondered if anything would follow. Then Patriarch Kirill met in Cuba on Feb. 12, 2016 with Pope Francis, and they signed their Joint Declaration. With the announcement of the June 16-27, 2016, meeting of the Great and Holy Council of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, Fr. Ryan's observations about "Eastern Orthodox and Catholics of the Byzantine Tradition" assume major importance (174-76).²

Add to this the coming visit of Pope Francis to Sweden for the Oct. 31, 2016, observance of the 499th anniversary of Luther's theses. Luther's Reformation in one sense will never end: Fr. Ryan observes "the church will always be a pilgrim church, on this earth, struggling with tensions and schisms. As a church of sinners, we will never be a perfect church" (40).

This book will help prepare each of us for these important commemorative events which include not only Eastern Orthodox and Lutherans, but affect every Christian. A warning: do not let our leaders involvement in them take away from awareness that, down in the grass-roots, something precious and important is happening, which must be nurtured. By putting this book in every retreat center and parish book store, by making it required reading in every seminary and permanent diaconate program, by asking every Director of Faith

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Father Harry E. Winter, OMI, is the Coordinator of the Ministry of Mission, Unity and Dialogue for the USA Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He serves in the Archdiocese of St. Paul, MN.

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Formation to study it, by forming ecumenical committees in every large parish and joining them together in clustered and small parishes, we can prevent such a fissure between the leadership and the laity.

Three small suggestions. First, when Fr. Ryan describes Taizé (90-93), he is silent about Brother (later Father) Max Thurian. If one reads the Wikipedia articles on Brother Roger Schutz, and Taizé, it is as if Thurian never existed. When I visited Taizé with a group from the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland, on the last weekend of July, 1964, it was quite clear that Bro. Roger was the founder, prior and organizer of the community. It was equally clear that Brother Max was the co-founder, sub-prior and theologian.³

Secondly, some reference to the statement “Evangelicals and Catholics Together for Mission,” and the group of the journal *First Things*, leading up to “The Manhattan Declaration,” could strengthen the book’s good presentation of the importance of Protestant Evangelicalism.

Finally, an index would be most welcome, since Fr. Ryan covers so many people and places.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ, wrote “nature is never spent; there lives the dearest freshness deep down things; And though the last lights off the black West went Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs – Because the Holy Ghost over the bent World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings” (God’s Grandeur).

Fr. Ryan has presented us with another accomplishment of the Holy Spirit with many, many people in various Churches. May we continue with this book to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. 

Notes:


1. See Harry Winter, OMI, “Momentum Builds for Eucharistic Sharing From the 2015 Synod on the Family to the 500th Anniversary of Luther’s Theses, 2017,” *Ecumenical Trends* Volume 45, Number 1, (Jan. 2016): 10-12, and [www.harrywinter.org/Eucharistic Hospitality](http://www.harrywinter.org/Eucharistic_Hospitality).

2. The Polish Russian Statement of Reconciliation may be found in [www.harrywinter.org/Eastern Christianity](http://www.harrywinter.org/Eastern_Christianity) page. The remarkable meeting of Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew, of May 25, 2014 may also be found there. The home page presents the Cuba agreement.

3. In an earlier article “Taizé: A Parable of Reconciliation,” *Ecumenical Trends* Volume 34, Number 11 (Nov. 2005): 9-12/153-56, Fr. Ryan did write “the noted theologian Max Thurian (F.Max)” is buried alongside Bro. Roger in the village graveyard. I consulted the two Wikipedia articles on April 6, 2016.

DECLARATION ON THE WAY: CHURCH, MINISTRY AND EUCHARIST: A COMMENTARY, from page 4

The span of five hundred years provides time for a narrative of reconciliation, and it is a tale of the possible and the hopeful.

At a moment of axial change in the world – and indeed in the coming 500 year mark of rupture for Lutherans and Catholics – the models for encountering and transforming, which also inform this *Declaration*, have immeasurably more to say to the world than we may know. 

Notes:

1. <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/press-release-joint-ecumenical-commemoration-reformation-lund>

2017 Week of Prayer
Reconciliation – The Love of Christ Compels Us
(2 Corinthians 5:14-20)

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