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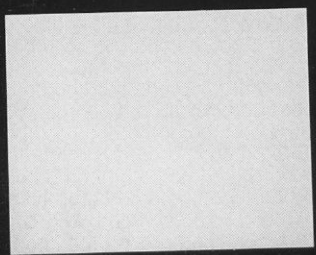
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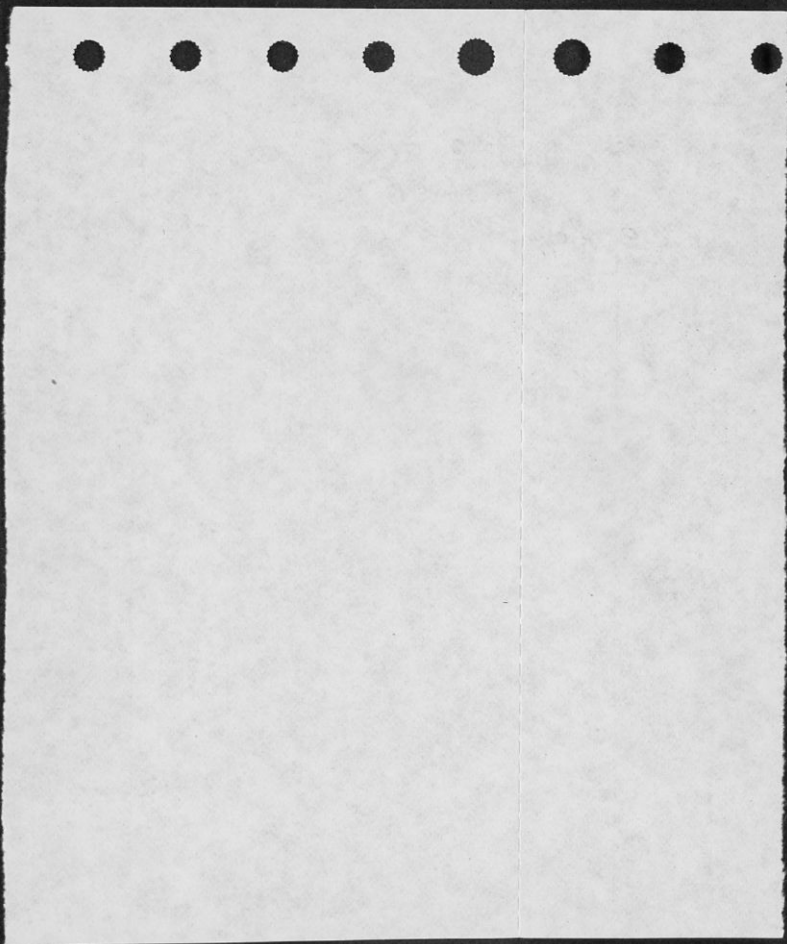
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Imprimatur: ✕ Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York

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June 5, 1958

Pamphlet No. 11-22

CENTRAL OFFICE
CHAIR OF UNITY APOSTOLATE
GRAYMOOR, GARRISON, N. Y.

Prepared with permission from Homiletic & Pastoral Review

Designed and Printed at Graymoor Press, Peekskill, N. Y.

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The Catholic Church and Ecumenism

By TITUS CRANNY, S.A., S.T.D.

There is a spiritual phenomenon in the world at the present day which might be described in terms of nostalgia—a kind of spiritual longing for home. It is a sincere and manifest desire for religious unity on the part of those who are separated from the Catholic Church, who deplore the existence of a divided Christendom, and who seek a way to remedy the plight in which they find themselves.

In the providence of God this desire for and search after unity may be a kind of reversal of that spiritual disaster which shook Europe four centuries ago and which since then has spread into nearly all parts of the civilized world. This movement toward unity is called the Ecumenical Movement, so named because it aims at the formation of One Church throughout the whole world.¹ We trust and pray that it marks the beginning of a homeward religious journey for the millions, now separated from the One Fold of the Redeemer, whose ancestors made their sad cleavage several centuries past.

Nothing Gained By Suspecting Protestant Motives

At least awareness of disunity is a good thing: these peoples realize their plight, that it is far from enviable and they seek a solution. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches and prominent leader in the Ecumenical Movement, is spokesman for many when he says:

If there is only one King, if salvation means to be part of one Body, no Church can accept the fact that the people of God are scattered, that the Body is broken.²

It is true that non-Catholic ideas about unity are at variance with the teachings of the Catholic Church, but we should not be

¹ *Instruction on the Ecumenical Movement*, (Eng. trs. Graymoor Press: 1949) 9.

² *Kingship of Christ* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1948), p. 10.

too quick to judge their motives or their means to secure unity, nor should we minimize their efforts to secure what they lack. Indeed we ought to pray that they may be led by God to the harbor of salvation and the citadel of truth, the Catholic Church.

Father W. H. Van de Pol, of Holland, convert to the faith from Protestantism and a longtime worker in the Ecumenical field, has written a book on the problems of Christian Unity. He presents an appraisal of the situation of the present day—of separation from Christ when all men should be united with Him and in Him. These are his words:

At the centre of the history of the human race, divided by sin, discord, and strife, stands One whose word and work be-token complete reconciliation, absolute unity and perfect peace: the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him God has willed to win back all things, to resume all things, to restore order to all things; in Him men have been reconciled to God and thereby to one another. Christ is the Redeemer of a world that was lost; He is our peace and in Him we are all one. He is the realization and embodiment of God's order in a world of human disorder: "This alone of all names under heaven has been appointed to men as the one by which we must needs be saved." Yet, in actual fact, Christendom does not present a picture of unity, reconciliation and peace in a world of disruption and disorder, but instead we are confronted with the alarming spectacle of hopeless dissension even among Christians themselves.³

These Are Not Sixteenth Century Protestants

The prospect of an early reconciliation, of a speedy attainment of unity with the Church for all who are outside of it, does not exist in the foreseeable future. It is true that God could miraculously lead all the erring sheep to the one fold, that in a moment of time and with a prodigious outpouring of grace He could dissipate the prejudices, misunderstandings, and complexities of a million hearts and bring them to the unity of His Church. But that is not His way.

³ *The Christian Dilemma* (London: Dent, 1952), p. ix.

We know that God uses human instruments, often proud and ignorant, and at times weak and foolish, to achieve His ends. And so He uses men to work for the bestowal of this unity upon other men. It should be borne in mind that the Protestants of today are not the same as their forefathers of the past. In practice we do not deal with heretics as the Church dealt with them in the sixteenth century, nor consider the Protestants of today as being precisely identified with those who broke from the Church during the era of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and the other leaders.

In the course of centuries the problem has become very complicated. It cannot be solved so easily as a yes or no. For as Father Charles Boyer, S.J., a leader in the Ecumenical Movement from the Catholic point of view, has declared:

The problem is a delicate one, for there is a danger of diminishing the Church in attributing to her a lack which is true only of one or another of her members. I should not be prepared to concede, on any doctrinal point, that the Lutherans or the Anglicans have a more perfect doctrine than the Catholic Church whose Bridegroom will remain with her until the end of the world.

But it is certainly true that there are Catholics who are less filled than they should be with the idea of grace as a gift, with the holiness of the Bible, with the mystical beauties of the Church. Such people could undoubtedly find, within the Church, admirable models of every aspect in which they are lacking. Nevertheless they can also find outside the Church useful lessons not provided in their immediate surroundings.

Let us say then that the return of our separated brethren would undoubtedly draw our attention to these spiritual treasures of the Church of which we make insufficient use.⁴

It should not be said that non-Catholics would contribute to the good of the Church because they have espoused non-Catholic errors. Their doctrinal background would not add to the peculiar riches of the Church. They would not contribute in a positive

⁴ *Unitas*, III (French edition), 1948, pp. 14, 15.

way to the doctrinal contents or to any essential element of the Church. For as the Instruction of the Holy Office has stated: "Non-Catholics may certainly be told that, in returning to the Church, they will forfeit none of the good that the grace of God has hitherto wrought in their souls, but that the return will bring this to its perfection and final consummation. Yet this must not be represented in such a fashion as to create in them the impression that by their return they were making a contribution to the Church of something essential that she lacked in the past."⁵

Religious Unity Will Be A Rediscovery

The Catholic idea and ideal of unity is far removed from the concept of most non-Catholics. Outside the Church there is a wide variety of beliefs: that the Church is made up of branches; unity does not exist at the present time but will be achieved later—at the price of compromise; all the religious bodies somehow comprise the Catholic Church; that the Church is an invisible society, vague and nebulous, both in membership and in profession of belief.

But we know that the Church possesses that Unity given to it by its Founder, a unity of faith, of government, and of worship which can never be lost. It is the visible unity of a visible society of existence in the world today. The Abbot of Downside Abbey in England has well phrased it:

The fact is that, according to the Catholic faith, the visible unity of the Church both precedes and survives the fact of schism, and is essential to the very idea of the Church. The Church founded by Christ not only naturally gives rise to the fellowship, the *koinomia*, the fellowship of the faithful: it is identical with that fellowship. And as it is in and by the Church that Christ fulfills the promise: "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the ages," so also today and tomorrow. Any movement of "return" therefore, be it conceived as the

⁵ *Instruction on the Ecumenical Movement*, (Eng. trs. Graymoor Press: Peekskill, N.Y., 1952), 5.

return of individuals or a whole body of hitherto "separated" brethren, is a movement of return to what already exists prior to the movement; it is not the creation of a non-existent unity, it is the rediscovery by those who return to that unity which already exists.⁶

The Church Wholly Disinterested?

At times it has been charged that the Catholic Church is not interested in unity efforts of non-Catholic groups, that she has no concern for the Ecumenical Movement of the present day.

We know that the Church's non-participation in such meetings does not rise from an attitude of arrogance, or pride, or disdain, but from the conviction that she alone possesses the truth given her by Almighty God; that taking part in meetings would mean to place the Catholic faith on the same level as man-made religions, which would be a denial of the truth that Christ has revealed. Any compromise in religious matters would be contrary to the teaching of Christ and to the constitution of the Church.

This does not mean that the Church is not interested, and in a very sincere and hopeful way, in the various movements toward unity. For example, when the leaders of the Conference on Faith and Order (May 16, 1919) invited Pope Benedict XV to take part in their conference, he refused. But at the same time they were granted an audience with him. As they left the chamber they were handed a statement of explanation for his refusal, the report of which was the following:

The Holy Father, after having thanked them for their visit, stated that as the successor of St. Peter and the Vicar of Christ he had no greater desire than that there should be one fold and one shepherd. His Holiness added that the teaching and practice of the Roman Catholic Church regarding the unity of the visible Church of Christ was well known to everyone and therefore it would not be possible for the Catholic Church to take part in such a congress as the one proposed. His Holiness,

⁶ Introduction to John Todd's *Catholicism and the Ecumenical Movement* (London, 1956,) pp. xi, xii.

however, by no means wishes to disapprove of the Congress in question for those who are not in union with the Chair of Peter; on the contrary he earnestly desires and prays that, if the congress is practicable, those who take part in it may, by the grace of God, see the light and become reunited to the visible Head of the Church, by whom they will be received with open arms.⁷

I should like to show briefly the concern of the popes for these groups outside the Church. We know in general that the Holy Father is solicitous for the reunion of all those separated from the Chair of Peter; that it is his role to work and pray and lead in achieving the prophecy of Christ: "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."

But the desire for unity has been the specific hope of the popes of every age and particularly of the Pontiffs of recent times. For example, in a message to a German Catholic meeting in Mainz in 1948, Pope Pius XII declared:

We know how insistent is the desire in many, both Catholics and non-Catholics, for unity of faith. And who could desire this more ardently than the Vicar of Christ? The Church surrounds dissenters in the faith with sincere love and prayer for return to her, their mother, from whom God knows how many are separated without any fault of their own. If the Church is inflexible with respect to everything that might appear in any way to place the Catholic faith on the same footing as other confessions or to confuse Catholics with dissenters, it is because she is convinced that there always has been and always will be one sure citadel wherein rests infallibly the fulness of truth and of grace that Christ has given us, and that according to the express will of her divine founder this one citadel is none other than the Church herself.⁸

In 1848 Pope Pius IX made an appeal to the Eastern dissidents,

⁷ *History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948* (Phila., 1954), p. 416. Ed. by R. Rouse & S. C. Neill.

⁸ *Oss. Romano*, Nov. 9, 1948.

assuring them that nothing would be required of them except what was demanded by unity of faith.⁹ Before the convening of the Vatican Council of 1870 he invited the Protestants and the Eastern dissidents to return to unity.

Toward "The Great Return"

Pope Leo XIII was most energetic in striving for the return of the separated East. To the Armenians he wrote: "For it is no shame—but praiseworthy in the highest degree—that a father should himself call his wandering and long-expected children home—should even go forth with open arms to receive and welcome them."¹⁰

His words were filled with emotion when he wrote in another document, *Praeclara gratulationis*: "Weigh carefully in your minds and before God the nature of our request. It is not for any human motive, but impelled by Divine charity and a desire for the salvation for all, that we urge your reconciliation and union with the Church of Rome."

He quoted the words of Cardinal Johannes Bessarion (1395-1472), who was so interested in the return of the Eastern separated brethren and who did much for reunion at the Council of Florence in 1439: "What answer shall we give to God when He comes to ask why we have separated from our brethren: To Him, who to unite us and bring us into one fold, came down from heaven, was incarnate and was crucified."

Turning to the Protestants, he added: "With the example of such men before you, our heart appeals to you even more than our words: to you, our brethren, who for three centuries and more have dissented from us in the Christian faith, and to you all likewise who in later times, for any reason whatsoever, have turned away from us: "Let us all come together in the unity of faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God."¹¹

The great Pontiff later wrote *Orientalium dignitas* demanding

⁹ *In suprema Petri* A.S.S. 1, 154-161.

¹⁰ *Paterna caritas*, July 25, 1888; Eng. trs. in *Tablet* (Sept. 1, 1888), 321-320.

¹¹ *Great Ency. Letters of Leo XIII*, (New York: 1903) 311.

the preservation of the Eastern rites¹² and *Christi nomen*, which recommended the establishment of a Catholic clergy for the purpose of bringing the Eastern Churches back to the unity of the faith. On March 19, 1895, the Holy Father named a Commission whose purpose was to work for the reunion of those outside the Church (ad reconciliationem dissidentium cum Ecclesia fovendam). It seems unfortunate that this Commission has not survived, but it might well be re-instituted at the present day.

The same Supreme Pontiff wrote a cordial letter to the non-Catholics of England¹³ after he had been informed of the efforts of Lord Halifax and other Anglicans to urge the faithful in England to pray for the conversion of their fellow men. This was followed by *Satis cognitum*¹⁴ in which the Holy Father presented the doctrine on the unity of the Church. Moreover, when he made the definitive pronouncement of the invalidity of Anglican orders¹⁵ he was again expressing the teaching of the Church and defending its unity.

The novena of Pentecost which Pope Leo XIII directed to be observed in all Catholic Churches throughout the world was intended "to hasten the reconciliation with the Catholic Church of those who are estranged from it for reasons of doctrine or obedience, for it is the will of Jesus that all be united in a single flock under a single Pastor."¹⁶ It is unfortunate that the novena at the present time seems to have fallen into disuse in most parts of the world.

Pope Pius XI continued the call to unity by such encyclicals as *Ecclesiam Dei* of 1923, *Mortalium animos* in 1928, *Lux veritatis* in 1931, and by his special interest in the Eastern rites of the Catholic Church. But in our own generation the words of our present Holy Father have come ringing forth from the Vatican City to all parts of the world calling to our separated brethren in the accents of a loving father. His words are those of invitation, of pleading, of charity. They contain but one message—the Church opens wide its arms to welcome those who return to her.

¹² A S S 27 (Nov. 30, 1894), pp. 257-264.

¹³ *Ad Anglos* (April 14, 1895).

¹⁴ A S S 28 (June 20, 1896), 708-739.

¹⁵ *Apostolicae curae* (Sept. 13, 1895).

¹⁶ *Pravida matris* (May 5, 1895) and *Divinum illud* (May 9, 1897).

"Year Of The Great Return"

When Pope Pius XII established the Jubilee year of 1950 he called it "The Year of the Great Return." "Oh, that this Holy Year" he said, "could welcome also the great return to the one true Church, awaited over the centuries, of so many who though they believe in Jesus Christ are for various reasons separated from her! With unspeakable groanings, the Spirit who is in the hearts of good people, today cries out imploringly the same prayer of our Lord: 'That they may be one' (Jn 17:21). With good reason men are anxious about the effrontery with which the united front of militant atheism advances and the old question is now voiced aloud: Why are there still separations? Why are there still schisms? When will all the forces of the spirit and of love be harmoniously united?"¹⁷ Then he added:

If on other occasions an invitation to unity has been sent forth from this Apostolic See, on this occasion We repeat it more warmly and paternally; We feel that We are urged by the pleadings and prayers of numerous believers scattered over the whole earth, who after suffering tragic and painful events turn their eyes towards this Apostolic See as towards an anchor of salvation for the whole world.

For all these who adore Christ—not excluding those who sincerely but vainly await His coming and adore Him as the One promised by the prophets and still to come—do We open the Holy Door; and at the same time We extend a welcome from the heart of a father whose fatherhood in the inscrutable designs of God, has come to us from Jesus the Redeemer.¹⁸

Several years before, in 1943, when he wrote his great encyclical on the Church, *Mystici Corpus*, the Supreme Pontiff referred to those separated from the one fold:

And oh how earnestly We desire that the immense charity of these common prayers embrace those also who, not yet receiving the light of the gospel truth, are still outside the Church's safe

¹⁷ AAS XLII (1950) 124.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

fold, or for the regrettable conflict of faith and unity are separated from Us . . . Let us then re-echo the divine prayer of Our Saviour to the heavenly Father: "That they all may be one as Thou Father in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

As you know from the very beginning of Our pontificate We have committed to the protection and guidance of heaven those who do not belong to the visible organization of the Good Shepherd; We desire nothing more ardently than that they may have life and have it more abundantly.¹⁹

He spoke of his own charity for their souls, of their relationship to the Mystical Body in desire and resolution, and of his longing to receive them into the safe embrace of the Church. These are his words:

From a heart overflowing with love We ask each and every one of them to be quick and ready to follow the interior movements of grace and to consider withdrawing from that state in which they cannot be sure of their salvation. For even though they unsuspectingly are related to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer in desire and resolution, they still remain deprived of so many precious gifts and helps from heaven, which one can enjoy only in the Catholic Church. May they enter then into Catholic unity and, united with us in the organic oneness of the Body of Jesus Christ, may they hasten to the one Head in the society of glorious love. With persevering prayer to the Spirit of love and truth, We wait for them with open arms to return not to a stranger's house, but to their own, their Father's house.²⁰

We Have No Time For Rest

So far as the Catholic is concerned, and much more the priest and religious, there can be no indifference or lack of interest and prayer toward the work of unity. It is the work of the Church, her

¹⁹ AAS XXV (1943) 242—Eng. trs. by America Press (New York, 1943), sec. 120.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, sec. 121.

mission given by Christ, to save the souls of men. As the German bishop, the Most Reverend Julius Dopfner, has recently declared:

As long as the Church in her earthly pilgrimage has not yet embraced the whole of humanity, she can allow herself no rest. All the painful divisions which have been realized over the course of the Church's history have created for her the pressing duty of reconciling her separated children. Even St. Paul never ceased to struggle for the salvation of the Hebrew nation and each of his countrymen, despite all the failures he experienced in his missionary work among the Jews, a presage of a formidable mystery of divine predestination.

The Church, as the *signum levatum in nationibus*, must in its responsibility for the whole human race actualize all her forces so that eventually there may be "one fold and one Shepherd." She would be betraying her mission if she were to be content with her present confines.²¹

This unity of the Church, divinely given and divinely preserved, can never be lost. There is one Church and there is one Christ. We say that the unity of the Church follows not only from her essence as the Mystical Body of the Saviour, but also from her mission as the one divine institution for the salvation of all men. "If Christ is the second Adam," writes the renowned Scheeben, "and if the Church by her teaching and her grace is to lead all mankind back to its pristine holiness, then the unity that was present in the human race before the disruption caused by sin must again be made manifest in her. Unity, therefore, is the great formative law operative on all sides in the mystical organism of the God-man, His Church, repelling on one hand all proud disruptive tendencies and tolerating on the other hand the most manifold variety."²²

More and more leaders outside the Church are beginning to recognize and realize this unity. One of the leaders of French non-Catholic thought, M. Boegner, has written of Christian Unity in terms of a "visible unity of faith . . . The texts are right there in Holy Scripture," he declared, "filled with the revelation that the Holy

²¹ *Unitas*, Eng. ed., VIII (1956), 34.

²² *Handbuch der Dogmatik*, IV, 341.

Ghost proclaims to be the truth of God. Whether we like it or not, these texts speak to us of one and only one Church of Christ, whose visible unity is part of the testimony she must render to her Lord. Since there is 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,' just as there is 'one spirit, even as you were called in one hope,' so too, there is 'one body,' one Church" (Eph. 4:45).²³

Paul James Francis—Apostle of Unity

What can we do to effect the reunion of our separated brethren? The problems are so vast, so apparently insurmountable, the differences so insoluble, that any hope of reunion seems an idle dream. In this connection I might refer to the words of a great apostle of reunion in our day, Father Paul James Francis. Early in his career as the founder of our community, several years before he entered the Church, and at a time when he had but one follower in his Society, he wrote these prophetic words:

Is then Christian Unity a visionary dream? Will the prayer of the Son of God never be answered: Was He a lying prophet when He told the time of its fulfillment saying: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring and there shall be one Fold and one Shepherd." Let who will deride or shake their heads in doubt saying "Heresy and schism have gone too far; . . . Rome is too proud and unbending. England is too self-satisfied, the East too Orthodox; Protestantism too enamored of letting everybody do and think as they please. They never can and never will come together. Christian Unity is hopeless!" Our answer is—God's will is omnipotent; the *fiat* of the Most High must prevail; the prayer of Jesus Christ has to be answered . . . Were the mountains of difficulty to be surmounted a thousand times higher and vaster than they are, God is able to cast them into the sea."²⁴

This is our answer as well.

²³ *Le Probleme de l'Unite Chretienne* (Paris, 1947) p. 43.

²⁴ *Lamp*, Feb. 1903, p. 3.

Four-Part Program:

I. Prayer

To effect the return of present-day non-Catholics to the unity of the one fold, a program of four fundamental elements is necessary: Prayer, penance, example, and presenting the truth.

Prayer is necessary for what has been called a "fantastic enterprise": the reunion of Christendom. For if without Christ men can do nothing for salvation, what can they do for the salvation of other souls without the grace and love of the Son of God by which the mystery of redemption and atonement is made operative in their souls as a supernatural activity? We can never overestimate the need and value of prayer in the apostolate, both for personal sanctification and for the souls of other men.

No one needs more prayers than he who is venturing toward the Church. All the talking in the world will prove worthless unless united to, inspired by, and founded upon prayer. We do not pray enough for the concerns that really matter. And surely the cause of Christian Unity is extensive enough to warrant our most sincere and persevering prayer.

As an aside on this point, may I recall that the Eucharist is the sacrament of Unity *par excellence*, not only for deepening the intimacy of Christ and the soul, but for enriching and perfecting that unity of all the members of the Mystical Body with one another.

It is significant that on Holy Thursday, when Jesus instituted the Eucharist, He also offered His great prayer for Unity as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. John: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given to Me, that they all may be one as Thou Father in Me and I in Thee, that they may be made perfect in unity, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." (Jn. 17:21) How these words of Christ ought to be in our minds and on our lips, impelling us to prayer for the souls of men, to make them one with Christ, and one with each other. The words of John Chrysostom reveal to us how keenly the saint appreciated this sense of Unity:

For we being many are one bread and one body. Why do I speak of communion; we are that self-same body. For what is bread—the Body of Christ. Not many bodies but one body . . . For we are all members of that one bread. If we are all nourished with the same and all become the same, why do we not also show forth the same love, and become also in this respect one? For this was the old way too in the time of our forefathers: “for the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.”²⁵

Prayer is essential to any form of any religious enterprise, but never more necessary than in the Apostolate of Unity. That is why the Chair of Unity Octave with its emphasis on prayer is so valid. Prayer is the most essential, necessary, and universal means to achieve unity. Prayer is the most effective remedy to save souls. Our Lady tells us at Fatima: “There are many souls that go to hell because they have no one to pray for them.”

In praying for Unity we regard Our Lady as the special patroness of the enterprise. “Rejoice O Virgin Mary thou alone has destroyed all heresies throughout the world” we read or chant in the Divine Office for her feast days. We realize that her function as spiritual mother of all men is to give life; we know that as the Divine Shepherdess she shares the anxiety of her Son in seeking souls that are outside the Church. She longs to bring them to the pastures of refreshment and life in the one Fold.

Such was the idea of Father Paul when he gave the Blessed Virgin the lovely and significant name of Our Lady of the Atonement.

She is Our Lady of Unity, and she will accomplish the greatest victories for her Son, where until now, Satan has emerged triumphant. Let us look up to her all radiant on her throne, our beautiful Mother of the Atonement, appalled in the crimson robe of the Precious Blood, interceding at this moment for the great At-one-ment; and may we never cease to unite our prayers with hers that the scales may fall away from the eyes of our separated brethren and they may understand that

²⁵ 24th Homily on First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

the Great Shepherd whom Our Lord appointed as His vice-regent on earth is their Father and their Shepherd.²⁶

Elsewhere he urged:

... let us consecrate ourselves afresh at her altar to contribute what lies within our power of prayer, sacrifice, and charitable endeavor to bring our separated brethren into the unity of the One Fold under the One Shepherd.²⁷

II. Penance

The second requirement for Christian Unity work is penance. This is not a popular term today. It never will be to those of a worldly spirit. But how did the great missionaries of past ages win souls for God if not by assiduous penance? They fasted and took the discipline; they slept little and worked late; they wrestled spiritually for the souls they desired to save. "I am come to cast fire on the earth and what will I but that it be enkindled" was a cry that burned in their blazing hearts.

There was a young sister who died in 1939 in a Trappistine Convent at Grottoferrata in Italy. She was only 24 years old when she died, but her whole convent life, with its penance and its mortifications, was motivated by one desire: Christian Unity. As she lay on her deathbed the Abbess came quietly and asked if she gave her life for Unity. With a sense of victory she cried gladly, "Yes!"²⁸

That spirit of Mother Gabriella is needed to achieve unity. Not all will be martyrs or great apostles for Unity, as some saints were, but everyone must be convinced of the truth that souls are won only at the cost of sacrifice, for such is the divine plan.

One of the most moving accounts of what apostolic men should be, was written in regard to the conversion of England. But its thought applies to the conversion of every nation under heaven.

Let them (the apostolic men) work among the Roman Catholics. Let them offer us what we do not have ourselves, the

²⁶ *Lamp* Nov. 1930 (28) 323.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Titus Cranny, *Cloistered Apostle of Unity* (Graymoor Press: 1956) 15.

picture of a Church perfect in discipline and in customs. Let this Church be chaste and beautiful as befits the divine spouse of Jesus Christ; let her sing the praises of her Saviour night and day; let even her exterior garments be resplendent, so that the spectator might be struck with admiration and throw himself at her feet, seeing clearly in her the beloved of the King of Heaven. Let them go into our great cities and preach the gospel to their quasi-pagan populations; let them go barefeet, and wear sackcloth; let mortification be written on their foreheads; finally, if there be among them a saint like the seraph of Assisi, the heart of England is already won.²⁹

III. Example

Example is the greatest apostolate of all. As Pope Pius XI wrote in his encyclical on St. Josaphat in 1923 commemorating the third centenary of this martyr for unity: "They must understand that it is less through disputations and other activities than through the *example* and *self-sacrifice* of a holy life that this unity is to be promoted."³⁰

By example we mean living the faith in such a way that it is lovable and livable. If those outside the fold see that the Catholic way of life is "different," at first they may be curious; if they see that it does something to character, they may be interested; if they realize that it is meant for them as well, many of them will enter the One Fold. By the same token we know how detrimental to the welfare of the Church and to the salvation of souls bad example can be.

It is by making religion attractive, by making the pursuit of heaven the great adventure of life that people are won and drawn to the Church. The old adage, "Your actions thunder so loudly that I cannot hear what you say," has relevance to winning souls to the

²⁹ *Letters to Univers*, April 13, 1841, believed to have been written by John Dalgairns. On reading this letter Dominic Barbari, the Passionist with the consuming desire for the conversion of England, made his decision to go to this land; Cardinal Newman was received into the Church by him.

³⁰ *Ecclesiam Dei*, AAS, XVI (1924), 150.

Church. If all the faithful in every part of the world lived up to the teachings of the Church, what a vast increase in the personnel of priests and religious there would be, and what a transformation would take place in political, economic and social life. If only all the faithful and, indeed, all of us priests could be impressed with the dynamic, magnetic character of good example in winning souls to God and in building up the Church. As the Holy Office declared: "All (the faithful) must be made conscious of the fact that, for those wandering outside the fold, there is no more efficacious means of preparing the way to embrace the truth and the Church than the faith of Catholics associated with good moral conduct and an edifying life."³¹

IV. Presenting The Truth

The fourth point in the work of Christian Unity is stating the truth. This should be clear enough, but it is not always so. There can be no compromise in presenting the teachings of Christ and the deposit of faith which has been entrusted to the Church. There can be no "watering down" of doctrine, no perversion of conscience, no false irenicism contrary to the spirit of charity and of truth. For as the Instruction of the Holy Office warns:

The whole and entire body of Catholic doctrine is therefore to be proposed and explained. Nothing embraced in the Catholic truth concerning the true nature and means of justification, the constitution of the Church, the Roman Pontiff's primacy of jurisdiction and the only real reunion effectuated by a return of the dissidents to the one true Church, must be passed over in silence or cloaked under ambiguous language... All this must be truly set forth clearly and intelligibly for the double reason that they are seeking the truth and that outside of the truth no true union can ever be attained."³²

Not everyone is called to write or speak on the question of reunion, particularly in a public or official way. Those who are should be trained in such a work. But surely many should be able

³¹ Inst. on Ec. Movement, *op. cit.*, 8.

³² *op. cit.*, 5.

to "give reason for the faith" that is in them, as St. Paul declares, and seek to learn from history and theology the answers that perplex the minds of many who are outside the Church.

We do not go about waving catechisms, or Denzinger, or defying anyone to disagree with us. We do not castigate all who are non-Catholics, for we know that God is not limited in the distribution of His graces. By the same token, however, we are proud of the faith and seek to live it to the hilt, and we can point to errors in theology or history so that the Church is not made to be the scapegoat for the foolish statements of its enemies. Catholics need to have a clear idea on various points dealing with unity: for example, that there is but one Church; that non-Catholic bodies were not founded by the Son of God; that there is but one means of salvation established by Christ for all men: the Catholic Church. Catholics also need to understand that prayer does not dispense them from an active and even intense apostolate, depending on the gifts of nature and of grace which they have received. And to refer to the words of the English Benedictine:

Prayer is the highest form of the apostolate—but that does not dispense us from spreading the gospel; and this is not to be done simply from the pulpit. Those of us who have the opportunity to approach non-Catholics directly must not suppose that we have done our whole duty by devoting all our spare time to devout exercises, unless we are satisfied that we have a special vocation in that respect. In the normal disposition of God's providence, faith comes by hearing. It does not come without prayer on our part and that of our non-Catholic friends, but it does not normally come by prayer alone.³³

In working and praying for the return of those outside the fold, care must be taken to prepare the way for such a step. There must be personal association, but it must be tactful and charitable. In this vein Father Van de Pol has stated:

It is no use—from our point of view—merely to insist on a returning of the Anglicans and Protestants to the Church with-

³³ Illtyd Thethowan, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, (London 1952), 9.

out any attempt to prepare the way for such a return. Many misunderstandings between Anglicans and Catholics, Anglicans and other Protestants, Catholics and Protestants, are caused by a continual misinterpretation of one another's writings and sayings. A better mutual understanding can only be expected from *close personal contacts* without any idea of an immediate conversion of the other party. The time has not yet come for that. The truth will have to find its way in the course of many years. We can only prepare the way. But up to now we have been doing nothing else but continually irritating one another and causing new estrangements. We expect too much of our aloofness and steadfastness, in condemning the others and too little from the guidance of God's Spirit were we to have sufficient love and good will to seek one another and to create new opportunities of personal contact.³⁴

It is necessary to realize that the Ecumenical Movement is a real force in the religious world today. It is not a passing fad. It has been present, in its modern formulation and development, for almost fifty years. And since the first meetings in 1910 with the Missionary Conference in Edinburgh down to the World Council of Churches of our own day, more than one hundred meetings and mergers among non-Catholic groups have taken place. The World Council of Churches may fail in its objectives and become no more than a historical trend in the whole movement of Ecumenism. But this seems to be true, that from the efforts and even failures of the past and of the present there will evolve some new workings to bring souls outside the Church to her embrace. Under the grace of God the consciousness of disunity is too strong, the desire for unity too ardent to permit the Ecumenical Movement to fail ultimately in attaining unity. Such unity will be attained with the Catholic Church in the providence of God, even though people would deny it today. They will attain unity, but in a way precisely that they do not now recognize.

Moreover, the Church desires that we who are her members

³⁴ Quoted by Columba Cary-Elwes, O.S.B. *Sheepfield and the Shepherd* (London, 1956), 104.

take an active interest in the work of reunion. We need only recall the words of the Instruction of the Holy Office of several years ago:

This excellent work of the "reunion" of all Christians in the one true faith and Church should daily become more integrated as a distinguished portion in the universal pastoral charge and be made an object of concern that the whole Catholic people take to heart and recommend to God in fervent supplications. Much progress will be made, if the faithful are appropriately enlightened, for example, by means of pastoral letters, about these questions and issues as well as the measures taken with regard to them by the Church and the reasons prompting them. All indeed, but especially priests and religious must be admonished to seek to fecundate the work by their prayers and sacrifices.³⁵

Finally, in this work of reunion, or Christian Unity, we must have a tremendous love and appreciation of the role of the Church, not only in our own lives, but in the whole economy of salvation and sanctification; indeed, we may say, in the whole pattern of human history. We are members of the Church; we participate in its life; we share its sorrows and its triumphs; we work, study, and pray for its objectives.

Loving the Church, we make the words of St. Aelred our own:

Let enemies say what they wish, let them lie as they will. Wherever the evidence of our eyes, the testimony of reason, the assurance of authority tells us that where the Roman Church is—there is my heart, my mind and my affection. From the faith of that Church, that faith which the prayer of Christ will never allow to fail; from its unity, which the depravity of schismatics will never divide for Christ protects it; from obedience to it, whose King will open to me the gates of heaven, neither death or life, nor any creature, through the help of God's grace will ever separate me.³⁶

³⁵ AAS, 42 (1950), p. 144.

³⁶ Migne, PL 195, 459-460, Sermon on Chapter 15 of Isaias.



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PRAY

**that all
may be one**