

Go you are sent... to fellow Christians

“Father, may they be one in us....”

JOHN 17:21

Pope Francis has made a point of meeting with other Christian leaders and taking joint actions with them. His emphasis is on deepening relationships and practical actions Christians can take together, rather than on doctrinal difficulties.

Last year Anglican Primate Archbishop Justin Welby told a gathering of Catholic and Anglican bishops that we can heal the wounds inflicted on each other and on the Body of Christ “... by walking side by side into a wounded world and seeking to heal the world, and in so doing, finding we heal one another.”

Many parishes share liturgies with other Christian denominations in Advent, on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Cooperation is also taking place in running or supporting foodbanks, and in sharing facilities such as churches and halls. In hospitals, prisons and tertiary institutions, Catholic chaplains work closely with chaplains from other Christian denominations and faiths.

“Ecumenism” has become identified in some places with the doctrinal and structural differences between denominations which we can do nothing about at diocese or parish level, as these are matters for the Holy See. At a local level, however, there are new opportunities to be explored in our relationships with other Christian denominations.

1. How could we expand joint prayer and worship with other Christian denominations?
2. What opportunities already exist to work with other denominations in the service of those who are disadvantaged in our community?
3. What new actions could we initiate with one or more other denominations to assist those in need?



“At this historic moment in time, the path to unity is threefold: it involves walking together through works of charity, praying together, and recognising common confession as expressed in the common martyrdom received in the name of Christ, in the ecumenism of blood... And these are all expressions of visible unity. Common prayer is visible. Performing works of charity together is visible. Shared martyrdom in the name of Christ is visible.”

POPE FRANCIS, INTERVIEW WITH AVVENIRE, NOV 2016

“While we journey together toward full communion, we can begin already to develop many forms of cooperation in order to favour the spread of the Gospel – and walking together, we become aware that we are already united in the name of the Lord.”

POPE FRANCIS, ADDRESS AT ECUMENICAL VESPERS 2016

“It would always be good, before beginning a particular activity to ask ourselves the following questions. Can we not do this together with our Anglican brothers and sisters? Can we not witness to Jesus by working together with our Catholic brothers and sisters?”

POPE FRANCIS, HOMILY AT VESPERS WITH ARCHBISHOP JUSTIN WELBY 2016

“Let’s leave it to the theologians to study the things that are abstract. Everyone else in the church should be asking how they can relate to other Christians as brothers and sisters...Be open, be a friend...walk together, pray for each other, and do works of charity together when you can. This is ecumenism.”

POPE FRANCIS, VISIT TO GEORGIA, SEP 2016

“By walking together and working together we realise that we are united in the name of the Lord and that it is not us therefore who create unity. We realise that it is the Spirit that pushes us and drives us forth.”

POPE FRANCIS, INTERVIEW WITH AVVENIRE, NOV 2016

“I can think of only one word to say: to come close. My hope and expectation is that of coming closer to my (Lutheran) brothers and sisters. Closeness does all of us good. Distance, on the other hand, makes us bitter. When we are distant, we close within ourselves and we become individual entities, incapable of encountering each other. We are held back by fears. We need to learn to transcend ourselves to encounter others. If we do not do this, we Christians, too, become sick because of our divisions.”

POPE FRANCIS, INTERVIEW WITH LA CIVILTA CATTOLICA OCT 2016