

## OIKOUMENE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMISSION FOR ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY, NY

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 1 PENTECOST NOVENA (5/13-23/21): DAYS ESPECIALLY RECOMMENDED FOR ECUMENICAL PRAYER)

\*OIKOUMENE IS GREEK FOR "HOUSE" "FAMILY" "PEOPLE" "NATION" "OPEN TO OR PARTICIPATING IN THE WHOLE INHABITED WORLD" AND IS THE SOURCE OF OUR WORD "ECUMENICAL," BUT HAS A BROADER SENSE. [PER ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA]

### "From the Desk of the Director"

Dear Clergy, Religious & Lay Friends,

"If we pray with Christians of other traditions, we may be surprised to feel united by a bond of friendship that comes from the One who is beyond all division. The forms may vary, but it is the same Spirit that brings us together."

-Graymoor: "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2021 – Day 4

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis met with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, an influential Shiite cleric, in the holy city of Najaf, Iraq. The Pope said: "The greatest blasphemy is to profane God's name by hating our brothers & sisters... Hostility, extremism and violence are not born of a religious heart; they are betrayals of religion."

"...The message of peace & tolerance that these two leaders preach adds a glimmer of hope to this war-torn country... The meeting was cheered by all peace-loving Muslims of the Middle East and beyond..." -Dr. Saeed Khan, Pres. of Outreach Committee ICCD -Evangelist -poster seen at Najaf airport where Pope Francis landed: "People are two kinds: either your brothers in faith or equal in humanity."

"...Francis' visit to Iraq seems rich in symbolism, wisdom, relevance and courage. The world needs religious leaders who visit war-torn lands and promote peace... Perhaps the pope's 'You are all brothers' message can point all of us toward another of the world's great theologians: Bono of the rock band U2, whose 2014 album 'Song of Innocence' repeats this proverb 7 times: 'There is no them. There is only us.' -Dallas Morning News editorial

This meeting, joined to that of Pope Francis' joint declaration on human fraternity in Abu Dhabi with Sunni Islam leaders from Al-Azhar University in Cairo in 2019, puts the Catholic world in healthy dialogue with the major branches of Islam. In his encyclical, Fratelli Tutti, the pope compares this meeting with St. Francis' with Sultan Malik-el-Kamil in Egypt in 1219.

"It's true that there are some who call themselves Christian who have followed other, false gods such as insurrectionism, racism and blind nationalism. But the way Jesus taught is the opposite of these evils... Instead of showcasing political loyalties, instead of condemning or defending, isn't it time to take a step back, to take a moment for prayer, listening, repenting, forgiving & healing?" -Heinrich Arnold: pastor of the local Bruderhof Community [Times Union – 3/13/21]

"We are forced to accept this ugliest, most redemptive truth: Each time one of us projects our internal anguish onto someone else; each time one person fixates on, scapegoats, or demonizes another person perceived to be different or threatening, instead of looking more critically at themselves, Eve & Adam the bereaved parents bury Abel anew, and God shakes God's head, muttering, 'How could you?'" -Cain V. Abel –local Rabbi Dan Ornstein



Prayer for the Canonization of Fr. Paul of Graymoor-Founder of the Society of the Atonement:  
“God of Unity & peace, in Christ your Son, You reveal your compassion for sinners & love for the poor which inspired Fr. Paul of Graymoor to pioneer the mission of Church Unity & spend himself in the care of our outcast brothers & sisters. Grant, we pray, that the example of this apostle of unity & charity will inspire us to advance the reconciliation of all things in Christ, without counting the cost....”

“Lord, give us the grace to live in full fellowship with our sisters & brothers of other religions, praying for one another, open to all...” -Pope Francis on World Religions Day

The 7 Deadly Sins:

Wealth Without Work

Pleasure Without Conscience

Knowledge Without Character

Commerce Without Morality

Science Without Humanity

Religion Without Sacrifice

Politics Without Principle

-Hindu Mahatma Gandhi (influenced by Jainism)

“I seem to hear whispered in my soul that God is always the friend & protector of truth.” Gandhi

“The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth, dwelling deeply in the present moment and feeling truly alive. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don’t even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child – our own 2 eyes. All is a miracle.” –Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hank (friend of Fr. Thomas Merton) –quoted in “Daily Reflections for Lent 3/8/21 (Mary DeTurriss Poust)

After 54 years (I’ve only been 39!) of working for Christian unity, Glenmary Fr. Frank Ruff has retired from Glenmary’s Ecumenical Commission, which he founded in 1967. He was for years the Roman Catholic presence at the Southern Baptist Convention:

“It’s been really fulfilling to see that more Catholics are seeing the necessity of Christian unity. Christian unity is learning to put the law of Jesus into practice of loving others. Don’t judge first, and if you can help it, don’t judge at all. Just love.” “AMEN!” (jk)

“You don’t have to focus on the limitations of another faith. Focus on the good and the depth of faith and the depth of their generosity.”

“The problem of Christian Unity is for everyone a problem of the orientation of the inner life, for unless it is oriented, even in secret, towards Christian Unity, how can Christians face this burning question? Unless it succeeds in gripping, even torturing the Christian conscience, what hope is there of its resolution?”

-Fr. Paul-Irenee Couturier – “Apostle of Christian Unity” (1881-1953)

...Dorothy Day “stressed often in her writings that we are all members of the same body. As Pope Pius XI said and Dorothy Day was fond of repeating, ‘Spiritually we are all Semites.’

Therefore, for true Christians, not only is there not a fundamental antagonism between



Christians & Jews but anti-Semitism constitutes a serious violation of Christian doctrine, a wound inflicted on the body of which we are all members.” –Patrick Henry –Catholic Worker  
-a Staten Island ferry is about to be named in honor of “Servant of God” Dorothy Day

#### PRAYER FOR PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND:

“God of our longing, remember those who wait and hope for peace. Hear our prayer and lament for our brothers & sisters in Israel & Palestine. With them we share a common story, set in a common homeland. Make common also a will to forgive, to reconcile, to make a just peace for the sake of the ancestors, for the sake of the children. Open our ears, eyes and hearts and make way toward justice in a war-torn world.

God all-merciful, you dwell in all human hearts and the Holy Land is wherever you make your home. Heal these broken places where prophets preached, where Moses and Jesus and Muhammad kept faith with you. Be a sure support for those who work toward reconciliation and make us all, however far away, steadfast in their cause. Amen.” -Edward O’N. Hoyt (CRS)

“We should give thanks...for this light that has been given to us. Let us pray for a better understanding of other Christian traditions so we may find the touchstones of faith and work toward a common vision of One Church. Remember too our unique spiritual kinship with the Jewish people, and pray for a greater understanding and sensitivity to other world religions.”

-“Seven Special Days of Prayer” for Holy Week –Maryknoll Sisters

“This mystery of evil also includes the base belief that some of us are more important, deserving and worthy than others. It includes the ugly conviction that this country and its history and opportunities and resources as well as our economic and political life belong more properly to ‘white’ people than to people of color. This is a perverse way of thinking that divides people based on heritage and tone of skin into ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘worthy’ & ‘unworthy’, paving the way to dehumanization. In other words, racism....Every race and color and tribe and people and language and culture are threads in the vibrant and diverse tapestry of the Reign of God....(Rev.)Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. put it well when he said, ‘I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.’”  
-Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas (10/13/19)

#### PRINCIPLES FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND INTERFAITH ATTITUDES:

-“....All that is good, true, and beautiful comes from one and the same author, God. Nothing that is true, irrespective of its particular religious or secular cloak, may be seen as opposed to true faith and religion.

-God wills the salvation of all people, equally, without discrimination, God has no favorites. All people have access to God and to God’s Spirit, and the whole of humankind has never lacked for divine providence. Moreover each religion is to reject nothing that is true and holy in other religions.

-No one religion or denomination has the full and whole truth. God is both infinite & ineffable. For this reason, by definition, God cannot be captured adequately in human concepts & human language. Thus, while our knowledge of God may be true, it is always only partial. God can be truly known, but God cannot be adequately thought.

Perhaps the issue of religious diversity might be described in this way:



*Different peoples, one earth    Different beliefs, one God    Different languages, one heart  
Different energies, one Spirit    Different forms of worship, one desire  
Different histories, one destiny    Different faiths...one beginning, one end.”*

-Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

The April 19<sup>th</sup> death of Cardinal Cassidy, former President of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council Promoting Christian Unity, reminded me of remarks he made during a visit to the College of St. Rose: that Albany was the 2<sup>nd</sup> best diocese in the U.S.A. in Jewish-Catholic relations ☺

*Praying for Unity:*

“...All of us need to pray for Christian unity, and then work for it. That prayer may start with asking ourselves 3 questions: First, what am I doing to extend fellowship to someone with whom I disagree? Second, how open am I to looking at the ways that I divide the Church? And third, what more can I do to help in the local community, in my parish, for example?”

-Fr. James Martin – Give Us This Day (April 2021)

Excerpts from FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church (2020):

§6: The surest warrant for and charter of an Orthodox social ethos is found, before all else, in the teachings of Christ. No feature of our Lord’s Gospel is more pronounced and constant than his absolute concern and compassion for the poor and disenfranchised, the abused and neglected, the imprisoned, the hungry, the weary and heavy-laden, the despairing.

§10: ...it would be irrational and uncharitable of Christians not to feel a genuine gratitude for the special democratic genius of the modern age.

§10: This can become an especially pernicious kind of false piety, one that mistakes the transient political forms of the Orthodox past, such as the Byzantine Empire, for the essence of the Church of the Apostles.

§11: But it is absolutely forbidden for Christians to make an idol of cultural, ethnic, or national identity. There can be no such thing as a “Christian nationalism,” or even any form of nationalism tolerable to Christian conscience. This must, unfortunately, be emphasized at the present moment, on account of the unexpected recrudescence in much of the developed world of the most insidious ideologies of identity, including belligerent forms of nationalism and blasphemous philosophies of race.

§11: There could be no greater contradiction of the Gospel (racism). There is only one human race, to which all persons belong, and all are called as one to become a single people in God the creator.

§12: One of the more morally corrosive aspects of modern democratic politics is the tendency to slander and revile—even, in fact, to demonize—others with whom one does not agree.

§14: And, throughout the early centuries of the faith, the Church’s provisions for the desperate—widows and orphans especially, who were often the most indigent and imperiled persons of the ancient world—made it the first organized institution of social welfare in Western society.



§16: The innocence of children is, therefore, a thing of extraordinary holiness, a sign of the life of the Kingdom graciously present in our very midst, and must be the object of the Church's ceaseless concern and diligence. The protection and care of children is the most basic and most essential index of any society's dedication to the good.

§16: No offense against God is worse than is the sexual abuse of children, and none more intolerable to the conscience of the Church.

§23: ...the Church should extend the sacramental gift of baptism to all children, irrespective of the manner in which they were conceived or adopted.

§24: The necessary touchstone for assessing whether any given reproductive technology is licit must be the inalienable dignity and incomparable value of every human life.

§25: A child's claim upon our moral regard then is absolute from that first moment, and Christians are forbidden from shedding innocent blood at every stage of human development.

§29: ...and the Church must continue to consider how women can best participate in building up the body of Christ, including a renewal of the order of the female diaconate for today.

§31: Euthanasia is alien to the Christian vision of life.

§38: And, though it be impolitic to do so, the Church must be willing to condemn moral derelictions in the allocation of civic wealth wherever it sees them.

§42: Nothing is more contrary to God's will for creatures fashioned in his image and likeness than violence one against another, and nothing more sacrilegious than the organized practice of mass killing.

§45: Self-defense without spite may be excusable; and defense of the oppressed against their oppressors is often a moral obligation...

§45: The use of force must always be the last resort of any just government, and must never become excessive.

§48: The Orthodox Church rejects capital punishment, and does so out of faithfulness to the Gospel and to the example of the Apostolic Church.

§48: Minucius Felix, St. Cyprian, and Tertullian all took it for granted that, for Christians, the innocent may never slay the guilty.

§49: As St. Basil says, "without peace with all people, in as far as it is within my possibilities, I cannot call myself a worthy servant of Jesus Christ." And, as he also adds, "nothing is so characteristic of a Christian as to be a peacemaker."

§51: ... the Orthodox Church earnestly seeks unity with all Christians out of love and desire to share the spiritual riches of her tradition with all who seek the face of Christ.

§51: ...and to seek unity among all who call upon the name of Jesus.

§52: ...Christians of all communions can meet together in love and work together for the transformation of the world. In particular, they can cooperate with one another in works of charity, thereby making God's love manifest to the world, and in efforts to advance social and civil justice, thereby proclaiming God's righteousness and peace to all peoples.

§54: ...the Church is dedicated to a sustained dialogue with other Christians.

§55: The Church thus seeks dialogue with other religious traditions not out of any desire to alter the deposit of her faith, much less out of any anxiety regarding that deposit's sufficiency, but out of a reverent love for all who seek God and his goodness, and in a firm certitude that God has left no people without a share in the knowledge of his glory and grace.



§55: ...knowing that God reveals himself in countless ways and with boundless inventiveness, the Church enters into dialogue with other faiths prepared to be amazed and delighted by the variety and beauty of God's generous manifestations of divine goodness, grace, and wisdom among all peoples.

§56: Though the Orthodox Church seeks deeper bonds of amity with all faiths, it recognizes her unique responsibility with regard to the other two "peoples of the book," the Abrahamic traditions of Islam and Judaism, with which it has longstanding dialogues and alongside which it has lived for millennia. Therefore, the Church can and does engage the beauty and spiritual truths of Islam in all its multiple traditions...

§57: As to Judaism, when the eternal Son of God became human he became incarnate as a Jew, born within the body of Israel, an heir to God's covenants with his chosen people. He came in fulfillment of God's saving promises to his people, as the Messiah of Israel.

§57: Orthodox Christians look to the Jewish communities throughout the world not merely as to practitioners of another creed, but as to, in some sense, their spiritual elders in the history of God's saving revelations...

§57: Bigotry and violence against Jews have long been a conspicuous evil of the cultures of Christendom...

§58: Moreover, the Church—illuminated by that radiance—enters into dialogue with other faiths fully prepared to be instructed by many of their own speculative, cultural, and spiritual achievements.

§59: Above all, it seeks to overcome ignorance, hostility, and fear with reciprocal comprehension and the peace of true friendship.

§64: In any society, the struggle for religious freedom and for respect for the conscience of every human being provides the most resplendent proof of the power of love over hatred, of unity over division, of compassion over indifference.

§65: During the Lenten fast of 379 AD, St. Gregory of Nyssa preached a sermon that was perhaps the first recorded attack on slavery *as an institution* in Western history.

§65: In time, Christian culture came to accept an evil it should have eschewed from the first.

§65: The Church re-affirms, therefore, the assertion contained in the *Declaration of Religious Leaders against Modern Slavery* (2 December 2014), to which it is a signatory, that slavery is "a crime against humanity"...

§66: No moral injunction constitutes a more constant theme in scripture, from the earliest days of the Law and the Prophets to the age of the Apostles, than hospitality and protection for strangers in need.

§67: At no time was the Church's philanthropic work limited merely to circumstantial good deeds toward the needy and suffering, but rather it sought to eradicate the causes that create social problems.

§68: Humanity occupies the place of a *methorios*, the boundary where the spiritual and material realms meet and are united...

§68: ...September 1—as early as in 1989, by Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios, of blessed memory, and subsequently adopted by all Orthodox Churches, by the World Council of Churches and many Protestant Confessions, by the Anglican Communion, as well as by Pope Francis for the Roman Catholic Church—as the annual day of prayer for and protection of God's creation.



§71: Christians should rejoice in the advances of all the sciences, gladly learn from them, and promote scientific education... In the eyes of the Church, all that contributes to the welfare of humanity and of creation as a whole is to be praised... The desire for scientific knowledge flows from the same wellspring as faith's longing to enter ever more deeply into the mystery of God.

§73: This profound belief in the goodness and beauty of all creation is the source and substance of the Church's whole cosmic vision.

§76: There is a close and indissoluble bond between our care of creation and our service to the body of Christ...

§80: ...the Orthodox Church celebrates every opportunity for encounter and reciprocal understanding between persons and peoples.

§82: ...the revitalization of the order of the diaconate, male and female, may serve as an instructive way of assimilating and applying the principles and guidelines proposed in this statement.

“...I actually think that one of the good things that is happening today is precisely the loss as Christians of our status and power in the wider society. That loss makes us free. We as Christ's disciples ain't got nothing to lose anymore. That is a great advantage because as a people with nothing to lose, we might as well go ahead and live the way Jesus wants us to. We don't have to be in control or be tempted to use the means of control. We can once again, like the first Christians, be known as that people that don't bull---- the world. Despair is a sin, and I'm hopeful because being a people of peace is ultimately about God's victory in the world. It's not about us.”

-Prof. E. Stanley Hauerwas (Duke U.), as quoted in (Bruderhof's) Plough magazine (Spring'21)

*Fr. Jim Kane*

