

# THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS

Audio Conferences  
July 25 and August 1, 2013

## *Ecumenism and Interreligious Relationships Based on Vatican Council Documents*

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### SESSION ONE: Reflections on Ecumenism Today

1. **Prayer and Conversion**—the grounding of ecumenism in prayer; the importance of change of heart. Ecumenism must go from an intellectual understanding to a commitment of the heart.
2. **Why be ecumenical?** Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper; teaching of the church in the Decree on Ecumenism; enhance the mission of the church; serve those in need....
3. **Role of the Holy Spirit**
  - a. Gradually moved from a focus on Christ to a more Trinitarian perspective—now seeking more of a focus on the Holy Spirit. This might be the Century or the Millennium of the Holy Spirit.
  - b. If we talk about relationships we talk about the Holy Spirit.
  - c. Ecumenism is about building relationships.
4. A short **History of the Ecumenical Movement**—Edinburgh meeting in 1910; Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarch in 1920; World Council of Church founded in 1948; Declaration on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, of the Second Vatican Council; *Ut Unum Sint*
  - a. International Structures—World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity;
  - b. National Structures—National Council of Churches; National Association of Evangelicals; Christian Churches Together.
  - c. Movements in the Church—the Focolare--Spirituality of Unity; religious orders [Paulists, Atonement men and women, and others]
5. A **Communion of Communions**—we are all returning to Christ or at least seeking to. Thus we are returning to one another. This goal is to bring all together with the distinctiveness of varied traditions. It is not obliterate the distinctions but to find common ground around which to unite. Knowledge of our Catholic identity is important and necessary if we are to find common ground. Ours is not a Least Common Denominator type of thinking.

6. **Both/and**—The necessary relationship of Scripture and Tradition, doctrine and life...For Christian Unity things go together---sometimes our differences are complementary.
  - a. We search for the truth
  - b. We presume the best of one another; we compare bests
  - c. We start our dialogue with ‘easier’ questions which may give us insights into ‘harder’ ones.
  
7. **Cultural Differences** do make a difference
  - a. With the Orthodox Christians—who did not experience either the Reformation or the Enlightenment.
  - b. In Africa and Asia—the struggle to inculturate.
  - c. The necessity of being conscious of our own cultural experience which we tend to presume is normative for others.
  
8. **Differences in the Understanding of the Church**
  - a. Local, Regional, or International
  - b. Hierarchical or Participative
  - c. The importance of reforming movements
  - d. The recent document of the World Council of Churches
  - e. The Harvest Statements—koinonia/communion as the underlying model
  - f. The New World Council of Churches document
  
9. **Local Reception**—Agreements ‘at the top’ must be received locally
  - a. What are the practices—the things we do together—that form us ecumenically?
  - b. Prayer for Unity
  - c. Interchurch marriages
  
11. **Eucharist/Lord’s Supper**
  - a. Difference in understanding and frequency
  - b. Divisions over Eucharistic sharing
  - c. Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Ravenna Statement of the Orthodox-Catholic International Dialogue in 2007; Full communion agreements—Lutherans and Reformed Living Together in Full Communion
  
12. **Moral Issues**--Diversity in Unity is especially challenging in **the moral arena**
  - a. Divisive moral issues such as Homosexuality
  - b. The lack of ecumenical dialogue on issues of personal morality until just recently
  - c. Can we disagree on some things—and how do we differentiate?
  
13. **God’s ways are mysterious.** God seems to work slowly. Yet there has been abundant change in the last few years. The key is prayer. **Christian Unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit.**