



The

ARK

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Rediscovering Christian Unity

Greetings to all interchurch families and interchurch children, to those who give them pastoral care, and especially to those potentially interchurch families who have not yet heard about the underlying principles of Vatican II nor even the concept of ecumenism. I send a special greeting of hope to those potentially interchurch families who have not yet had the opportunity to become truly interchurch families. My husband and I are an interchurch couple. I am an Episcopalian and he is a Catholic. We raised our children in both traditions.

We were both raised to be devout Christians in our own traditions, and it is perhaps that core foundation that drew us to each other. We came from two different parts of the country. Where I came from and the home that I came from allowed me more access to Catholics; I had lived with Catholic nuns in their convents on two different occasions during my life before I met my husband. These were positive experiences that were affirming of me in an ecumenical way.

My husband was well versed in Catholic teachings; he had attended Catholic schools

for his entire life, and he had lived in an all-Catholic neighborhood. Growing up, his friends were Catholic. I gave him his first bagel to eat after we were married. I had grown up around many Jews who shared their traditions and life style with me and with whom we share a common Judeo-Christian heritage. Now bagels are very common, but they weren't in Kentucky 34 years ago. On the other hand, Kentucky is in the heart of what is known as the "Bible Belt," and this would eventually become another ecumenical experience for me down the road in my understanding.

Very simply put, Vatican II is dedicated to rediscovering Christian Unity. It is not about converting other Christians to Roman Catholicism (or vice versa). The World Council of Churches supports this dialog and concept. It is an ecumenical movement. Dr. Eileen Scully, a Canadian theologian, believes that Christian Unity or Full Communion will be very different from the merger of two big commercial corporations or "even for pragmatic self-serving institutional reasons, but it's a sharing of life together, in response to God's gift of unity, for the sake of the world the unity of the Spirit is unity in a very different kind of power – one that seeks not to dominate, but to serve; one that is not concerned with institutional, cultural

or personal survivalism (or even religious survivalism!), but is ready to lay down its life for friendship.”

Paul DeLain Allick, an Episcopal theologian, suggests that we have become overly concerned with the size of the congregation sitting in the pews at the expense of our real purpose, which is to create Christian disciples. He notes that “God in Christ has reconciled us to each other, to God, and to all of creation. We are new creation. We are the priesthood of all believers. We invite the crowd to join us on our pilgrimage. We show them, not tell them, how our lives have been transformed by the gospel and by the sacraments we celebrate. Each of us becomes a catechist. This is the cost of our discipleship. Drawing a crowd this way takes time. Many will turn away. But those who engage will engage deeply and profoundly.” This reflects what Dr. Scully, the Anglican Canadian theologian, has said above.

Of course, what is preventing people from becoming ecumenists is more complicated than our need to pay the electric bills and to maintain historic church buildings. However, these are factors that need to be dealt with, but not at the expense of the pastoral care of interchurch families.

As Paul DeLain Allick says above, it will require our full dedication, and some are not up to it. We must, however, push on with what we have been called to accomplish as ecumenists to rediscover Christian Unity, not for ourselves, but for the good that it will bring to the world. He also points out that we show or demonstrate how our lives have been transformed. We are called to demonstrate ecumenism in action to show where it has worked before.

I went back to the concept of creating Christian disciples because I believe that is the heart of what rediscovering Christian Unity at the grass roots is all about. I keep in the back of my mind **Philippians 4: 8**. It had been one of mother’s favorite Bible passages as it had been

for her mother before her. Paul calls us to look for what is good in the world. It says:

“Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

—Mary Jane Glauber

How Can Ecumenism Be Taught?

By definition, when we say interchurch, we mean a family in which each parent is active in their own church while any children will be open to involvement in both churches. Some couples fail to become interchurch and are not able to contribute to rediscovering Christian Unity. With proper pastoral care, they may understand that they are not required to convert, that they do not need to seek out a compromise church and that they do not need to shift churches either way to create a single church family, as this does not create an ecumenical home. Pope Benedict XVI sees that interchurch families have the potential for being a “practical laboratory of [Christian] unity” if given the proper pastoral care by both of the communities from which they come.

1. Corrymeela Peace and Reconciliation Centre: <http://www.corrymeela.org/>

At Corrymeela, in Northern Ireland, we attended our first international interchurch families conference. It was the first time that our oldest daughter had been able to worship with both of her parents without it being a time of tension and conflict. The lesson to be learned is that interchurch children need to be supported, too. This was a pivotal point for our interchurch family, children and adults alike. At Corrymeela, we prayed the Lord’s Prayer together,

but each in our own versions at the same time. It was very affirming.

At Corrymeela, we learned that interchurch families are the new paradigm for Christian Unity. Up until that very moment, we had felt as if we were second class citizens in our churches. Fr. George Kilcourse, a Catholic priest in Louisville with an interest in what interchurch families have to offer, had found us much like in the parable of the lost coin and the lost sheep and told us about this conference. First he had listened to our stories, and he wrote a book called “Double Belonging, Interchurch Families and Christian Unity.”

Interchurch couples may be misidentified in their parishes as being single and available to be fixed up on a blind date. The Catholic wife is laughing about it now when she tells the story; fortunately, her Methodist husband had declined the blind date. Interchurch parents may be identified as single parents and sent information about support groups, for example, since the Protestant church has never seen the Catholic husband at church with the wife and the infants. One priest tells us that when he got ready to plan the funeral of a parishioner who had recently died, he got a call from a Protestant pastor saying that the man had also been attending the Protestant church with his wife for years and asking if they could plan a joint funeral. This was the first time the priest even knew that the man was in an interchurch marriage. With more information, interchurch couples will be able to self identify and they won't be afraid to self identify. These are missed opportunities. We can move on from here and look to the future.

At Corrymeela, when you enter into the dining room, you must fill up the tables in the order that you arrive at the door. This gets people to sit with people they would not normally sit with and to talk with them. This is the premise behind the Maline's Conversations, European ecumenical discussions that have been held since the middle of the 20th century, that once we get to talk to each other, we will get to

know each other, and we will get to like each other. It is true. At this point, everything that Jesus had hoped for is possible. Usually, Corrymeela is used to bring Protestants and Catholics out from Belfast and put them together so that they can meet face to face for the first time. In our case, as interchurch families, we got to discuss our role in rediscovering Christian Unity in a divided Christian community — which would be the greater community and not just Northern Ireland, although that context certainly came up in our discussions.

2. Interchurch Family Conferences:

<http://www.aifusa.org>

Corrymeela was a very powerful experience, as has been every interchurch family conference since that first one. We have continued to be nourished and nurtured by interchurch conferences and our membership in the organization. The American Association of Interchurch Families is part of an international organization, but we are seeking to establish more city chapters. Please seek how you can set up a chapter and how you can become a Chapter Coordinator. Please join now.

3. The Interdependent: <http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/interdep/20061027.pdf>

In England, interchurch families have something like a youth group where they have been raising their interchurch children as ecumenists. One of these young men, George Walsh, chair@ifyag.org.uk, went to Sibiu, Romania, as a Steward for the European Ecumenical Conference earlier this year. He said he did this because it energized him. In talking to the parents of other children who have been raised in truly interchurch homes, we find that they have a greater understanding of the concept of ecumenism. In contrast, the general public seems to have no understanding of the terms, “ecumenists” or “ecumenical.”

In keeping with the sentiments expressed in *The Interdependent*, interchurch chil-

dren seem to have a very high degree of involvement in community service programs such as: volunteering at Corrymeela, Habitat for Humanity, Americorps Vista Volunteer Teach For America, New York City Teaching Fellows in the Bronx, tutoring underprivileged inner-city kids after school, volunteering at a facility for the seriously handicapped, volunteering at a pre-school daycare for low income families, volunteering at an orphanage in Guatemala, studying integrated schools in Northern Ireland, and volunteering in Nicaragua's peace movement. Dr. Eileen Scully notes that truly interchurch families in Canada "give witness to a high degree of commitment in service to community. They are risk-takers, both in society and in church." She doesn't think that this is by accident.

4. "Integrated Schools" in Northern Ireland: <http://www.nimma.org.uk/>

In Belfast, interchurch parents have been instrumental in establishing what are called, "Integrated Schools." In Northern Ireland, this means that Protestant and Catholic children grow up going to school together in the same classrooms where they can get to know each other. This is good for rediscovering Christian Unity and it has also helped with calming the political situation in Northern Ireland.

We have Corrymeela, the integrated schools of Northern Ireland, Interchurch Families Conferences, and the way that interchurch children are being raised in England as shown through their publication, *The Interdependent*. <http://www.ifyag.org.uk/Interdep/>, to serve as examples for teaching ecumenism within an interchurch Protestant – Catholic dynamic. Interchurch Family Conferences are available in the USA.

—Mary Jane Glauber

Teaching Forgiveness

Desmond Tutu notes that we need to teach forgiveness in order for us to move along our journey. He says that "Forgiveness" is what helped them in South Africa in what had seemed like a hopeless situation. He was himself instrumental in the peace and reconciliation process in South Africa. As a child walking down the street with his mother, he remembers a priest passing them who tipped his hat out of respect toward his mother, a Black South African woman.

This was an example that was not lost on the young and impressionable Desmond Tutu who learned that people could learn to act differently. Most people would not have treated his mother as respectfully at that time and, in fact, Desmond Tutu had never seen anyone behave like this before toward his mother. Desmond Tutu grew up to become an Anglican priest who understands forgiveness, so that when things changed in South Africa there was not the blood-bath that accompanies many revolutions. It was handled the way that Jesus would have wanted. Desmond Tutu was instrumental in this process; a process that no one thought was even possible.

In searching for how to teach "forgiveness," the lack of which seems to be a factor that is holding back the rediscovery of Christian Unity and the teaching of Ecumenism, I went to the children's section of our local library to see what was there. I found *A Child's Book of Prayer in Art* by Sister Wendy Beckett. Sister Wendy had an excellent PBS series a few years ago. She says, "Looking at Art is one way of listening to God." The book was published by Dorling Kindersley in 1995. On the Introduction page, there is a painting "French Peasant Girls Praying," by Sir George Clausen. It is a lovely image that needs no further comment.

- To teach **Respect**, she has us look at the "Martyrdom of Saint Clement," by the artist Bernardino Fungai. It is from an altar piece.

- To teach **Love**, she has us look at the portrait of an old man and a young boy by the artist Domenico Ghirlandaio.
- To teach about the **Family**, she has us look at a painting of the Gower family by the artist George Romney.
- To teach **Understanding**, she has us look at look at “Christ Discovered in the Temple,” by the artist Simone Martini.
- To understand the importance of **Learning**, she has us look at and study “The Young Schoolmistress,” by the artist Jean-Baptiste-Simeon Chardin.
- To teach about **Forgiveness**, she has us look at a painting of “The Kiss of Judas,” by the artist Giotto di Bondone.
- To explain **Choosing Heaven**, she has us study “Charon Crossing the Styx,” by the artist Joachim Patinir.
- In order to explain **True Happiness**, she shows us “Portrait of a Young Man,” by the artist Alessandro Allori.
- To demonstrate **Thinking**, she has us look at “Seated Shepherdess,” by the artist Jean Francois Millet.
- To show us the value of **Determination**, she has us look at the painting, “Hunt by Night,” by the artist Paolo Uccello.
- To show us the purpose and value of **Selflessness**, she has us look at the painting “The Surrender of Breda,” by the artist Diego Velazquez.
- To show us the meaning of **Listening**, she presents us the painting “The Calling of St. Matthew,” by the artist Michelangelo Caravaggio.

All of these things we would want our children to know and we would want to understand them better ourselves so that we can teach them to our children.

Sister Wendy has us looking at the art work of some of the most famous in history so

that we can learn from them. This is wonderful for people of all ages! And it is a beautiful book! These are ecumenical Christian values. Sister Wendy has understood the underlying principles behind Vatican II that are common to all Christians. She goes “beyond” in her depth of understanding, and provides a book that we can actually use in our homes.

Sister Wendy says: “This book is about happiness with God. God is total love. Learning what God is like is called prayer. God is sad when we will not live in truth and goodness, because then we suffer, and God is always trying to draw us into happiness. Looking at art is one way of listening to God. So take your time. Look at only one picture at a time. Stay with it and let the picture draw you into itself and reveal itself to you... God will always help us, until we are true all the way through, as God is.”

This book is intended for children, but it is at the core of what we need to know as Christians. The following Prayers from Sister Wendy’s book could be useful for interchurch children, interchurch families, and their communities, as well as for all those who give them pastoral care in our search to rediscover Christian Unity:

A Prayer Regarding Forgiveness: “Never let me betray anyone, and if I do, please help me to say at once that I am sorry. Teach me that God always forgives, however dreadful I have been.”

A Prayer Regarding Understanding: “Please help me to understand other people and not be too upset when they do not understand me. Help me to understand that love and anger can go together.”

A Prayer Regarding Selflessness: “Please give me a loving heart that tries to understand how other people feel. Help me to be kind and sensitive and not to put myself first.” (I believe this may also have to do with the Golden Rule.)

A Prayer Regarding Listening: “When I pray, I listen to you, God. Give me an ear that really hears what you are saying and help me to understand what you are asking me to do.”

We can use all of these prayers to guide us no matter where we are on our journey to rediscovering Christian Unity.

—Mary Jane Glauber

A Need for the Eucharist in Our Lives

Regarding Christian forgiveness, in the Eucharistic Liturgy, we confess our sins. We confess to God what we have done and left undone. We confess what we have said and left unsaid. We know that Jesus sacrificed his life for us so that we could be saved; we are reminded of this in the Eucharistic prayers. God understands that, as humans, it is in our nature to “mess things up” and that we are constantly struggling to find the right path. It is through the Eucharist that we are forgiven by God and that we learn to forgive others. This is the Christian message to us. It is God’s message to us. Truly Christian interchurch families are nourished by communion and want to take communion together. Truly interchurch families have expressed this need many times.

We also have as an example in our lives Christ’s ministry, itself, of hospitality. As Christians, we are constantly reminded of God’s unbounded love for us. Jesus, during his life on earth, dined with all the wrong people according to Jewish sanitation and purity laws, but he did this to demonstrate the nature of God’s love and of God’s power. This power was far different from that of most earthly princes. He went beyond the laws as they were understood at that time. This is the same transformative nature that the Eucharist has in our

lives. Truly Christian interchurch families have expressed the need to share in this Eucharistic presence of Christ’s body and blood together in the Catholic Church as a means of nurturing their family life in that Church. Other Christian denominations have become more open in the last twenty years regarding communion practices in the United States. Communion is offered to Baptized Christians from any other denomination. Some denominations say, “This is God’s table and all are welcome here.” Yes, this is God’s table and not mankind’s table.

—Mary Jane Glauber

2008 AAIF Conference in Louisville

We have lined up an excellent speaker for the 2008 AAIF Conference in Louisville from June 27 through June 29 at Laws Lodge of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Daniel Olsen will speak. He has a M.A. in Theological Studies at Loyola in 2004. He completed a B.A. in Philosophy and History at St. Mary's University of Minnesota in 1998. After graduating from St. Mary's and prior to entering graduate studies at Loyola, he served as a Pastoral Associate at St. Charles (Roman Catholic) parish in Hartland, WI (near Milwaukee). His duties there included coordinating the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) program, working with liturgical ministers, leading prayer services, hospital visitations, and coordinating (and sometime leading) varying adult education programs. During that time he became aware of interchurch families and that the theology of the Roman Catholic Church seemed to be ahead of the pastoral realities in our parishes. He is currently utilizing a Schmitt Dissertation Fellowship through Loyola University Chicago to complete his dissertation in Constructive Theology entitled,

"Living Bridges: Interchurch Families as Domestic Churches." He expects to defend the dissertation next spring/summer and graduate by August (or May) of 2008 with a Ph.D. in Constructive Theology at Loyola University Chicago. He is a married Roman Catholic father of two. His wife is also Roman Catholic and they live in suburban Chicago, IL. His wife, Tracy, works at a consulting firm in Chicago. He has a daughter, Abigail, who is two, and a son, Matthew, who turned one recently.

—Compiled by Mary Jane Glauber

Further Reading:

Those who provide pastoral care and understanding in preparing potentially interchurch couples for marriage should refer to the following Vatican document. Interchurch couples, their families who love them, and the communities who wish to support them should also become familiar with the document:

- *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 1993 ("The Ecumenical Directory") http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_25031993_principles-and-norms-on-ecumenism_en.html Note the concept of "exception"-ality regarding the pastoral care and understanding of interchurch families. Sections #129-36 and #143-60 relate to the pastoral care of interchurch families. See especially #159-60 and the question of the possibility of "exception"-al Eucharistic sharing.

Other Useful Web Sites:

- <http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/sitemap.htm> This is the site map for the Interchurch Families Web site. You can find papers of interest on interchurch family topics here.

- www.interchurchfamilies.org/ifir/2007/ifir06-200704synod.pdf *Sacramentum Caritatis*. This is an explanation of this document for interchurch families from an historical and interchurch and Catholic perspective.
- <http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/journal/2004jan06.shtm> *An address to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*.
- www.interchurchfamilies.org/ifir/2007/ifir06-200704kasper.pdf *Spiritual Ecumenism*. Cardinal Kasper outlines the practical ways interchurch families can be helpful for Christian Unity.
- <http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/journal/98ja01.shtm> The Beatitudes for Interchurch Families.
- <http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/journal/v03n0104.shtm> *Churches Together in Marriage: Pastoral Care of Interchurch Families* (This is a 2 page, practical & very helpful guide).
- <http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/confer/caif/scully-e.shtm> "Together in Baptism and Marriage" (a must read, the nature of Christian Unity is not like a corporation's merger. We are following Jesus' example to go beyond, to turn the world upside down, even the Christian world of our churches).

—by Mary Jane Glauber

—issue edited by Carol Natella

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American Association of
Interchurch Families

Mary Jane Glauber
AAIF National Co-Chair
2506 Glenmary Avenue
Louisville, KY 40204