

ARK

MAY 2011

VOLUME 22
EDITION 5

The

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Interchurch Families: Christian Unity Made Visible in our Households



The ARK, a Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families

“A prayer that God might change our minds and hearts so that the obstacles to visible unity might be removed by God’s grace, forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Father Ernest Falardeau explains that “This “epicletic” dimension of the Eucharist, the work of the Holy Spirit, is at the heart of the Eucharist we offer. All other prayers have their beginning and summit in the prayer of Christ that we might

be one and might be saved.” For all Christians then being able to share this Eucharistic prayer is what unites us. Father Falardeau points out Cardinal Kasper’s book: Sacrament of Unity: The Eucharist and the Church in which he “speaks of the “ecumenism of life”, by which he means the prayer needed throughout the year that we might make ecumenism real in our lives. He quotes the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism saying that the heart of the ecumenical movement is spiritual ecumenism.” (Please see page 2)



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Continuing the theme we began during this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity:

Ecumenical Corner

Praying with the Church of Jerusalem

They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42)

The leaders of the Christian churches of Jerusalem were asked to prepare the theme and reflection for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The initial work of the Jerusalem group was further developed by the World Council of Churches and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. On December 7, 1965, Pope Paul VI met the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, and consigned to oblivion the mutual excommunications of 1054 and prayed for Christian unity. The impetus of that meeting continues to move the Christians of Jerusalem to work and pray for an ever deeper unity among all Christians.

United in Hope

What keeps the churches of Jerusalem united and hopeful for greater unity? It is the word of God (didache) which the early Jerusalem church received from the apostles and passed on (tradition) to succeeding generations. The description of the fellowship (koinonia) which the early Christians exemplify, consisted in seeing that no one was wanting in food, clothing and

shelter. They held everything in common and shared what they had and what was needed (Acts 2: 42-45).

The Eucharist (breaking of bread) was the heart of the liturgical life of the Jerusalem community. It still is. The Eucharist is not simply ritual, something that is made by human hands. As St. Isidore of Seville pointed out, it is God's "good gift" (Isidore's translation for eucharistia) by which we are able to give worthy thanks to God. The Eucharist is not something that is added to the saving sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary; it is that very sacrifice, offered "once for all" (Heb 10:10). It is his sacrifice which becomes the offering of the Church and each Christian.

The prayers that we offer are not a nostalgia for the unity of the early church of Jerusalem. It is a prayer that God might change our minds and hearts so that the obstacles to visible unity might be removed by God's grace, forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This "epicletic" dimension of the Eucharist, the work of the Holy Spirit, is at the heart of the Eucharist we offer. All other prayers have their beginning and summit in the prayer of Christ that we might be one and might be saved.

Ecumenism of Life

Cardinal Walter Kasper in Sacrament of Unity: The Eucharist and the Church (New York: Crossroad, 2004, p. 57-83) speaks of the "ecumenism of

life", by which he means the prayer needed throughout the year that we might make ecumenism real in our lives. He quotes the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism saying that the heart of the ecumenical movement is spiritual ecumenism. The living of the Christian life to the full, drawing near our Savior Jesus Christ, is the heart of the movement for Christian unity. This is making ecumenism a spirituality, a way of life, and a visible reality. If we spend the Week of Prayer in this way, we will be implementing the prayer of the churches of Jerusalem in apostolic times and today. We will be making unity real and visible, while waiting in hope for the coming in glory of Christ and his kingdom.

Father Ernest Falardeau



Blue Hyacinth in bloom

mjpg ©

CBS ENTERTAINMENT- RELEASED THIS ANNOUNCEMENT SOON AFTER THE 2008 AAIF BIENNIAL CONFERENCE IN LOUISVILLE

**08.26.2008 "CHRISTIAN UNITY," AN INTERFAITH RELIGION SPECIAL, TO BE
BROADCAST SUNDAY, SEPT. 21 2008 [Old News reviewed] ON THE CBS TELEVISION**

NETWORK CHRISTIAN UNITY, an interfaith religion special, will be broadcast Sunday, Sept. 21, 2008 on the CBS Television Network.

Over the centuries Christians have split into many groups, not always on friendly terms. Christian Unity is an ongoing attempt to bring Roman Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox into further dialogue and cooperation. This year The Annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity celebrates its 100th anniversary in this country.

The Graymoor Spiritual Life Center, in Garrison, N.Y. is a Roman Catholic Community that is home to the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement and where Christian unity is encouraged year-round. The group sponsors its annual "Week of Prayer" during the month of January, to encourage Christian unity, which a tenth century Abbot described as a, "unity that Christ wills, as he wills and when he wills". Rev. James J. Gardiner, SA, is director of the Graymoor Spiritual Life Center, and he offers an historical perspective on the center's significant contributions to the ecumenical movement.

The program also includes interviews with the Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, a leading voice in ecumenism and the state of the movement today, and with Rev. George A. Kilcourse, professor of theology at Bellarmine University, Louisville, Ky., author of Double Belonging: Interchurch Families and Christian Unity, and a pioneering voice in the field of ecumenical marriages. He joined by a colleague, Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty, Associate Professor of Theology at Bellarmine, who adds her perspective.

We explore Louisville, Ky., a southern, Bible-belt community where the ecumenical spirit thrives. We learn how the city effectively embraced the idea of unity among Christian denominations, not only through community outreach but also in helping to bridge racial divides.

The Rev. Joe Phelps, Pastor of Highland Baptist Church, is interviewed alongside Rev. Clay Calloway, Associate Minister of St. Stephen's Baptist Church, as they talk about "No Murders Metro," an inter-denominational campaign they created to raise awareness about local homicides. Rev. Phelps says, "We've found common cause in our faith, and in the issues that face us as people across the denominational and racial lines that unite us. "

Also featured is Rev. Lincoln Bingham, Pastor, St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, who has devoted much of his religious life to the ministry of reconciliation. As co-chairman of the Greater Louisville Christian Reconciliation Ministries, he is quoted as saying, "What we do helps to open eyes. When I get in a dialogue with a ministerial group of different denominational affiliation my understanding is opened and broadened." CHRISTIAN UNITY reveals the wishes of many that the one Christian faith be fully united once again.

John P. Blessington is the executive producer; Liz Kineke is the producer. The special is produced with the cooperation of The National Council of Churches, The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Islamic Society of North American, the Union for Reform Judaism and The New York Board of Rabbis.

In the January and February issues of the ARK this year, several suggestions were included for ways that we might be able to keep that ecumenical dialogue on-going in our own communities. Please share your journeys and stories with other ARK readers. Please send your written stories to the ARK: mjglauber@gmail.com

Ecumenism in interchurch marriage

by Rich Heffern
Nov. 27, 2009

Reprinted with permission from Rich Heffern of the National Catholic Reporter

When Steve and Jo Ann Schweitzer, a Cincinnati couple in a Catholic-Presbyterian marriage, first presented a workshop 13 years ago on what canon law still refers to as “mixed marriages,” one couple attended. Today similar workshops draw 75 couples or more.

Deacon Fred Merritt of the Cincinnati archdiocese’s family life office told NCR he estimates that nearly 40 percent of marriages there are interchurch.

“We approach these marriages like any marriage. The couple requests a wedding date at the parish and then they enter into the parish’s specific marriage preparation process.”

He said many times a deacon is asked to prepare and

preside at the wedding, since they are usually marriages outside of Mass.

In those cases where a couple would like to be married in a non-Catholic facility, permission from the archbishop must be obtained. The Catholic party in the wedding is asked to sign a document indicating the intention to teach the children about the Catholic faith. In those cases where the non-Catholic party is not baptized, a dispensation must be obtained through the chancery, according to Merritt.

Merritt said that there are as many interchurch marriages



between Catholics who seldom attend Mass as there are with those who frequently attend. “I find that many times the interchurch engaged couples attend each others’ liturgy

together on a regular basis to try to better understand how it could affect their own practice in the future.

“Unfortunately, many couples who do this tell me they feel more welcomed at the non-Catholic liturgy than at the Mass. The non-Catholic often feels like an outsider while the Catholic is welcomed at the non-Catholic liturgy.”

In the Savannah, Ga., diocese, an area where Catholics are fewer in numbers, the split between Catholic and interfaith marriages is about even, said Pat Brown, a sister of St. Mary of Namur and director of the family life office. “From 1998 to 2009 pretty consistently we have had almost 50/50 Catholic and interfaith marriages. In 2009 there were 236 Catholic marriages and 178 interfaith marriages. In the Hispanic community we find most of the marriages are Catholic.”

She said marriage preparation in the diocese does not focus specifically on or offer a special session for interfaith couples, “although that would be ideal. Many of our couples find it difficult to schedule even the one-day workshops since many are military, students or young professionals, so we haven’t offered an additional workshop for them. We do encourage discussion of spirituality, religious values and decisions around raising children while respecting each other’s faith.”

Interdenominational, ecumenical, interreligious, interchurch -- all these terms are used. “Some involved in ministry prefer ‘interchurch’ because it defines each partner’s commitment to remain true to his or her religious heritage while working to restore unity among Christian churches,” said Elizabeth Bookser Barkley, professor at Cincinnati’s Mount St. Joseph College who writes about Catholic marriage.



“Whatever you call them, these marriages can enrich both partners and their churches if couples, along with their faith communities, acknowledge early on that they’ll have to work to keep both faiths intact.”

Couples in interchurch marriages “don’t like to see their marriages treated like problems,” says Fr. George Kilcourse, professor of theology at Bellarmine College in Louisville, Ky., and founder of the American Association of Interchurch Families. “The problem is not their marriage, but the division between churches into which they’ve been baptized. We need to start putting the emphasis where it belongs: Christian churches’ indifference to unity.”

The Second Vatican Council’s “Decree on Ecumenism”

speaks of the scandal of baptized Christians and churches being divided, according to Kilcourse. “For that reason, the church

irreversibly committed itself to the visible restoration of full communion. In the same way, the council’s reference to ‘the separated brethren’ suffers from misunderstanding. Such a separation or division of Christians implies an anomaly. It is a situation which ought not to exist among baptized persons.”

It’s not that Protestants have arrogantly separated themselves from the Catholic church; Catholics and Protestants alike are victims, Kilcourse said.

He cited the words of the “Decree on Ecumenism,” which said: “The children who are born into these communities and who grow up believing in Christ cannot be accused of the sin involved in the separation, and the Catholic church embraces upon them

as brothers, with respect and affection.”

Kilcourse said that a pair of steps could move the church toward healing this division with regard to interchurch marriages. “First, Catholics need to recognize the integrity with which interchurch families constitute a ‘domestic church,’ a church of the home that responds to Christ’s universal call to holiness.”

Second, bishops need to embrace and put into practice all the pastoral possibilities envisioned in the Vatican’s 1993 “Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism.”

“The extraordinary possibility of limited eucharistic sharing is pastoral care especially relevant for authentically interchurch couples. They are very different from ‘mixed marriage’ couples because they conscientiously remain active in their own church, participate to varying degrees in their spouse’s church, and both take an active role in the religious education of children. They bring both extraordinary gifts and unique needs to the church.”

Newly married interchurch couples benefit from open-mindedness, listening to one another’s religious story, and making visible in their relationship the unity that Christ wills for the church, according to Kilcourse.

“I often remind such couples that in the marriage rite we affirm, ‘What God has joined, we must not divide.’ In that sense, we priests and deacons who witness interchurch marriages are defenders of the bond in a special ecumenical sense. The church even delegates to the Protestant spouse a special ministry in the church -- to see that children are raised according to the law of Christ and the church. In light of Vatican Council II’s ‘Declaration on Religious Liberty,’ a Protestant spouse is free to make an equivalent promise as the Catholic about baptizing and then raising the child in his/her own church.

“So couples need to work out, in the context of their unique relationship, the religious identity of children in a way that respects their ecumenical, or interchurch, identity.”

The council reminded us, Kilcourse said, that “whatever is truly Christian never conflicts with the genuine interests of the faith; indeed, it can only result in more ample realization of the very mystery of Christ and the church.”

Rich Heffern is an NCR staff writer. His email address is rheffern@ncronline.org

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Source URL: <http://ncronline.org/news/ecumenism-interchurch-marriage>

Interchurch Marriages: How to Help Them Succeed -

by
Elizabeth Bookser Barkley

In this Catholic Update they explain that it is our tendency to often focus on the two partners in an interchurch marriage, in this article it notes that it is also a valuable tool for: family members, friends and fellow parishioners, as we reach out to support interchurch couples in their faith journey.

This article from “Catholic Update” notes that “Many Catholics married to persons of other Christian denominations feel left out of parish activities because they don’t fit the profile of the “normal” Catholic marriage.” The percentage of marriages in the Roman Catholic Church to other Christian denominations is significant enough that this topic should be examined for the potential it holds. This article begins that journey for the churches.

The purpose of this “Update” was to “remind the whole Catholic community of the vital role interchurch couples can play in working toward full unity of those whose common bond is Jesus Christ. That these marriages succeed is the concern of us all.”

The introductory paragraph notes that “For Catholics about to set out on the journey of marriage with a person of another Christian denomination, the path ahead may seem fraught with perils: dispensations to be obtained, in-laws to placate, serious faith matters to ponder, such as the religious education of children.”

However, on the other hand, we are left with a sense of hope and of purpose as interchurch couples and those who give them pastoral support. Why? The article explains, “... couples who have lived creatively and faithfully, in such a marriage, counsel that what may look like obstacles can actually lead to real growth in this exciting journey of love together.”

Please note that we are all working toward the same goal and that it is not uncommon that what we have struggled with the most becomes the best lesson from God.

This article examines what Christian Unity means, why it is important and the role that interchurch families play in this process for our Church United of tomorrow, and that reconciled Church “That they



may be one” that Christ wished for us. ~ John 17:21

Working toward Christian unity

Couples in interchurch marriages “don’t like to see their marriages treated like problems,” says Father George Kilcourse, professor of theology

AAIF

City Chapters & Listening Project

Are you interested in meeting and talking to other interchurch families in your city between AAIF Biennial Conferences?

Please See
www.aifusa.org for
membership information
- 2011 dues are due

Please contact:
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or **Laura & Franz Green**
at fandlgreen@cox.net
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Materials to be used by your
aif City Chapters.

at Bellarmine College in Louisville, Kentucky, and author of Ecumenical Marriage.

“The problem is not their marriage, but the division between the Churches into which they’ve been baptized. We need to start putting the emphasis where it belongs: Christian Churches’ indifference to unity.”

“Since the Second Vatican Council, one of the most important thrusts of Catholic Church teaching has been ecumenism, a vision that some day Christian Churches will return to the unity that marked the early Christian Church. “No place does this occur more deeply than in homes where married Christians of different Churches live and share the faith, trying to understand what they have in common,” affirms Father Dohrman Byers, pastor of Old St. Mary’s Church in Cincinnati, Ohio.” reports E.B. Barkley

'What's in a name?'

This part of the article will explain why the term interchurch serves this ministry best.

Eight pointers for success

Elizabeth Bookser Barkley researched and found eight pointers for success in interchurch marriages.

Although there may be no single path for interchurch families to be or to become

interchurch, there may be many ways to help them to succeed as interchurch couples.

Laying the foundations of unity

By supporting these marriages, the greater community would be moving the churches along further toward that unity for which they hope and aspire. These are the concrete ideas for making marriages work.

Elizabeth Bookser Barkley notes that interchurch families are living examples of a Christian Unity for which the rest of us can only aspire and should aspire.

Elizabeth Bookser Barkley, Ph.D., is a professor of English at the College of Mount St. Joseph in Cincinnati. She is the author of three books and numerous feature articles.

Please see the following link for information about how to purchase copies of the full article

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0690.asp>

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IFIN - Interchurch Families International Network: A Report From Around the World - Germany

“Kirchentag,” an ecumenical event that is particular to Germany, took place in Munich last year. “Kirchentag” is a significant ecumenical event in Germany. At Munich last year there were 110,000 people who paid for the whole 4 days, and more than 300,000 people who got a day ticket for one of the 4 days that the event was held there.

Report on the Seminar: Separated at the table of the one Lord? held at the Ecumenical Kirchentag in Munich.

At the Second Ecumenical Kirchentag, which attracted more than 130,000 visitors to Munich from the 12 – 16 May, on the theme: **So that you might have hope**, the German interchurch families association (Netzwerk Ökumene: Konfessionsverbindende Paare und Familien in Deutschland) was responsible for the first time for seven events:

We had a stand in the Agora in Hall 6 of the Exhibition Centre, where fifteen couples in turns ran the stand, and another stand in the Icesports Centre, a big hall where the international movement of Christian communities “Together for Europe” held events for a whole day.

Members of the Netzwerk Committee also organised an ecumenical service for interchurch couples in a the big St. Maximilian church with the theme: “Unity despite everything”.

Members of the Netzwerk Committee were involved in three panel discussions in large exhibition halls with an audience of more than 5000 people: the panel on which I include a report below; the panel on the theme: “Pioneers for unity or the ones who are suffering from the separation of the churches? Interchurch families as domestic Church”; and the panel on “Living today the Church of tomorrow”.

And other members of the Netzwerk organized an act of worship in the exhibition hall.

I was invited to take part in the seminar held on the 14 May: **Separated at the table of the one Lord? Considering the Lord’s Supper and the Eucharist.**

In a very full hall statements were presented by Bishop Dr. Jaschke, Bishop Junkermann, myself, Dr. Moga and Dr. Plisch on the questions: **What does the Lord’s Supper mean to me? What do the fellowship of the Lord’s Supper and eucharistic hospitality mean to me? What questions do I have about the practice of other churches?** which were then commented on by Prof. Dr. Otto Hermann Pesch.

The Catholic Bishop Jaschke and the Orthodox theologian Moga explained that a shared eucharist and the unity of the Church belong closely together, while the Lutheran Bishop Junkermann said: **It is the same Lord in whom we are united by our Baptism, who invites us to His table.** In his commentary the Catholic theologian Pesch called for believers to make a decision according to their conscience. He pointed to interchurch couples and families as **the nucleus of the future church community.** And Dorothea

Sattler, Director of the Ecumenical Institute in Münster, explained that work was ongoing towards a common definition of the Lord’s Supper and the Eucharist.

View into one of the large convention halls with a sign "HALLE ÜBERFÜLLT," which in English means "the hall is full, no more seats". In the hall C1 of the Exhibition Centre, where seminar No 6 took place, there were seats for 5000 people. Since it was full, there was a need for the sign "Halle uberfullt" as shown below. Also note the extremely large number of hopeful people desiring to be able to get in who had to be turned away.



In my own statement I said among other things that we had given up taking Communion at both the Lord’s Supper and the Eucharist for 20 years, as we did not want to participate separately. We had married in a Catholic church in 1965 as my husband would otherwise have been excluded from the sacraments of his own church.

Our three children were baptised Catholics. After the First Communion of our youngest daughter I went to our Catholic priest and showed him the results of the theological dialogue, after which we were invited to share the Eucharist at Mass. There are still couples who suffer through not being invited together to the Eucharist and the Lord’s Supper. Shared pastoral care by the churches is so rarely possible.



Ein Kirchentagsbild: Der Andrang in die Kölner Messhallen war auch bei diesem Protestantentreffen ungeheuer groß. Foto: dpa

I finished by saying: **At least interchurch couples and families should be officially invited to participate fully in the Eucharist and the Lord’s Supper, as an essential part of their Christian marriage and family life.**

So that you might have hope? Don’t let’s give up hope!

Rosmarie Lauber

Translation by Melanie Finch



Statement for Seminar No 6

Separated at the table of the one Lord? Considering the Lord’s Supper and the Eucharist.

(Friday 16:00 – 17:30 Hall C1, Exhibition Centre)

(Rosmarie Lauber, Methodist / husband RC / 3 adult children RC)

What does the Lord’s Supper mean to me?

The Lord’s Supper is an important element of my faith. In the celebration of the Lord’s Supper Christ offers himself to us for the forgiveness of our sins.

In the celebration we experience the fellowship of our church community.

What do the fellowship of the Lord’s Supper and eucharistic hospitality mean to me?

We were married in 1965 and we have always attended worship together, alternate weeks in each of our churches. We experienced great suffering when for 20 years we had to give up taking Communion at the Lord’s Supper or at Mass, as we both found it impossible to do so on our own. We only shared the Eucharist together at the interchurch families conference in Neresheim. After our daughter’s First Communion I could no longer bear being excluded from the Eucharist. Following an invitation from our Catholic priest we have taken Communion together at Mass since 1985. We do the same in my church at the Lord’s Supper. The results of the dialogue between the churches have been a great help.

What questions do I have about the practice of other churches?

Although the theological dialogues have brought a wide measure of agreement on the theology of marriage as well as the Lord’s Supper and the Eucharist, the Catholic bishops have not taken any further the decrees on interchurch marriage given by Rome through the Ecumenical Directory (1993) or the paper from the Ecumenical Commission of the German Bishops’ Conference on the question of eucharistic hospitality with regard to interchurch couples and families (1997).

Interchurch families suffer from the fact that they are not officially invited to Communion. They often have difficulties in finding a church community where they feel at home. Many stay away from the church, because for them the most important expression of Christian marriage and family life is not officially granted.

Shared pastoral care to interchurch couples is so rarely possible.

At least interchurch couples and families should be officially invited to participate fully in the Eucharist and the Lord’s Supper, as an essential part of their Christian marriage and family life.

~ Rosmarie Lauber

*Translation into English
by Melanie Finch*

*** **Kirchentag Dresden 1-5th June 2011** ***
<http://www.kirchentag.de/>

If you are interested, or require further information,
please contact Birte by email ➔ [fischer_birte\(at\)web.de](mailto:fischer_birte(at)web.de).

To secure a place you need to give Name/Address/Telephone/Date of Birth.

“So that you might have hope”

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Our stand at the Ecumenical Kirchentag in Munich. The sign "Konfessionsverbindende Paare" in English is "Interchurch Couples"



What is a German “Kirchentag” ?

A “Kirchentag” is held every year; it is the most important convention of Protestant and Catholic churches in Germany with typically more than 100 000 Christian participants..

There are 3 types of this 4-day-event:

Protestant Kirchentag (called Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchen-Tag DEKT) every 2 years, organized not by the churches, but by an independent organization in cooperation with the Protestant bishops.

Pink roses,
blooming in May



Catholic Kirchentag (called Deutscher Katholikentag) also every 2 years, alternating with the Protestant Kirchentag, organized by a lay organization, in cooperation with the Catholic bishop of the diocese in which the Kirchentag takes place. Ecumenical Kirchentag (called Ökumenscher Kirchentag ÖKT) every 7 years, which is organized jointly by Protestants and Catholics..

These 3 types of Kirchentag are very similar in their structure and also concerning their ecumenical character:

For 4 days in May, each day is filled with Bible studies, lectures, forum discussions, etc, mostly located in big convention halls where up to 5000 people can sit and listen.

There is a so-called Agora , where hundreds of institutions, groups etc. have stands,

located mostly in a number of large convention halls. Our interchurch families network has been present with a stand at every Kirchentag since the year 2000.

Not only at the Ecumenical Kirchentag every 7 years, but every year at the Protestant as well as the Catholic Kirchentag many Christians of other churches participate. And always bishops and lecturers from other denominations are present.

At the first Ecumenical Kirchentag in Berlin in 2003 as well as at the second

Ecumenical Kirchentag, which was held last year in Munich, more than 300 000 Christians came together. The majority were young Protestants and Catholics between 15 and 30 years old.

~ Prof. Dr. Rudolf Lauber

"...there your heart will be also" is the Kirchentag theme, taken from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:21). Jesus asks: to what is your heart committed? Treasures in heaven or on earth? What is really important in life? For what and for whom does your heart beat? Is your heartfelt conviction one of a good life for everyone, a healthy environment, a world of peace and justice? Each and every one of us has been given a sense of responsibility in our heart. When we recognise that we are ourselves loved by God, then we are able to pass on this love with all our heart.

Dresden embraces the Kirchentag with open arms. The churches, the city, the region and the people of Saxony bid you welcome. Behind the splendid panorama provided by the River Elbe there lies, on both sides of the river, a city full of public spirit and culture, with **many sides and many surprises waiting to be discovered.** Dresden stands for reconciliation and peace, music and debate, the courage for rebellion and civic resistance.

At Kirchentag, everyone is invited – not just Protestant Christians.

**IFIN - Interchurch Families
International Network:
A Report From
Around the World
- The Ukraine**

The Director of the Institute of Ecumenical Studies at the Catholic University of Lviv in the Ukraine sends the following report:

**A Call to Celebrate the
Resurrection of Christ on
the same day: 8th April 2012**

At present Christians throughout the world celebrate the great feast of Easter on two different days – a sad sign of the divisions that tear them apart. However it happens that on 4th April 2010 and 24th April 2011 the feast of Easter falls on the same day according to both eastern and western calendars. The signatories of the text below call on Christians of all denominations to use this period to prepare to **celebrate the feast of Easter on the same day on 8th April 2012**. This date is calculated according to the rule and method agreed by Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox in 1997. The advantage of this

“So that you might have hope”



Hosta Lily Leaves

Registration has begun for “Strengthening Beloved Community” - Please see: <http://www.fgcquaker.org/gathering/2011/strengthening-beloved-community> This event will take place in Grinnell, Iowa this year.



Detail of a window at the Episcopal Church of the Advent, Louisville, KY - The windows were made and installed circa 1875

John 17: 19- 21

19 And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.

20 "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,

21 so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

Desert road at Arcosanti, AZ



evangelical Churches of the Middle-East, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, the Lutheran World Federation, the Middle-East Council of Churches, the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church, Seventh-day Adventists and the World Council of Churches.

If the astronomical calculation of the Nicean rule is more accurate in the Gregorian than in the older Julian calendar, the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches took a step towards the Orthodox at Aleppo by agreeing to fix the date of Easter according to a cosmic calendar rather than by deciding on a fixed date, as the Holy See had proposed before the pan-Orthodox meeting at Chambésy in July 1977.

This pan-Orthodox meeting at Chambésy recalled that the symbol of the Spring equinox is that of the first day of creation, marking the separation of day and night and proclaiming the

IFIN News continued

calculation, as all agree, is that it actualises the rule established by the fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea.

In the early Christian centuries there was disagreement about the date of Easter. The Ecumenical Council of Nicea, in 325, settled the question by establishing the rule that Easter should be celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon after the Spring equinox. This kept a link between the Scriptures and the feast of Easter, while the Council acknowledged that the celebration of Easter should not be a cause for division among Christians. When Pope Gregory XIII, aware of the inaccuracy of the Julian astronomical calculations in force at the time, reformed the calendar in 1582, this had the effect of destroying the consensus. Most Orthodox Christians wanted to keep to the Julian calendar. Today all the

Churches recognize that there are inaccuracies in both methods of calculation.

A conference was held at Aleppo, in Syria, 5-10 March 1997, when the representatives of the major Christian traditions agreed on how to establish a common date that would be acceptable to the whole Christian world. The proposal was that the Churches would continue to follow the Nicean rule for calculating the date of Easter, but they would rely on very exact modern astronomical data, and use the Jerusalem meridian. This conference at Aleppo, hosted by the Syrian Orthodox Church, included representatives of the Anglican Communion, the Armenian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople, the

Desert Plants at Arcosanti, AZ



victory of light over darkness. The symbol of the full moon (which earlier marked the Jewish Passover) is that of the fourth day of creation, marking the creation of the two lights, and anticipating the victory of light over darkness. Finally the symbol of the first Sunday after the full moon of the Spring equinox recalls the Resurrection of Christ, the unique and definitive victory of life over death in human history, leading to the eternal eighth day of creation. Thus the feast of Easter is always celebrated according to the Nicene rule *after* the Jewish feast of Passover (since the old Jewish calendar linked the covenant between God and humanity with the crossing of the Red Sea and the fourth day of creation).

Thus celebrating Easter according to the Aleppo proposal allows all Christians to recover the meaning of the message of the fathers of the Ecumenical Council of Nicea, that on the day of the Resurrection the whole earth is given light. One hemisphere receives all the light of the sun, and the other receives all the light of the moon.

The representatives of the major families of Christian Churches who met at Aleppo made a second recommendation, namely that there should be a period of study and reflection on this consensus in order to facilitate its acceptance.

In April 2009 an ecumenical seminar was held at Lviv, organized by the Institute of Ecumenical Studies of the Catholic University of Lviv. It gathered representatives from all the Christian Churches of the city (Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants), as well as representatives from the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and from the World Council of Churches. They studied the consensus reached at Aleppo in a very positive way. They also expressed the desire that 2010 and 2011, when by chance Easter falls on the same day according to both calendars, should be a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter on the same date in 2012. This would be on 8th April 2012, the date that would conform by astronomical calculations to the Nicene rule. At the press conference that followed the seminar, participants explained that



because the Orthodox Churches had confirmed the consensus represented by Chambésy in 1977 (at the preparatory conference for a Holy Orthodox Council in 1982) this was a real possibility.

Together Christians throughout the world can unite their prayers and their efforts to ensure that the years 2010 and 2011 lead to the widest possible celebration on 8th April 2012 – wherever Christians arrive at a consensus and obtain the blessing of their bishops or church authorities – of the victory, the true victory, of Christ over death.

Signatures (Surname, Christian name, email address), preceded by the message: ‘I support the call to celebrate the feast of Easter on the same day, 8th April 2012, following the Aleppo consensus, wherever Christians obtain the blessing of their bishops or church authorities’ should be sent to the Institute of Ecumenical Studies (UCU) of Lviv: HYPERLINK mailto:ies.ucu@gmail.com ies.ucu@gmail.com

“Please think on these things” especially as to how they may affect interchurch families and Christian Unity. - M.J. Glauber

This report was forwarded on by Ruth Reardon for publication in the ARK.

Detail of a window at the Episcopal Church of the Advent, Louisville, KY - The windows were made and installed circa 1875



<http://ucu.edu.ua/eng/>

IFIN News continued

It should be noted that the Director of the Institute of Ecumenical Studies at the Catholic University of Lviv in the Ukraine is Orthodox and married to a Roman Catholic. This makes this news that is really relevant for many interchurch families who are already in an Orthodox marriage with a Christian from another denomination since they can now celebrate Easter on the same Sunday of the year. The fact that this impacts someone at a university who is the Director of Ecumenical Studies who would be in a position to understand the ramifications of the impact that this kind of change might have on the family is quite significant. It is our lived experiences of Christian Unity and our shared stories of that Christian Unity that seem to be leading us in the direction toward the (Christian) Unity that "they may be one" that Christ wished for us.

~ M.J. Glauber



Roses in bloom in May in Kentucky

Many Thanks to everyone who helped to make this issue of the ARK possible !!

Special Thanks are extended to Father Ernest Falardeau, Rich Heffern, Dr. Elizabeth Bookser Barkley, Father George Kilcourse, The Catholic Update, Rosmarie + Prof. Dr. Rudolf Lauber, Melanie Finch, Ruth Reardon, the Director of the Institute of Ecumenical Studies at the Catholic University of Lviv in the Ukraine, Netzwerk Ökumene:konfessionsverbindende Paare und Familien in Deutschland, <http://www.kirchentag.de/>, Franz and Laura Green and all of the AAIF Board, and then especially to my husband, Peter Glauber

Looking forward to the 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference
- details to follow at www.aifusa.org

The ARK

THE ARK, A PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF INTERCHURCH FAMILIES

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MARY JANE GLAUBER, VOLUNTEER Servant ARK editor

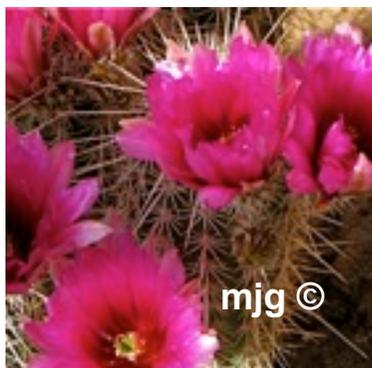
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To:

Cacti in bloom in May at Arcosanti, AZ



May 2011

Volume 22
Edition 5

International Standard Serial Number: **ISSN 1943-6467 (print)**
ISSN 2160-682X (online)