

### 3-Minute Catechesis: Ecumenism & Interreligious Relations

“In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.” This is the opening paragraph of “In Our Time,” one of the documents issued by the Second Vatican Council over 40 years ago. This document revolutionized Catholic thinking by stating without question that the Jews were chosen by God, and urged us to focus on the commonalities that exist between the two religions. We, as Catholics, are determined to fulfill that legacy.

At the World Jewish Congress in 2005, Cardinal Angelo Scola said that Jews and Catholics are siblings who share a covenant with God: "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - like the God of Jesus Christ - is the living God who maintains close and salvific relations with his people."

Every year in March, the Jewish-Catholic Dialogue hosts an *Interfaith* Colloquium, a dynamic gathering that includes Jewish and Catholic speakers. As we share our faith, the experience opens our eyes to the similarities in our religious traditions and our hearts to the love and respect we must hold for each other.

**Ecumenism** is a movement promoting unity between different Christian churches and groups, including Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Episcopalians, among others. Genuine ecumenism is not about convincing non-Catholics to become Catholics – or pretending that we are not Catholic. Ecumenism, like interreligious relations, is a reaching for mutual respect and understanding, a quest for members of different traditions and denominations to honor everything that unites them, even as they discuss respectfully the things that divide them. We celebrate our shared faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and remain aware that knowledge of the other leads to self-understanding.

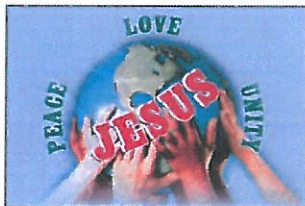
Jesus intended unity among us and the Father, as well as unity among ourselves as his disciples. He prayed, John tells us in his Gospel, that “they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you.” Between the Feast of St. Peter on January 18<sup>th</sup> and the Conversion of St. Paul on January 25<sup>th</sup>, Christians worldwide join in the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity, eight days of deep and sincere prayer for an end to separation in the Church. We pray for healing of all divisions, and we long for the day when all God’s people will be gathered around His table in complete unity and love.



## OCTAVE OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY JANUARY 18-25, 2012

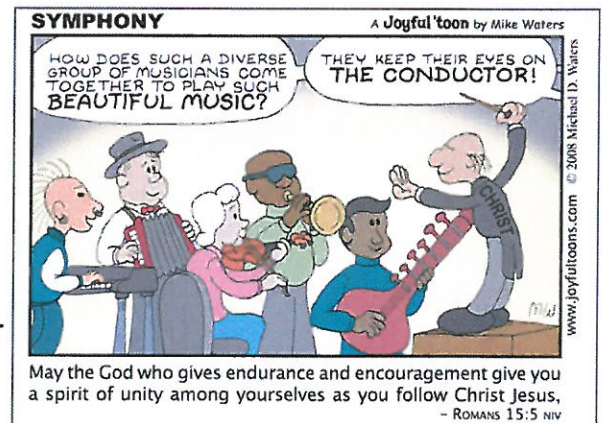
*As a parish, how can you honor Jesus' prayer that we "all be one" during the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity? Here are some suggestions:*

- ◆ During the upcoming season of Advent, intentionally develop a relationship with a nearby Christian church by invite neighboring Christian congregations to events that are service- or social- oriented:
  - ◆ If your parish celebrates Las Posadas, ask parishioners to invite non-Catholic family, friends, and co-workers.
  - ◆ Host an Advent Retreat and invite your Christian neighbors.
  - ◆ Find out about an Advent or Christmas custom at a neighboring community, like providing meals to the needy or putting up luminarias – and arrange for members of your parish to help.
- ◆ Talk with a neighboring congregation about a common concern – something specific to your location or beyond – and work together to address it.
- ◆ Add prayer intentions for ecumenism to your regular Sunday Mass intentions.
- ◆ Use the 3-Minute Catechesis to inform and form your congregation.  
(This is a tool for life-long faith formation and whole community catechesis. Just before mass begins, the congregation is asked to be seated, and the pastor, deacon, or proclaimer reads a 3-Minute teaching on a topic of interest.)
- ◆ Print prayers (and information) focused on unity in your bulletin, or post them on your parish bulletin board.
- ◆ Host a potluck dinner and invite the pastor and congregation of a neighboring community to join you. Have questions for discussion:



- ◆ What do you see as the gifts of your congregation?
- ◆ What does your church do that you really enjoy?
- ◆ What does your community do that you think is meaningful?
- ◆ What other congregations do you work with?
- ◆ What concerns do you have about the neighborhood?
- ◆ How can we work together to make our community better?

- ◆ Host (or promote and attend) an Ecumenical Prayer Service. (There are some Catholic Churches hosting them, and you would be welcomed.) Offer car-pooling, and plan to stay for after-prayer dialogue about those beliefs which bind us to one another as followers of Jesus Christ.



May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus,  
– ROMANS 15:5 NIV

*Check out the resources available on Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute's website: [www.geii.org](http://www.geii.org).*