

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



At least once a year, Christians are reminded of Jesus' prayer for his disciples that "they may be one so that the world may believe" (see John 17.21). Hearts are touched and Christians come together to pray for their unity. Congregations and parishes all over the world exchange preachers or arrange special ecumenical celebrations and prayer services. The event that touches off this special experience is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Traditionally the week of prayer is celebrated between 18-25 January, between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul. In the southern hemisphere, where January is a vacation time, churches often find other days to celebrate it, for example around Pentecost, which is also a symbolic date for unity.



That would be an Ecumenical Matter! What is Ecumenism?

The goal of ecumenism is Christian unity. This is rooted in the prayer of Jesus Christ "[that they all may be one](#)" in his farewell discourse, or "high priestly prayer" (John 17:20-26). This is understood as the "ecumenical mandate": the imperative that all Christians have for working towards Christian unity, even as a pre-requisite for effective evangelization. There are, however, a variety of different expectations of what that Christian unity looks like, how it is brought about, what ecumenical methods ought to be engaged, and what both short- and long-term objectives of the ecumenical movement should be. For some, Christian unity means a clear, visible, and organic unity of sacramental life, worship, and ecclesial structures. For others it is sufficient to share a common Christian faith and to cooperate on certain joint ministries or tasks where beneficial, especially for evangelization and charitable service

Websites

Resources are available from the Churches together in Britain and Ireland: <https://ctbi.org.uk> and The Archdiocese of Dublin Education Secretariat education.dublindiocese.ie

Scripture Reading

I appeal to you, sisters and brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and in thought.

(1 Corinthians 1:10)

Prayer for Unity

God our Father

On this day when we gather together as the Christian family we give thanks that you have called us here to share and celebrate the light that comes to us through Jesus your Son.

May we always be open to the inspiration that you offer us through the heritage of faith that we have received and may we be generous in responding to the challenges that we face.

Bless our school communities that they may continue to develop not only as centres of learning but as places of love and hope, working together in faith for justice.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Reflection



Trust in the Slow Work of God

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are, quite naturally, impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip to the intermediate stages.

We are impatient to being on the way to something unknown,
something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress that is made by passing through
some stages of instability
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you.

Your ideas mature gradually - let them grow,
let them shape themselves without due haste.

Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time
will make you tomorrow.

Only God can say what this new spirit gradually forming in you will be.

Give our Lord the benefit of believing that His hand is leading you
and accept the anxiety of leaving yourself in suspense and incomplete.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin