



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Ecumenism

Tragically, members of the Catholic Church have often defended against her unity, and throughout the centuries, there have developed divisions among Christians. Already in the fifth century, doctrinal disagreements led to the separation of some Christians in the eastern region of the Roman Empire from the main body of the Church. More damaging was the rupture between Rome and Constantinople in AD 1054. And in the 16th century Western Europe experienced the divisions that followed the Protestant Reformation.

The Catholic Church has always been committed to the restoration of unity among all Christians. This commitment was intensified by the Second Vatican Council and led the Church to participate in what is called the ecumenical movement. The word *ecumenical* means "worldwide" and, in a Catholic understanding, describes efforts "for the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ" (UR 24; CCC 822). This is to be a visible communion. "Full unity will come about when all share in the means of salvation entrusted by Christ to his Church" (Pope John Paul II, *On Commitment to Ecumenism [Ut Unum Sint; UUS]* 86)... Ecu-

menism includes efforts to pray together, joint study of the Scripture and of one another's traditions, common action for social justice, and dialogue in which the leaders and theologians of the different churches and communities discuss in depth their doctrinal and theological positions for greater mutual understanding, and "to work for unity in truth" (UUS 18, 29). In dialogue the obligation to respect the truth is absolute. "The unity willed by God can be attained only by the adherence of all to the content of revealed faith in its entirety" (UUS 18). On the worldwide level, these dialogues are sponsored on the Catholic side by the Pontifi-

cal Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, a Vatican office directly accountable to the Pope.

...The Catholic Church recognizes that the Holy Spirit uses other churches and ecclesial communities "as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church" (CCC 819; LG 8). Depending on what and how much of the elements of sanctification and truth these communities have retained, they have a certain though imperfect communion with the Catholic Church. There are also real differences.

US Catholic Catechism for Adults
USCCB, 2006, pgs 127-129

Issue 7 — Ecumenism

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Things to talk about:

- What is your attitude toward people of other Christian traditions? Is this based on personal experience, study or hearsay?
- The Council Fathers challenge us as a Church and as individuals to make our lives bear faithful witness to the teachings of Christ. How well does your life reflect an authentic image of our Catholic tradition?
- Have you taken advantage of opportunities to grow in knowledge and accurate understanding of other religious traditions? What more might you do in the future?

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

In January 1908, a small group of Anglican Franciscans led by Father Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White began an annual observance which they called the "Church Unity Octave" at Graymoor in Garrison, New York. Their idea was based on the prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper, "that they may all be one... that the world may believe" (John 17:21), which, Father Paul believed, "has got to be answered." They set aside a period of eight days (January 18-25) to pray as Jesus did, for unity among Chris-

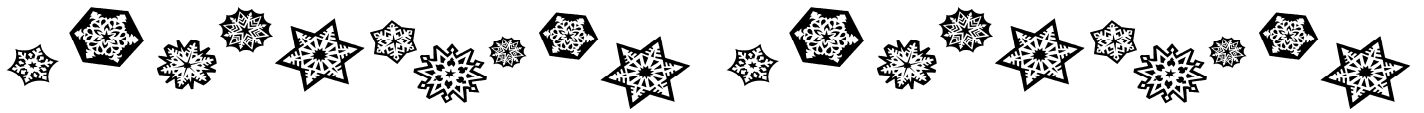
tians—Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant. Over the years, the annual observance gained support and merged with similar observances shortly after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. With support from the Vatican Council, the World Council of Churches, it's name was changed to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. As Christian churches worldwide anticipate this centenary of prayer for Christian unity, the Vatican and the World Council



CHRISTIAN UNITY WEEK

have endorsed "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes 5:17) as the 2008 scriptural theme.

You can find more information about the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the their website: www.weekofprayer2008.org.



Saint in the Spotlight — Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622)

On Thursday this week, January 24, we celebrate the memorial of St Francis de Sales.

Francis was destined by his father to be a lawyer so that the young man could eventually take his elder's place as a senator from the province of Savoy in France. For this reason Francis was sent to Padua to study law. After receiving his doctorate, he returned home and, in due time, told his parents he wished to enter the priesthood. His father strongly opposed Francis in this, and only after much patient persuasiveness on the part of the gentle Francis did his father finally consent. Francis was ordained and elected provost of the Diocese of Geneva, then a center for Calvinists. Francis set out to convert them, especially in the district of Chablais. By preaching and distributing the little pamphlets he wrote to explain true Catholic doctrine, he had remarkable success.

At 35 he became bishop of Geneva. While administering his diocese he continued to preach, hear confessions and catechize the children. His gentle character was a great asset in winning souls. He practiced his own axiom, "A spoonful of honey attracts more flies than a barrelful of vinegar."

Besides his two well-known books, the Introduction to the Devout Life and A Treatise on the Love of God, he wrote many pamphlets and carried on a vast correspondence. For his writings, he has been named patron of the Catholic Press. His writings, filled with his characteristic gentle spirit, are addressed to lay people. He wants to make them understand that they too are called to be saints. As he wrote in The Introduction to the Devout Life: "It is an error, or rather a heresy, to say devotion is incompatible with the life of a soldier, a tradesman, a prince, or a married woman.... It has happened that many have lost perfection in the desert who had preserved it in the world."

In spite of his busy and comparatively short life, he had time to collaborate with another saint, Jane Frances de Chantal, in the work of establishing the Sisters of the Visitation. These women were to practice the virtues exemplified in Mary's visit to Elizabeth: humility, piety and mutual charity. They at first engaged to a

limited degree in works of mercy for the poor and the sick. Today, while some communities conduct schools, others live a strictly contemplative life.

Francis de Sales took seriously the words of Christ, "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart." As he said himself, it took him 20 years to conquer his quick temper, but no one ever suspected he had such a problem, so overflowing with good nature and kindness was his usual manner of acting. His perennial meekness and sunny disposition won for him the title of "Gentleman Saint."

www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay

Lord Jesus, you prayed that your disciples might be united with each other, in a unity grounded in your oneness with the Father and the Holy Spirit. May your prayer for unity grow in the depths of the hearts and minds of all Christians. May we be one in our words, that a single reverent prayer might rise before you; may we be one in our yearning and pursuit of justice; may we be one in love, serving you by serving the least of our sisters and brothers. Lord, make us one in you. Amen.

By Mgr Donald Bolen

Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about Advent? Check out the following books or websites for more information:

- United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006
- <http://www.americancatholic.org/features/ChristianUnity>
- <http://www.silk.net/RelEd/ecumenism.htm>

These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement [Draft]:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.

Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

Read the following Church Documents to find out more about Ecumenism in the Catholic Church. They can be found online at www.vatican.va or www.usccb.org

- Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio, UR)
- The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions
- On Commitment to Ecumenism (Ut Unum Sint, UUS)