

# NADEO NEWSLETTER

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NADEO

## *The Purposes of NADEO*

- To stimulate the exchange of ideas, experiences and networking among the ecumenical officers of the dioceses in union with Rome.
- To promote programs which further the work of Christian Unity and inter-religious cooperation.
- To cooperate with the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and other ecumenical and interreligious agencies.

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## The Reorganization of the PCID

When Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, president of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, was named apostolic nuncio to the Arab Republic of Egypt and delegate to the Organization of the League of Arab States, there was a good deal of speculation about the future of the PCID, especially since no successor was named.

That speculation was answered, at least in part, by a March 11, 2006 press release from the Vatican Information Service:

In order to favor more intense dialogue between people of culture and exponents of different religions, [the Holy Father] united, for the time being, the presidency of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to that of the Pontifical Council for Culture. Consequently, he appointed Cardinal Paul Poupard, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, as the new president of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue.

A bit of historical background might be helpful.

In his *Motu Proprio* Apostolic Letter *Inde a Pontificatus* of 25 March 1993, John Paul II decreed that the Secretariat for Non-Believers be subsumed into the Pontifical Council for Culture. In that same *Motu Proprio* he changed the name of the Secretariat for Non-Christians to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Pope Benedict XVI's decision to "unite for the time being" the presidency of the Council for Interreligious Dialogue with the presidency of the Council for Culture, and to appoint Cardinal Paul Poupard, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, as the new president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, indicates that the PCID has not been suppressed or subsumed. But the fact that it will no longer exist as an independent entity does appear to signal—at the curial level, at least—some changes in the focus of the Holy See's approach to interreligious dialogue. While a specifically religious or spiritual dimension must necessarily be preserved for dialogue to be "interreligious," it is also the case that the interaction between religion and culture raises important questions in today's world.

There are those who are fearful, and others delighted, by the potential this curial shift has to deemphasize the importance of interreligious dialogue in the life of the Church. There are others who have indicated that the shift is meant to send a strong message that the theological and spiritual aspects of the dialogue ought to be replaced by an exclusive focus on values. These interpretations have merit and ought not to be ignored.

There is, however, another way of reading this recent shift and the impact it is meant to have on the future of interreligious dialogue in the Catholic Church.

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## President's Letter *by Fr. Robert Flannery*

A Blessed Holy Season to each of you! As we celebrate these days of Easter, the days which recall our salvation in Christ Jesus, may our faith be strongly united with our sisters and brothers throughout the world who share the effects of the same paschal mystery.

If you have not yet registered for the upcoming **National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU)** being held in San Jose, California from May 8 - 11, please do so. Both the NWCU program - keynote speakers and seminars - and the **NADEO Catholic Program** promise to be very exciting and helpful. Our NADEO seminars include Rev. Dr. Richard Mouw on "Evangelicals and Catholics"; Dr. Scott Alexander and Fr. John Pawlikowski on "A Christian Response to the Tensions in the Abrahamic Relations"; and Dr. Richard Linneberger, Sister Josephine Kase, IHM, and Mr. Andrew Boyd on "Motivations and Models for Diocesan Commissions and Local Parish Planning." Fr. Thomas Rausch, SJ will speak about "Ecumenism and the Hispanic Community" at our NADEO Luncheon, and Archbishop-Emeritus John Quinn will address "Reflections on Papal Authority" at our LARC Luncheon. The Fairmont Hotel where we will stay is a beautiful complex, and the entire workshop will be quite stimulating. Please plan to join us. We thank Fr. Jose Rubio, the local diocesan ecumenical and interreligious office, and Bishop P.J. McGrath, of San Jose for their generous support in facilitating the Catholic program.

At our **NADEO Business Meeting** this year, the General Assembly will vote on two important matters (as well as other items): (1) The possible change in the name of our Association to either NADEIO (National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers) as recommended by the Faiths in the World Committee or CADEIO (Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers) as recommended by past NADEO President, Fr. Vincent Heier and myself. As the ecumenical and interreligious worlds continue to broaden in terms of scope and new associations, it is important for clarity and for our identity that our name reflects who we are and what we do; (2) We will also vote on the new By-Laws

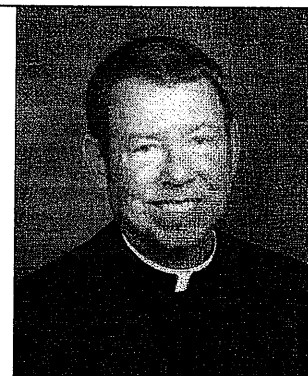
which we have been working on for the last two years. Only full members who are current with this year's 2006 dues of \$200 are eligible to vote. Please contact our treasurer, Fr. Joseph Wallace, at (856) 429-1600 if you have not paid dues for your diocese or eparchy this year. He will also take payments for Associate Members at \$10.00 each. Please consider adding your staff members, commission members, or other interested individuals on our mailing list to receive the NADEO newsletter and other pertinent communications.

Since our last newsletter, **Bishop Richard Sklba**, of Milwaukee, has become the chair of the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA). Our NADEO family welcomes Bishop Sklba and looks forward to working with him for the next three years.

Information regarding the **Institute for Ecumenical Leadership** was sent to all ecumenical officers six weeks ago. This year is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first Institute offered in 1981. The 2006 Institute will be held at the Mercy Center in St. Louis Missouri from **Monday, July 31 to Thursday August 1**. Bro. Jeff Cros, FSC of Memphis Theological Seminary and Fr. Ron Roberson, CSP of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (SEIA) will present the institute. The Institute is open to all ecumenical officers, Diocesan officials, commission members, parish leaders and any other interested individuals. Please contact Mr. Sam Wagner at the Sea for Further information (202) 541-3020.

Perhaps you read in the religious news that **Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, M.Afr.**, former President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, has been named Apostolic Nuncio to Egypt. Archbishop Fitzgerald, or Michael as we know him in the NADEO community, has assisted in leading a number of Interreligious Institutes for Nadeo and BCEIA through the years. With his knowledge of Arabic and Islam he will be perfect for this new position. We wish him well in his new ministry and assignment.

During February, I was in Porto Allegre, Brazil representing NADEO at the **World Council of Churches Ninth General Assembly**. Doing this on my own expense, I felt it was impor-



tant to learn in the great setting what the other churches and communions are presently doing. Ms. Garland Pohl, our former NADEO president, was also there as well as Fr. Thomas Ryan, CSP. Garland's excellent article about the Assembly is in this issue. I thank her for writing it for our NADEO community. Bishop Brian Farrell, LC Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, was glad that I attended on behalf of NADEO. While Bishop Farrell cannot join us in San Jose the year, he hopes to join us at **next year's NWCU that will be held in Washington, D.C. from January 29 to February 1, 2007**. Please mark these dates on your calendar now if you have not already done so since this is a much earlier time frame than usual.

Besides attending the World Council of Churches Assembly. I have had the opportunity and privilege of being present at the following gatherings to represent our Association: two meetings of the Christian Churches Together USA in Los Altos, Ca and Atlanta, GA; the SEIA/NADEO Interreligious Institute in Chicago, the 2005 International Council of Christians and Jews in Chicago; the 2006 NWCU National Planning Committee meeting in San Jose; three meetings of the BCEIA in Chicago; a regional Churches Uniting In Christ (CUIC) listening sessions at Eden Seminary in St. Louis; Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the USA (ARC-USA) in Belleville, IL; and a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary observance of *Nostra Aetate* at St. Louis University at which Dr. John Borelli was the presenter. At all these gatherings I am pleased to represent NADEO in the name of all of you. I hope to see you in San Jose, May 8 -11<sup>th</sup>. **Happy Easter!**

God's Peace,

*Fr. Bob Flannery*

President, NADEO

# Foundations for Interreligious Dialogue

Faiths in the World Committee (FITW)  
National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers (NADEO)

## I. The Second Vatican Council, Interreligious Dialogue

October of 2005 marked the fortieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions." Although the theological foundation of this document consists of ancient and fundamental Church teachings regarding the universality of God's providence and "manifestations of goodness,"<sup>1</sup> in many ways the strong emphasis and importance it places on what the magisterium subsequently refers to as "interreligious" will be characterized as visionary. This conciliar declaration recognizes existence of elements of truth and holiness in other religions, and accordingly exhorts the sons and daughters of the Church to engage in "dialogue and collaboration with followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love."<sup>2</sup> It also clearly affirms that there is a deep compatibility between the unfailing witness to Christ necessary for any authentic Christian life, and the imperative to "recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among"<sup>3</sup> peoples of other religious traditions.

## II. Interreligious Dialogue and Faithful Witness to Christ

In the post-Vatican II era, the magisterium begins to speak of the deep compatibility and complementarity that exists between interreligious dialogue, on the one hand, and proclamation and catechesis of the Gospel, on the other. Indeed it defines these activities as two distinct, yet equally necessary modes of evangelization.<sup>4</sup> Thus, each constitutes a crucial dimension of the Church's permanent missionary mandate, and neither can be dispensed with.<sup>5</sup> Also, the magisterium cautiously but courageously asserts that, contrary to prevailing fears, interreligious dialogue need not lead to theological relativism, at least not for those who meet the minimum requirement for fruitful dialogue by being firmly rooted in their Christian faith. For such Christians, interreligious dialogue becomes an exercise in humility whereby they more profoundly recognize that the fullness of truth "is not a thing we possess, but a person by

whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed [i.e., Jesus Christ]."<sup>6</sup> Since the Second Vatican Council, Church teaching maintains that if entered into prudently by members of the faithful who are secure in their Christian identity interreligious dialogue can enable them to become increasingly aware of their Christian identity and [allow them to] perceive more clearly the distinctive elements of the Christian message. Their faith will gain new dimensions as they discover the active presence of the mystery of Jesus Christ beyond the visible boundaries of the Church and of the Christian fold."<sup>7</sup>

## III. The Four Modes of Interreligious Dialogue

Another extremely valuable post-Vatican II contribution of Church teaching on the subject of interreligious dialogue has been its definition of the term itself. Since the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the Church has maintained that "interreligious dialogue" is no less than "all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment in obedience to truth and respect for freedom."<sup>8</sup> Continuing to build upon this broad understanding of the nature of interreligious dialogue, the Church has suggested that we think of actualizing such dialogue in at least four different modes:

- *The dialogue of life*, where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.
- *The dialogue of action*, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.
- *The dialogue of theological exchange*, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.
- *The dialogue of religious experience*, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute.<sup>9</sup>

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## Foundations for Interreligious Dialogue—Continued from Page 3

Contrary to the popular conception that interreligious dialogue is simply an exchange of ideas by a limited circle of “specialists” (i.e., “*the dialogue of theological exchange*”), this far broader definition describes an apostolate which can be adopted by almost every one of the faithful, each according to his or her own gifts and each according to his or her own socio-cultural context.

### IV. The Millennium of Dialogue

In the jubilee year marking the coming of the new millennium, Pope John Paul II emphasized the importance of meeting “the great challenge of interreligious dialogue to which we shall still be committed in the new millennium, in fidelity to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>10</sup> Referring, in part, to his convening of the world’s religious leader to pray for peace in Assisi in October of 1986,<sup>11</sup> the Holy Father indicated how assiduously the Holy See has worked “to build [...] a relationship of openness and dialogue, with the followers of other religions.”<sup>12</sup> He goes on to say: “*This dialogue must continue. In the climate of increased cultural and religious pluralism which is expected to mark the society of the new millennium, it is obvious that this dialogue will be especially important in establishing a sure basis for peace and warding off the dread spectre of those wars of religion which have so often bloodied human history. The name of the one God must become increasingly what it is: a name of peace and a summons to peace.*”<sup>13</sup>

With these words, Pope John Paul II is summoning “*not only the Catholic Church, but other Christian ecclesial communities, as well as people of other faiths*” to come together in an urgent, yet hope-filled dialogue of mutual understanding and cooperation. In this light, a goal would be to provide religious people of good will with a means of struggling against those forces which blaspheme by invoking God’s name to lead the world and its people deeper and deeper into a global “clash” of cultures and religion. To put it more positively, the goal of both local and global interreligious dialogue will be to call all people to strive against violence and terror of any kind and in any and every place in a joint pursuit of lasting global peace and justice.

Based on magisterial teaching since the Second Vatican Council, and based on the teachings and praxis of Pope John Paul II, there can be no doubt that interreligious dialogue is a crucial and integral component of the Church’s global mission of reconciliation in the new millennium.

### V. The Faiths in the World (FITW)

#### Committee of NADEO: Integrating Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism

In 1983, the Faiths in the World Committee (FITW) was established as an *ad hoc* committee of NADEO. Its original purpose was to provide collegial and scholarly support, as well as programming and other resources for diocesan ecumenical officers who were found themselves engaging, not only the vast array of challenges and possibilities attendant to the ecumenical movement, but who were also finding themselves increasingly asked to initiate, or in some way facilitate interreligious dialogue in their dioceses.

Although it is quite true that ecumenical relations and interreligious relations are, in many ways, distinct fields of ministry with very distinct sub-specialties (e.g., the study of Reformed Christianity versus the study of Islam), it is also true that the Church is called to an integrated approach to her ministry of reconciliation, healing, understanding, and cooperation with respect to both other ecclesial and other religious communities. The opening words of the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, are quite unambiguous on this point as they underscore the Church’s fundamental embeddedness in the entire human family: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the [people] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”<sup>14</sup>

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## Archbishop of Canterbury on Being Christian in a Religiously Plural World

By *Fr. Thomas Ryan, CSP*

The question of Christian identity in a world of plural perspectives and convictions cannot be answered in clichés about the tolerant co-existence of different opinions, the leader of the world Anglican Communion told representatives from the world's churches.

The Most Rev. Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, addressed the question of Christian identity in a world of religious plurality at a plenary session of the 9th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches held from February 14-23 in Porto Allegre, Brazil.

"There are groups that identify themselves by their founders—Lutherans, Marxists—but the name Christians use of themselves is not like that because of what the title 'Christ' means. We do not look back to a founder. We look now, around, within, for a presence that has authority over our lives and is active today," the Archbishop said.

Christians are to reveal a God of justice, but one who is free to forgive offenses. "We are to call him 'Father', to speak in intimate and bold words," said Williams.

The day at the Assembly marked by reflection on religious pluralism began under the big-top tent in the morning worship with the chanting of a traditional prayer from India: "Lead me from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light, from death to life."

Williams told Assembly participants that the claim of Christian belief is not first and foremost that it offers the only accurate system of thought against all other competitors. Rather, "it is that, by standing in the place of Christ, it is possible to live in such a degree of mutual gift and understanding that no human conflict and division need bring us to uncontrollable violence and mutual damage."

Being a Christian, said the Archbishop, is not laying claim to absolute knowledge, but laying claim "to the perspective that will transform our most deeply rooted hurts and fears and so change the world at the most important level."

This perspective, he said, "depends on being where Jesus is, under his authority, sharing the 'breath' of his life, seeing what he sees—God as Abba, Father, a God completely committed to the people in whose life he seeks to reproduce his own life." Christians must be faithful to God in liturgy and prayer, "standing again and again where Jesus is, saying 'Abba.'"

Being in "the place of Jesus," a recurring theme in Williams' address, "is open to all who want to see what Christians see," he said. "And no Christian believer has in his or her possession some kind of map of where exactly the boundaries of that place are to be fixed, or a key to lock others out or in."

In those places where that name is not named, "God may yet give himself to be seen," he said. To say as much is not at all to say that what happens in the history of Israel and Jesus is relative, just one way among others. But when others arrive at a place where forgiveness and adoption are valued, even though not spoken of in the same terms, "are we to say that God has not found a path for himself?"

The Archbishop recognized that "If I say, only in this place are hurts fully healed, sins forgiven, adoption into God's intimate presence promised, that assumes that adoption and forgiveness are to be desired above all other things. Not every perspective has that at the center."

In sharing our perspective with people of other religions, said Williams, we may learn that there are other things "perhaps of less ultimate importance, yet enormously significant, that my perspective has not taught me to see or to value."

In speaking to an Assembly session in which representatives of other religions were present, Williams said that "if we are truly learning how to be in that relation with God and the world in which Jesus of Nazareth stood, we shall not turn away from those who see from another place."

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## Institute for Pastoral Workers on Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations

Georgetown University will offer an Institute for Pastors and Pastoral Workers on Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, this will be offered from from June 25–July 1, 2006. Because *The Henry Luce Foundation* has funded this project, Institute will be offered TUITION FREE. Participants are responsible for travel to Washington, DC, and *per diem* expenses. Single rooms in a conveniently located dorm will be available for \$52 a night. Most rooms share a bath and another room. Meals could cost \$30 a day. There is a Campus parking fee for anyone traveling by car.

The Institute is jointly offered by Georgetown University and Hartford Seminary. It will be an ecumenical group capped at 25 participants.

If you know of anyone who might wish to attend, please contact Michael L. Peterson mip34@georgetown.edu.

## **"God, in Your Grace, Transform the World"** **9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly—World Council of Churches**

*By Garland D. Pohl*

When the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council (WCC) of Churches opened on February 14 it marked the first meeting of the decision making body in Latin America. From its founding meeting in Amsterdam in 1948, its assemblies, which meet every seven years, have criss-crossed the globe. This one, held in Porto Allegre, Brazil, recognized the rapid movement of Christian membership and vitality to the southern hemisphere. Composed of 348 churches worldwide, including the Orthodox, but not having the Catholic Church in membership, this assembly differed from previous ones in several ways: a new form of decision making, a greater emphasis on youth participation, a new design of the way the assembly prayed, and inclusion of Pentecostal and Evangelical voices.

The Catholic Church is not among the member churches, but has a productive relationship with the WCC through the Joint Working Group (JWG), composed evenly of members of the Roman Catholic Church and members of the other churches of the WCC. The JWG began its work in 1965, though the seeds of collaboration were sown in 1961 with the appointment of five observers to the New Delhi Assembly. This courtesy was reciprocated with the inclusion of two observers from the WCC at the Second Vatican Council. Later, twelve Catholic members were added to the Faith and Order Commission. Official delegations from the WCC have been received at intervals by Vatican offices and popes. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), which mandates the work of the JWG and oversees other relationships, appoints a delegation of observers to each assembly. The delegation has voice, but no vote, and was chaired at this assembly by Bishop Brian Farrell, secretary of the PCPCU. Bishop Richard Sklba of Milwaukee, chair of the Bishop's Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA), was a member of the Vatican delegation. NADEO members in Porto Allegre were Fr. Bob Flannery, Fr. Tom RyanCSP, and Garland Pohl.

A new method of decision making, that of consensus, had been proposed after threats of withdrawal by the Orthodox Church. Orthodox participants had felt that while representing twenty five percent of the constituency of the member churches, their numbers always precluded their ability to influence the outcome of voting on issues that were controversial and conflicting with the values and doctrine of their church. A Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC had prepared the methodology which had been accepted earlier by the Central Committee and had been used in meetings before the assembly. A constitutional amendment committed the WCC to this method.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly was touted as a youth assembly – youth being persons under thirty years of age. Pre-assembly events highlighted the role of youth. Stewards from many lands handled the many tasks that must be performed in the course of a ten day meeting. Churches were asked to provide a certain percentage of youth delegates to the assembly. Nominations to the Central Committee, which conducts the business of the WCC between assemblies, were to have a twenty five percent youth composition. However, churches were unable to provide more than a fifteen percent youth constituency to this body, a matter of concern for the ecumenical formation of future leaders. A special body to represent youth in the decisions of the WCC was created.

Prayer, a central element of assemblies, had become a matter of controversy around celebration styles. Recent past services have been referred to as ecumenical worship, including elements of various liturgical styles and texts, even incorporating Eucharistic worship. The Orthodox absented themselves from common Eucharistic gatherings and objected to the use of the terms worship and liturgy, those usually referring in their tradition to the Eucharist. The Orthodox tradition does not permit sharing of the Eucharist. The term common prayer was used to affirm the desire to be together to pray. Greater sensitivity to issues of language and leadership roles in prayer provided opportunity for more inclusive gatherings. Prayer prepared by different communions allowed more integrity of the services and increased learning of those elements particular to different churches.

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## Foundations for Interreligious Dialogue—Continued from Page 4

The constitution goes on to proclaim that, like Christ, it is the Church's role, not to sit in judgment over all, but rather to rescue and serve the totality of the human race as it strives to realize its destiny as one family under God.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, in keeping with this integrated approach to the Church's ministry of reconciliation and healing, it seems necessary, in any local or global setting, that the Church's ecumenical efforts be influenced by and in turn, influence, its interreligious efforts. The fact that, in most dioceses around the country, one and the same individual is usually responsible for both ecumenical and interreligious affairs does not by itself mean the two efforts are being integrated. The integration must be intentional and reflective such that the local Church would be inviting other ecclesial communities to join her in enhancing their mutual understanding and appreciation of each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, while they together discern how the Spirit is moving them to understand and embrace their sisters and brothers in humanity. One might even claim that, due to the prominent role exercised by post-Vatican II Church in the theory and global praxis of interreligious dialogue, Catholics may well have a leadership role to play in gradually and selectively integrating some of the efforts of ecumenism with those of interreligious dialogue.

These foundations direct and animate the work of FITW and are offered to NADEO as a resource for those ecumenical and interreligious officers who are dealing with the ever increasing religious pluralism of the United States.

<sup>1</sup> *Nostra Aetate* (Oct., 1965), sec. 1, parag. 2. All citations from Church documents, with the exception of *Dialogue and Mission* (referenced below) are taken from the English translations posted on the Vatican website: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 2, parag. 3

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter, *Redemptoris Missio* [hereafter *RM*]: *On the Permanent Validity of the church's Missionary Mandate* (Dec., 1990), esp. sec. 55. See also *Dialogue and Proclamation* [hereafter *DP*]: *Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, promulgated by the Pontifical Council on Interreligious Dialogue (May, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> *RM* sec. 55 (esp. parag. 2)

<sup>6</sup> *DP* sec. 49

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 50.

<sup>8</sup> *DP*, sec. 9; italics represent a quotation from an earlier document entitled, "The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission" [hereafter, *DM* for "Dialogue and Mission"], *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 75 (1984), pp. 816-828; also *Bulletin Secretariat Pro Non Christianis* 56 (1984/2), no. 13.

For an online English translation, see:

<http://www.melbourne.catholic.org.au/eic/pdf/art~Interfajth~attitudenonchristian.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> *DP*, sec. 42. This four-fold typology was first articulated, with slightly different nomenclature, in *DM*, secs. 28-35.

<sup>10</sup> Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* [hereafter *NMI*] (January 200J), sec. 55.

<sup>11</sup> In the wake of September 11 2001 Pope John Paul II convened a second Assisi event in January of 2002.

<sup>12</sup> *NMI* sec. 55

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, (Oct. 1965), sec. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 3, parag. 2.

## Archbishop of Canterbury on Being Christian — Continued from page 5

And in countries where Christians are historically a majority, said Williams, "faithfulness to the other means solidarity with them, the imperative of defending them and standing with them in times of harassment or violence."

The nature of our conviction as Christians puts us, said the Archbishop, "in the place where we are called to show utter commitment to the God who is revealed in Jesus and to all those to whom his invitation is addressed."

In a response to the Archbishop's presentation, Dr. Anna May Chain, a Baptist Old Testament scholar and principal of the Myanmar Institute of Theology in Burma, described how, at a time of political chaos in her homeland, Muslims, Buddhists, and Catholics were "in the place of Jesus" for her, becoming her guard and shield.

Picking up on Williams' statement that we should not turn away from those who see from another place, Chain said of friends in her country, where Buddhists form 92% of the population, "As I have learned from them to value living life today mindfully, my conviction is that they will also learn from me about the loving-kindness, the forgiveness and mercy of God."

**“God, in Your Grace, Transform the World” - Continued from page 6**

Greetings were received from many world leaders in the ecclesial and political realms including President Lula da Silva of Brazil, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury, who later addressed the assembly in person, the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I, and Pope Benedict XVI. The pope's message was read by Cardinal Walter Kasper, who appended his own remarks to the text.

Plenaries were devoted to “public issues”, including statements on Latin America, the responsibility to protect, terrorism and human rights, reform of the United Nations, access to water, and nuclear arms elimination. Other plenaries included a mid-term report on the United Nations Decade to Overcome Violence (2000—2010), economic justice, Christian identity and religious pluralism, with the introduction of United Nations guests and their statements from various world religions, and church unity.

The ecclesiology report, “Called to be One Church”, originated with a mandate to the Faith and Order Commission to develop a statement on church unity. The final report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation requested more work in certain areas. This report addresses those concerns and reflects the understandings of the relationship of the churches to each other, to the WCC, and to the search for unity through dialogue. Baptism into Christ's body requires openness to each other and “to speaking the truth in love.” Speakers from the Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical churches addressed the matter of unity as did Archbishop Desmond Tutu. In a moving tribute to the support of the WCC during the anti-apartheid campaign, he said, “A united church is no optional extra, but indispensable for the salvation of God's world.”

The seven hundred delegates and official observers heard reports from the General Secretary, the Moderator and others on the state of the WCC, listened to reports and approved various business issues of the body. They participated in ecumenical conversations, structured to help focus the task of unity and identify concerns, and Bible study. Other participants, designated as visitors and partners, were able to observe the plenaries and decision sessions and to participate in many workshops and talks of the *Mutirão*, a Portuguese word meaning “a coming together to make a difference.” Bishop Richard Sklba participated in a lively workshop with a young lay woman from the Netherlands who engaged him with a challenge that the future of Christianity lay in the grassroots, while the church did not acknowledge grassroots problems.

All information and materials, resolutions, and speeches, including pictures of the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, can be found at [www.wccassembly.info](http://www.wccassembly.info).

## PUBLICATION NOTICE

The NADEO Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers. NADEO is a professional society whose purpose is to stimulate the exchange of ideas and experiences among the ecumenical officers serving the Catholic Church in the dioceses of the United States of America. It promotes programs that further Christian Unity and interreligious dialogue according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar Magisterium. NADEO also cooperates in a special way with the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Additionally, the association collaborates with other professional societies, councils of churches and interfaith organizations in the achievement of its purposes. The association is based at the Office of the President, 303 S. Poplar St., Carbondale, IL 62901-2709. The NADEO Newsletter is published at the Office of the NADEO Editor, 1000 East Maple Avenue, Mundelein, IL 60060. It is also available on the web at [www.nadeo.org](http://www.nadeo.org).



## Christian Churches Together in the USA is Officially Started

By *Jerry Fiteau* Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Christian Churches Together in the USA -- the broadest, most inclusive ecumenical movement in US. history -- was officially founded during a March 28-31 gathering near Atlanta. Its founding 34 Christian churches and national organizations represent more than 100 million Americans. Twenty-two additional churches and organizations are participating as observers or are in the process of deciding about joining, and more than 30 others are in conversation with Christian Churches Together. Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore, who hosted a 2001 meeting in Baltimore at which plans for the new organization first took shape, will represent the Catholic Church as one of its five co-presidents. He said he was "delighted that the work we began in Baltimore has continued to prosper."

Christian Churches Together is intended as a forum of ecumenical dialogue and witness involving the participation of representatives from all five major Christian families of churches in the United States: Catholic, Orthodox, Historic Protestant, Evangelical/Pentecostal, and Historic Racial/Ethnic. Its mission is "to enable churches and Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen our Christian witness in the world."

National leaders from all five families participated in the late March meeting, held at the United Methodist Church's Simpsonwood Conference Center, a wooded retreat site on the Chattahoochee River outside Atlanta. In addition to all member churches and organizations, participants at the meeting included observers from eight churches and a national organization that are considering joining.

The nation's Catholic bishops voted to participate in Christian Churches Together during their November 2004 meeting. A 12-member delegation of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, headed by Bishop Stephen E. Blaire of Stockton, CA, former chairman of the USCCB Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, attended the founding meeting.

In accord with the structure of the new organization, the USCCB delegation chose Cardinal Keeler, Bishop Blaire and Paulist Father Ronald G. Roberson, an associate director of the USCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, to serve on the Christian Churches Together steering committee another Catholic, Mercy Sister Ana Maria Pineda of the religious studies department of Santa Clara University in California, was chosen as an at-large member of the steering committee. Throughout its formational stages Christian Churches Together has given priority to sharing in prayer and worship, building relationships of trust and discerning the challenges of more faithful Christian witness that need to be addressed in society.

During the founding meeting the group focused on poverty in the United States. It engaged in biblical reflection on the issue and conversations with academic experts and people who have experienced poverty the participants affirmed that working to overcome poverty is "central to the mission of the church and essential to our unity in Christ." They committed themselves to working together on the Issue. Bishop Blaire called Catholic participation in Christian Churches Together "an important step forward in the, process towards Christian unity that Jesus Christ wills for us."

"The Catholic Church is deeply committed, as integral to her mission, to the full, visible communion of all Christians," he said.

Father Roberson said he believes the founding meeting will come to be viewed as a watershed in the U.S. history of ecumenism.

"At the same time, we did this with a sense of incompleteness," he said. "We really felt the absence of some of our country's churches and we continue to hope they will join us in this new initiative." Christ Churches Together had originally planned to have an inaugural worship service last September celebrating the launching of the new ecumenical forum, but several key churches interested in joining were; still in the process of studying or deciding on membership, so the founding was delayed to give them time to become charter members.

*Continued on Page 10*

## New Resources for Interfaith Dialogue

In conversations among scholars, committed religious people, and ordinary folk in mosques, temples, synagogues, churches, the belief has repeatedly resurfaced that for religions in the United States, the most religiously diverse country in the world, this is indeed a *kairos* moment. It is critical to the future of our country that citizens encounter and come to know people of different backgrounds, become familiar with their world views and their hopes and struggles, and enter into mutual relationships with them, as neighbors, as seekers of a just social order, as brothers and sisters in a mutually built society.

This challenge is great in that it asks that all cross over into other worlds of thinking and association, at a fair distance from our comfort zones. At the same time, among religious men and women in the United States, consciousness of ecumenism, and more especially religious pluralism, is not high. And interreligious dialogue is often misunderstood as something that takes place as an exchange only among experts. Yet, our vocation as directors of ecumenical and interreligious affairs is to animate this dialogue. The difficulty is where to begin and how to begin.

The book, *Deepening Faith through Interreligious Dialogue*, by Maria Hornung, MA, Med., a 21<sup>st</sup> Medical Mission Sister, looks at the imperative of interreligious dialogue within the world and within the United States in the century. It addresses the major difficulties in undertaking interreligious dialogue. It creates and illustrates a process model that supports people interested in becoming acquainted with interreligious dialogue. It introduces individuals and groups to the exciting and necessary enterprise of interreligious dialogue in its several *modalities*. Hopefully, the dialogue with the publisher will result in the availability of the book by the end of this summer.

*Deepening Faith through Interreligious Engagement* has been developed as Hornung worked with single and multi-faith communities, introducing and empowering members of these faith communities to enter into dialogue and collaboration across faith boundaries. For the first time, a user-friendly manual will be available to faith communities offering a process of becoming conversant with interfaith engagement and tools for further use.

The process includes exploring religious diversity in the participants' areas of interest and concern, affirming participants in their own faith articulation, engaging persons of other faiths, integrating the experience of this engagement, garnering resources and skills, envisioning global ethics dialogue, and affirming commitment to future interreligious dialogue. The nine sessions are detailed for easy facilitation. They, plus all necessary readings, are included in the 50 pages manual.

*Deepening Faith through Interreligious Engagement* will be available at the 2006 NWCU in San Jose, CA. It is also available through the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia by email [meh@interfaithcenterpa.org](mailto:meh@interfaithcenterpa.org).

### Christian Churches Together in the USA is Officially Started—Continued from Page 9

During the organizational years the participating churches developed a process of mutual engagement and worked out an agreement on the purposes and organizational structure of Christian Churches Together. The Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, who has served as interim moderator of the new organization, said, "We finally found the courage to confront our obvious and long-standing divisions and to build a new expression of unity, rooted in the Spirit, that will strengthen our mission in the world".

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, which until now was the nation's largest ecumenical body, has encouraged formation of Christian Churches Together since the beginning.

The Catholic Church belongs to national church councils in many parts of the world, but in the United States its size has been an obstacle to council participation. The NCC's 36 member churches have a combined membership of about 45 million, 22 million fewer than the nation's 67 million Catholics.

Christian Churches Together plans to operate with minimal national staff. It will have a general assembly, convened at least once a year, in which each member church or national organization has at least one representative, with additional representatives for each 5 million members. Business between general assemblies will be conducted by a steering committee of 18 to 24 members.

Membership in Christian Churches Together is limited to churches or associations of churches that are national in scope and to national Christian organizations.

END

## The Reorganization of the PCID—Continued from page 1

By connecting the Church's commitment to interreligious dialogue with its commitment to cross-cultural understanding, Pope Benedict XVI may well be calling us to think about religion—and to engage in interreligious dialogue—with *greater and more explicit attention to its cultural context*. By emphasizing this connection, the pope appears to be cautioning us to focus our dialogue efforts on religious thought, experience, and praxis in the abstract. Rather, his intent seems to be to encourage the dialogue to look closely at the roles the world's religions *actually* play and *ought* to play in shaping and being shaped by the stunning variety of cultural contexts in which they are, by nature, embedded.

In 1991, the PCID document *Dialogue and Proclamation* identified four discrete yet interrelated types of dialogue: "life," "action," "theological exchange," and "religious [or spiritual] experience." Of these four types, the third has been the most common, and the fourth the main focus of MID. But what of the first two? In many ways, the dialogue of life, "where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations" (DP, 42) may be seen not so much as one of the four types of dialogue, but rather as the larger framework in which the other dimensions of dialogue must consciously unfold. If this is true, then we are forced to ask ourselves how there can be an authentic "dialogue of life" if the "dialogue of action"—despite its utter centrality to the Church's teachings in *Nostra Aetate*—remains little more than a vague ideal?

One way, therefore, of interpreting the curial reorganization with respect to the PCID is that it may very well signal Pope Benedict's effort to place long overdue emphasis on a broader, more culturally contextualized dialogue of shared values in response to the explicit call of *Nostra Aetate* for the members of the various traditions to work with the Church in her sacramental mission to heal the divisions within the human family.

In fact, one could argue that this approach to interreligious dialogue may well be one expression of a wider papal agenda for which Benedict XVI appears to be laying the cornerstone in *Deus Caritas Est*. If embraced with sincerity and integrity, the approach to interreligious dialogue reflected in the curial restructuring could challenge all involved to bring to the fore of the dialogue such crucial questions as: *What are the ways in which religion X helps foster a culture of caritas (or whatever the principal analogue might be in various traditions, for example "justice" for Muslims; "compassion" for Buddhists; etc.) in context Y; and What are the ways in which, in context Y, religion X is being used by the forces of materialism or political extremism.*

An approach to interreligious dialogue that emphasizes the embeddedness of religion in culture may offer an opportunity for all of us to become excited about the many ways in which interreligious dialogue can challenge intercultural exchange to: (a) become more self-conscious of the fact that cultures can and should shape each other for the better; and (b) pay heed to the fact that the world's religions and the Church can and must play a key pedagogical and mystagogical role in this process.

In this context, it might be good to recall the words of the late John Paul II in "Dialogue between Cultures for a Civilization of Love and Peace" (2001):

Individuals come to maturity through receptive openness to others and through generous self-giving to them; so too do cultures. Created by people and at the service of people, they have to be perfected through dialogue and communion, on the basis of the original and fundamental unity of the human family as it came from the hands of God who "made from one stock every nation of mankind" (Acts 17:26).

Monastic Interreligious Dialogue came into being in response to the Vatican's recognition of the key role that monastic men and women can play in the Church's dialogue with other religious traditions. In October 1973, in Bangalore, India, Christian and non-Christian monastics came together for the first time in history to talk with one another about the most basic issue of the monastic life, namely, the experience of God. The success of that meeting prompted Cardinal Sergio Pignedoli, who was then Prefect of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, to ask Abbot Primate Rembert Weakland to encourage Benedictines to become involved in interreligious dialogue because, as he put it, "The monk represents a point of contact and of mutual comprehension between Christians and Non-Christians. The presence of monastics in the Catholic Church is therefore, in itself, a bridge that joins us to all other religions."

The currently defined mission of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue will continue to be that of fostering dialogue "at the level of spiritual practice and experience between North American Catholic monastic women and men and contemplative practitioners of diverse religious traditions. . . to promote the unity of the human family and mutual understanding among the world's religions."

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### **NWCU**

2006 National Workshop on  
Christian Unity

May 8-11, 2006

San Jose Fairmont Hotel

San Jose, CA

To register, visit  
the NWCU website:

[www.nwcu.org](http://www.nwcu.org)

### ***SEIA/NADEO***

*Institute for  
Ecumenical Leadership*

*July 31-August 10, 2006*

*Mercy Center*

*St. Louis, MO*

Watch for more information  
at the NADEO website

[www.nadeo.org](http://www.nadeo.org)

### **NWCU**

2007 National Workshop on  
Christian Unity

January 29, 2007 to  
February 1, 2007

WASHINGTON, DC

Watch for more information at  
the NWCU website:

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