

Excerpts, Papal Homily at Vespers Anticipating the 40th Anniversary of the Decree on Ecumenism

Pope John Paul II recently had much to say about the ecumenical journey. See below excerpts of his homily on November 13, 2004. We reproduce below remarks on 'the spirituality of communion.' The link for the entire text follows.

4. . . .We no longer consider other Christians as distant or strangers but see them as brothers and sisters. "The 'universal brotherhood' of Christians has become a firm ecumenical conviction.... Christians have been converted to a fraternal charity which embraces all Christ's disciples" ([*Ut Unum Sint*](#), n. 42).

We are grateful to God to see that in recent years many of the faithful across the world have been moved by an ardent desire for the unity of all Christians. I warmly thank those who have made themselves instruments of the Spirit and have worked and prayed for this process of rapprochement and reconciliation.

6. How should we imagine the future of ecumenism? First of all, we must strengthen the foundations of ecumenical activity, that is, our common faith in all that is expressed in baptismal profession, in the Apostolic Creed and in the Nicene-Constantinople Creed. These doctrinal foundations express the faith professed by the Church since the time of the Apostles. Then, on the basis of this faith we must develop the concept and *spirituality of communion*. "The communion of saints" and full communion do not mean abstract uniformity but a wealth of legitimate diversities in gifts shared and recognized by all, according to the well-known proverb: "*in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*".

7. *A spirituality of communion* also means an ability to think of our Christian brothers or sisters, in the deep unity born from Baptism, "as 'those who are a part of me'. This makes us able to share... and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship" ([*Novo Millennio Ineunte*](#), n. 43).

A spirituality of communion "implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a 'gift for me'. *A spirituality of communion* means, finally, to know how to 'make room' for our brothers and sisters, bearing "each other's burdens" (Gal 6: 2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, "masks" of communion rather than its means of expression and growth" ([*Novo Millennio Ineunte*](#), n. 43).

To sum up, therefore, *a spirituality of communion* means travelling together towards unity in the integral profession of faith, in the sacraments and in ecclesiastical ministry (cf. [*Lumen Gentium*](#), n. 14; [*Unitatis Redintegratio*](#), n. 2). . .

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/2004/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20041113_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html