



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Preparing for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



As every year, in January the Universal Church asks all faithful to live the **week of prayer for Christian Unity**. From January 18 to 25, initiatives aimed at promoting encounter between members of different Christian communities multiply with for moments of reflection and prayer in various countries. The Holy Land is a special laboratory for this type of encounter.

In December 2019, the launch of the **ecumenical series "Exchange of gifts"** by the Vatican Publishing House was hosted at Palazzo della Rovere, home of the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. The first two volumes, *Prayer* and *Our Mother Earth* offer the reader texts by Pope Francis on these themes introduced respectively by a preface by the Patriarch of Moscow Kirill and by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

On that occasion, **Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity**, and Archbishop Ian Ernest, director of the Anglican Center in Rome and representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Holy See spoke.

"For Pope Francis it is of fundamental importance that the various Christians and ecclesial communities **undertake the path of unity together**, because unity grows by walking together and walking together means practicing unity: "unity comes on the journey, the Holy Spirit creates it on the journey", commented Cardinal Koch proposing the words and vision of Pope Francis.

"The spiritual dimension of ecumenism soon found its visible expression with the introduction of the Week of Prayer for Christian unity at the nascent stages of the ecumenical movement and it has been an ecumenical initiative from the outset", continued the president of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity recalling that this year's theme is taken from the chosen scriptural passage **"They showed us unusual kindness"** (Acts 28.2).

However the spiritual dimension of ecumenism cannot be disconnected from practice, insisted Cardinal Koch quoting the speech of Pope Francis during the general audience of 28 May 2014, in which he invited us to do all that can be done together: "pray together, work together for God's flock, seek peace, take care of creation, the many things that we have in common. And as brothers we move forward".

Anglican Archbishop Ian Ernest also stressed the importance of the joint action: "It is clear that when Anglicans, Catholics, the Orthodox, the Lutherans and other Churches are together in a certain place - be that in a parish or a city or a nation or around the world - that it is the same parish, city, nation or world that they are serving. We face the same issues and are called to respond to the same needs. It is natural, then, that we should seek ways to do this closely as Disciples of Christ. The body of Christ may be riven by sad divisions, but we can begin to overcome these if we look for **ways to work together and walk together in bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world in word and action.** "

Strengthened by this invitation to prayer and action, we are preparing to joyfully live the Week of Prayer for Christian unity which the Church offers us with a special thought for our brothers and sisters of the Holy Land who have lived close together for centuries and who they experience the "exchange of gifts" daily.

Elena Dini

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