



RENEWING THE ECUMENICAL SPIRIT

A Statement Prepared by the Ontario Diocesan
Directors for Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs and
Endorsed by the Catholic Bishops of Ontario

*Distributed by the Ontario Diocesan Directors for
Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs*

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Dear fellow priests, deacons, religious and laity,

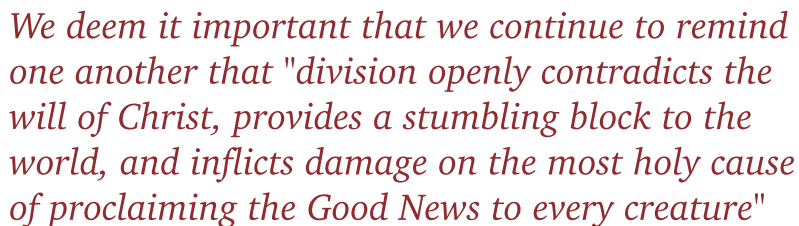
In celebration of the fifteenth anniversary year of the Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (*May They Be One, Qu'ils soient un*), we wish to recall once again the importance of our ecumenical commitment.

Despite the new stress points which have more recently surfaced within some ecclesial communities, giving rise to concerns within the Catholic community, it remains an essential priority to stay focused on the common pursuit of the unity of all Christians. We deem it important that we continue to remind one another that "division openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the Good News to every creature" (*Unitatis redintegratio* ("Restoration of Unity. *La restauration de l'unité*") November 21, 1964 (*Vatican II*)).

In the spirit of *Ut Unum Sint* we do well to further remind ourselves that the work of ecumenism is not a choice we arbitrarily make but rather a responsibility we must necessarily assume. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council spoke of this responsibility as being 'irrevocable.' We acknowledge the passionate and

important words of Pope John Paul II when he reminded all Catholics that "it is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of "appendix" which is added to the Church's traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does."

Through *Unitatis redintegratio* the Church has taught, and we are continually being reminded that 'prayer is the soul of the ecumenical movement'. While new forms of ecumenical prayer and outreach ought to be encouraged, we wish to call attention especially to the value and importance of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and urge a new expression of enthusiasm within our Catholic parishes for participation in this worthy and indispensable practice.



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Pastors are encouraged to exercise leadership in the gathering of neighbouring Christian communities to unite in prayer and fellowship, especially but not only, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as well as the World Day of Prayer. In the spirit of *Ut Unum Sint* we are reminded that "along the ecumenical path to unity, pride of place certainly belongs to *common prayer*." In

addition, we are told that "if Christians, despite their divisions, can grow ever more united in common prayer around Christ, they will grow in the awareness of how little divides them in comparison to what unites them". Attention should also be drawn to the number of worthy suggestions offered by the Canadian Ordo (liturgical calendar) with regard to the Week of Prayer activities.

Our ecumenical achievements in the past and those yet to be realized can only be measured as a result of the primacy of prayer, so essential to the pursuit of Christian Unity. Every baptized Christian is called to be a spiritual ecumenist, seeking to intercede so that the prayer of Jesus to the Father, "that all may be one ... as we are one" (In.17:21) be fulfilled.

Pope Benedict XVI, building upon the ecumenical legacy of his venerable brother, Pope John Paul II, gave a determined focus to his pontificate when he acknowledged that "as a primary commitment,[he would] work without sparing energies for the reconstitution of the full and visible unity of all the followers of Christ".

