

**Churches in dialogue:  
the long way towards Christian Unity  
The WCC as a fellowship of churches and an ecumenical institution**

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It is a great honour to be invited to this gathering by the Ecumenical Commission of the Catholic Bishops Conference in Italy and it gives me a great pleasure to be here today, among sisters and brothers, respected church leaders and eminent theologians, to reflect together on the contemporary ecumenical movement.

My presentation will somehow have a different scope. Coming from the World Council of Churches, my starting point will be the beginning of the 20th century when the contemporary ecumenical movement began rather than the Second Vatican Council when Catholic participation in this movement was inaugurated; I will not focus exclusively on Orthodox-Catholic relationships; the ecumenical methodology I will refer to will not be the bi-lateral but rather the multilateral dialogue; and, last but not least, I will try to describe a new reality in church history and a new dynamic in the inter-church relations, brought by the ecumenical institutions.

I hope that my reflections will confirm that despite all difficulties and shortcomings, the ecumenical movement has been a real blessing for our churches.

***Grateful to God for a rich harvest***

It is true that we can celebrate today<sup>1</sup>. The contemporary ecumenical movement created the proper atmosphere and conditions within which churches became aware that bonds of friendship between them and bridges to overcome their divisions were indispensable.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf, some of the many recent publications on this matter: John A. Radano (Ed.), *Celebrating a Century of Ecumenism. Exploring the achievements of international dialogue*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2012; Cardinal Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits. Basic aspects of Christian Faith in ecumenical dialogue*, London-New York, Continuum, 2009.

Churches were inspired and encouraged by Jesus prayer “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). This is call to unity, but also a call to witness to the world, “so that the world may believe”. Christians and churches were challenged by the ecumenical movement to proclaim together that Jesus, their common Lord and Saviour, is the one sent by the Father. This new relationship among Christians aimed at fostering a commitment to unity and to mission, which included both the proclamation of the word as well as action on justice, peace and care for God’s creation.

Conversion to Christ and prayer for unity prompted Christians to recall and take seriously the challenge St Paul had addressed to the Corinthians: “I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose”. (1 Cor. 1:10) Therefore, Christians and churches adopted a new attitude and searched together for a new quality in their relationships by a dialogue of truth and love, by a commitment to healing memories of division, confrontation and intolerance. As Pope John Paul II said in his encyclical *Ut unum sint*:

*“With the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Lord’s disciples, inspired by love, by the power of the truth and by a sincere desire for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, are called to re-examine together their painful past and the hurt which that past regrettably continues to provoke even today.”<sup>2</sup>*

Thus, the contemporary ecumenical movement allowed churches, tragically divided and estranged in the course of long centuries, to meet one another again, to work together, to reflect together, to witness together and to pray together. In many ways and in many occasions, churches confronted their divergences courageously and honestly, and examined them in the light of doctrine, prayer and Holy Scripture.

It is true that the harvest of decades of common labour is rich:

- (a) There are numerous examples of theological documents, produced either by bi-lateral or multi-lateral theological dialogues. These documents reveal persuasively the degree of progress made in recognizing the shared faith in the one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who binds us together in the community of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Ut unum sint*, No. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. the four-volume *Growth in Agreement* series published by the World Council of Churches, a collection of reports and agreed statements from bilateral and multilateral dialogues adopted from 1971 through the present. **Vol. 1**, *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (Faith and Order Paper, no. 108; New York: Paulist Press; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984). **Vol. 2**, *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, ed. Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans; Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000). **Vol. 3**, *Growth in*

- (b) There are several examples of ecumenical institutions, at the global, regional, national or local level. These institutions served the churches in their new journey, as churches were trying to respond to the gospel imperative of Christian unity, but also were deeply feeling the need to affirm their call to mission and common witness, their common commitment to the search for justice, peace and reconciliation in a world divided along the lines of class, race, religion, culture, competing national loyalties, etc..<sup>4</sup>
- (c) There are also lots of stories, of persons and communities, who played a pioneering role, as they have committed themselves existentially to a long pilgrimage on the way to unity of the churches and reconciliation of peoples and nations.<sup>5</sup>

### ***One century since Edinburgh 1910***

If we look back, we do have many reasons for giving thanks to God for the profound changes we have experienced, as Christians and churches, in our relationships. In the century since Edinburgh 1910 -- i.e. since the first World Mission Conference, marking the beginning of a new era that is widely known and recognized as “the century of the contemporary ecumenical movement” --, efforts and initiatives aiming at Christian unity multiplied significantly and participation in the ecumenical movement increased dramatically.

At Edinburgh, representatives of mostly historical Protestant and Anglican traditions were present. Over the decades, they were gradually joined by Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and more recently Pentecostals in efforts of dialogue and cooperation for the sake of unity.

At the time of Edinburgh, there were practically not institutional expressions of the ecumenical movement<sup>6</sup>. Since the 1940s and 1950s there was a phenomenal multiplication of such organizations. They were representing different expressions of the ecumenical movement (confessional, conciliar, regional, national, action-

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*Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005*, ed. Jeffrey Gros, Thomas F. Best, and Lorelei F. Fuchs (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans; Geneva: WCC Publications, 2007). **Vol. 4.** *Growth in Agreement IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 2005 -2013*, ed. Thomas F. Best, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans; Geneva: WCC Publications, 2015).

<sup>4</sup>A very interesting booklet providing an excellent picture of the existing ecumenical organisation, including the difficulties resulting from the institutional proliferation and complexity: Jill Hawkey, *Mapping the Oikoumene – A study of current ecumenical structures and relationships*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2004.

<sup>5</sup>Ioan Bria and Dagmar Heller (Ed), *Ecumenical Pilgrims – Profiles of Pioneers in Christian Reconciliation*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1995. See also: Tamara Grdzeldidze and Guido Dotti, *Cloud of Witnesses: Opportunities for Ecumenical Commemoration*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2011.

<sup>6</sup>We should keep in mind that that, as early as the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, organizations such as WSCF, YMCA and YWCA have played a significant role in paving the way for the contemporary ecumenical movement.

oriented, more recently promoting inter-religious relationships and cooperation, etc.) and are impressive today because of their numbers.

At Edinburg, there was no any formal and stated commitment of churches to the ecumenical movement. Soon after, Faith and Order and Life and Work, though inspired and lead by dedicated church leaders and visionary ecumenists, they were rather movements; in general terms, churches were not yet officially represented in the very early stage. The Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, addressed in 1920 "*Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere*", inviting churches to create together a "fellowship of churches", followed by the creation of the World Council of Churches in 1948, precisely as a "fellowship of churches" and, later, in the 60s, by the decisions of the Second Vatican Council opening new avenues for the participation of the Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement, consolidated the ecclesial character of the – quite unprecedented – common journey of divided Christian churches.

What I have described here as a journey started in Edinburgh is churches' pilgrimage towards unity seen from the perspective of the World Council of Churches. Attempting the same exercise from a Roman Catholic perspective would bring to the fore other signposts: the vision of catholic theologians preceding the Second Vatican Council, the very spirit and the decisions of the Council itself and, particularly, the implementation of these decisions in concrete ways, including new structural instruments (e.g. the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian Unity), bi-lateral theological dialogues, participation in ecumenical initiatives, membership in national and regional council of churches, new communities and spiritual movements active in the ecumenical movement (e.g. Focolare, Saint Egidio, Bose) etc. There could also be an effort to discern similar signposts from an Orthodox perspective as, for example, the participation of almost all Orthodox churches in the World Council of Churches, bi-lateral theological dialogues and ecumenical initiatives undertaken by heads of Orthodox churches.

What has to be underlined here is churches' common commitment to the same cause, to the "one ecumenical movement", the journey on the same direction, the pilgrimage – as the World Council of Churches put it – of churches and ecumenical organizations on the way to justice and peace, reconciliation and unity. Again, even if the terminology is different, even if methodologies differ, even if the instruments are not the same, the commitment is identical.

This is largely testified by the particularly inspiring language used by Pope Francis, describing the contemporary ecumenical movement as "churches together on the

way to Christian unity” and using the powerful analogy between this “togetherness on the way” and the principle of “conciliarity” (*syn-hodos*) that has strong and deep ecclesiological roots.<sup>7</sup>

As we receive this rich legacy and we celebrate the achievements of the contemporary ecumenical movement, we should ask ourselves some fundamental questions, struggle together in order to find the appropriate responses and commit ourselves to do our best to implement these responses. There are no easy answers to these questions, which continue to challenge all Christians: how could the ecumenical achievements of a century, which have taken Christians in many ways beyond the divisions which had long characterized their relationships, be solidified? In what ways can those achievements help fashion steps forward which will promote the unity that is sought? These are now the tasks ahead of us.

### *The World Council of Churches*

As I was invited to speak from the perspective of ecumenical institutions, I will turn now to the World Council of Churches. The World Council is one of the many institutional expressions of the ecumenical movement, but certainly the broadest and most inclusive global ecumenical organization. Some 350 member churches form today this “fellowship of churches”, including Orthodox, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Old Catholic and Reformed churches, as well as United and Independent churches.

Despite the serious limitations of the World Council of Churches – as, for example, the fact that half of the Christian world is not among the members of the fellowship –, no other ecumenical organisation would be as comprehensive in terms of the member churches it represents, the breadth of the issues it addresses, the range of the relationships it maintains across ecclesial traditions, and the variety of networks and movements it includes in its manifold activities.

Looking back and assessing the 60 years of history of the WCC, H.A.H. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew underlined that we should be grateful to God for what this “fellowship of churches” meant to its member churches and ecumenical partners in the ecumenical movement:

*“Who would have imagined that one day the appeal by the Church of Constantinople in 1920 ‘Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere’, inviting them after the fratricidal First World War to form a ‘League of Churches’ would take concrete form? (...) a “koinonia/communion*

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. H. Destivelle, *Le Pape François et l’Unité – Un oecuménisme en chemin*, in: *Istina LX*, 2015, pp. 7-40.

*of churches' (...) with the aim of overcoming distrust and bitterness, drawing the churches together, creating bonds of friendship between them, and thus fostering their cooperation. As that encyclical said: 'Love should be rekindled and strengthened among the churches, so that they should no more consider one another as strangers and foreigners, but as relatives, and as being a part of the household of Christ and fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise of God in Christ(...)' In fact, in the course of the 60 years of its life, the Council has provided an ideal platform where churches, with different outlooks and belonging to a great variety of theological and ecclesiological traditions, have been able to engage in dialogue and promote Christian unity, while all the time responding to the manifold needs of contemporary society."<sup>8</sup>*

A lot could be said about what the World Council of Churches deployed as programmatic activities in the areas of unity, mission, diaconia, advocacy, ecumenical formation, inter-religious dialogue and relations, renewal and so many other fields. A lot could also be said about the relationship the World Council of Churches developed with non-member churches, but also other ecumenical organizations, NGOs, international humanitarian organizations, etc.

I would not go into all the details of these activities and relationships. I would rather attempt to highlight a few aspects of the very nature of the World Council of Churches that proved to be of particular importance for churches endeavouring to walk together towards Christian unity, to witness together to their faith within the multiple challenges of the modern world, and to serve the human community in a world seeking for justice and peace.

My starting point will be the constitution of the World Council of Churches, more precisely article I of this constitution, known as the "Basis" of the Council.

*"The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit".<sup>9</sup>*

### ***Being a fellowship of churches***

The notion of "fellowship of churches", used for the first time in contemporary history to designate the coming together of divided churches, is often traced back to the above mentioned Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (1920) inviting the churches to create a "fellowship/koinonia of churches".

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/2008/homily-by-the-ecumenical-patriarch-hah-bartholomew>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/wcc-constitution-and-rules>

The choice of the word “fellowship” was eventually justified, since it had an extremely rich ecclesial and ecumenical potential. It pointed to a coming together of divided churches, committing themselves to enter into dialogue. It portrayed a fraternal association of churches set up to organize activities in areas of common interest. But ultimately it suggested a deeper theological and ecclesiological reality reminding the challenging image of the early church that was devoted “to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship” (Acts 2:42).

The creation of a World Council of Churches was in fact a new way of building, maintaining and developing the relationships of the churches to one another. The World Council of Churches came into being as a new structure and organization, to serve the churches as they worked towards *koinonia* in faith, life and witness. It was a new instrument for bringing the churches together into a “fellowship”, on the way towards their full “*koinonia*”.

Certainly, the whole concept of fellowship posed – and continues to pose – challenges from an ecclesiological point of view. An important policy document of the World Council of Churches clarifies the meaning of the term “fellowship” as follows:

*“While ‘fellowship’ is sometimes used to translate the Greek word koinonia, which is a key concept in recent ecumenical discussion about the church and its unity, the relationship among the churches in the WCC as a whole is not yet koinonia in the full sense (as described, for example, in the Canberra Assembly statement on ‘The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling’). But the WCC Constitution (Art. 3,1) does portray the Council as a community of churches on the way to the ‘goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, [seeking] to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe’. To the extent that the member churches share the one baptism and the confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, it can even be said (using the words of the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council) that a ‘real, even though imperfect communion’ exists between them already now”.*<sup>10</sup>

This is how the World Council of Churches, though its constitutional language, paved the way for the theology of *koinonia* to permeate the lives of the churches, to inspire their theological dialogues, to give substance to the relationships among them, and to formulate new positions, as the Second Vatican Council did, recognizing the existence of a “real, even though imperfect, communion” among the churches.

As to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, it has made the pertinent observation that the existence of the World Council of Churches as a fellowship of churches constituted

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. Policy Statement “Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches”, para. 3.3.

for its member churches an important "ecclesiological challenge": churches that had accepted the membership in the Council would now have to clarify the meaning and the extent of the fellowship they experienced within the Council, as well as the ecclesiological significance of *koinonia*, which was the purpose and aim of the WCC but not yet a given reality.<sup>11</sup>

The World Council of Churches suggests, therefore, that the dynamic of the ecumenical movement is rooted in the tension between the churches as they are and the true *koinonia* with the triune God and among one another which is, at the same time, their calling and God's gift, the task itself and the ultimate goal. As to the living and driving force of this ecumenical quest, it could not be other than the Holy Spirit, who bestows the fruit of "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*" (Gal. 5:22).

Today, as the divisions **among** churches continue to exist and new divisions emerge very unfortunately **within** churches, the fundamental principles of a "fellowship of churches" allow the World Council of Churches to continue to be an extremely valuable instrument holding churches together in an ecumenical space:

- *where trust can be built,*
- *where churches can test and develop their readings of the world, their own social practices, and their liturgical and doctrinal traditions while facing each other and deepening their encounter with each other,*
- *where churches freely will create networks for advocacy and diaconical services and make their material resources available to each other,*
- *where churches through dialogue continue to break down the barriers that prevent them from recognizing each other as churches that confess the one faith, celebrate one baptism and administer the one eucharist, in order that they may move to a communion in faith, sacramental life and witness.*<sup>12</sup>

### ***Confessing together the Lordship of Jesus Christ***

I move now to the second important element of the article Basis. When churches decided to embark in a totally unprecedented experience of forming a "Council of Churches", an instrument that would bring and hold together churches divided for centuries, one of the imperatives for them was to formulate together and agree together on what would hold them together in such a new body; what would -- and should -- be the starting point of their dialogue and the foundation of their

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<sup>11</sup>Idem para. 3.4.

<sup>12</sup> Cr. Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, para .

collaboration. In other words, a Basis, an article Basis for the constitution of the new “fellowship of churches”, was needed.

Obviously, such a basis would not be considered as a confession of faith, understood as a Creed or presented as a full statement of the Christian faith. It should simply lay the foundations of a new way of being and acting together.

After long discussions, the basis included three fundamental elements: (a) the Christ-centredness of the churches’ common calling; (b) a specific reference to the Holy Scripture as the common source of churches faith; (c) an explicit reference to the Trinitarian faith.

It was important to open the constitution affirming that member churches “*confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour*” because any dialogue between churches, any common witness to the world and any cooperation should be based on the common conviction that Christ is the Divine Head of the Church, the God-among-us who continues to gather and accompany his children. Churches accepted the challenge to feel like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: embarking together on a journey, with the certainty that the Lord will be with them, accompany them and guide them, and with the hope that at the end of this journey they would reach “*visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship*”.

It was also important to affirm that the common confession of the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour was “*according to the Scriptures*”. More than a statement, this was a clear link to the heritage of the undivided church: a reminder that the principle of faithfulness to the Scriptures was an integral part of the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed. At the same time, these few words wanted to capture and encapsulate in the dynamics of the new organization the insights offered by the biblical renewal on the one hand and the great potential of common Christian work on the Bible on the other.

Finally, the wording of the Basis included one more element that was meant to strengthen the fellowship: member churches would seek to fulfil their common calling “*to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit*”. We can discern here two more stones consolidating the foundations of the fellowship of churches. First: an explicit inclusion of the Trinitarian faith of the church, the very source of all theology of communion. Second: the use of the liturgical/doxological language reminding to the fellowship that this language can inspire and strengthen churches in dialogue and, therefore, prayer should be at the heart of their fellowship.

The Basis of the World Council of Churches had wider ecumenical implications. Most of the councils of churches, at the regional, national or local level, have adopted for their own constitution a very similar, sometimes almost an identical Basis. This was important since, after the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church considered seriously becoming member of such councils of churches, and the elements included in the Basis have facilitated the process without necessitating any substantial change. “The member churches of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church are inspired by the same vision of God’s plan to unite all things in Christ”, affirmed the World Council of Churches<sup>13</sup>, and it is clear that one means of moving towards this vision has been Roman Catholic membership and participation in councils of churches.

At the same time, beyond the institutional expressions of the ecumenical movement, most of the bi-lateral theological dialogues have also focused on these constitutive elements of the constitutional basis of the World Council of Churches. Christology, the Holy Scripture and Trinitarian Faith have been on the agenda of theological dialogues as the fundamentals of churches common faith.

Today, the progress made in the ecumenical movement and the radical changes in the relationships among many churches may have shifted the centre of gravity from these fundamentals to the baptismal theology, the discovery of a common baptism which allowed many Christians to recognize again each other as sisters and brothers in Christ, and go as far as to official inter-ecclesial recognition of each others’ baptism.<sup>14</sup> But the first seeds were planted by churches attempt to come and stay together in a “fellowship of churches” which, with God’s help and guidance, gradually evolved in working, acting, praying and moving together.

### *A word of conclusion*

Rev. Dr Olv Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, reflecting on the concept of a “*Pilgrimage of justice and peace*”, launched by the 10<sup>th</sup> assembly, highlights the importance of dialogue, the importance of “including the other in my own future”:

*“Pilgrimage is the defining quality of the ecumenical movement today (...). Speaking of a pilgrimage that combines spiritual dimensions of prayer and worship and practical action for justice and peace, we are reminded that Christian life and identity are part of something*

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Cf. Policy Statement “Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches”, para. 6.2.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. among a very rich bibliography on this subject: *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition, A Study Text*, Faith and Order Paper No 210, WCC, Geneva, 2011. Dagmar Heller, *Baptized into Christ – A Guide to the Ecumenical Discussion on Baptism*, WCC, Geneva, 2012.

*greater than ourselves, something which binds us together in solidarity with each other as an expression of God's grace and love. We move out of a merely self-centred or self-serving approach to Christian faith and life. Walking together on this pilgrimage requires and encourages openness to dialogue, the acceptance and practice of mutual accountability, and the inclusion of the other in my own future. Searching for meaning beyond myself or ourselves as part of a particular group, a church, a tradition, we discover the life-affirming meaning of the wider fellowship of those together on the way.*"<sup>15</sup>

The primary result of the contemporary ecumenical movement was the introduction and the gradual development of a "culture of dialogue", a new culture that undoubtedly led to new relationships between churches, but also with other religions and with the world-at-large. It would not be an exaggeration, I think, to state that dialogue has become a condition *sine qua non* for churches today; for their relationships, for their witness to the world, for their contribution to justice and peace in the world.

It is important to recognize and celebrate the fact that for most churches dialogue has become a formally stated imperative arising from the gospel. Therefore, the ecumenical movement, as growth in communion, became a powerful witness to the gospel that all Christians can bear before a fragmented, divided and tormented world. The ecumenical movement invited and continues to invite churches to this spirit and culture of dialogue, so that Christians today can affirm that: "*we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us*" (2 Cor. 5:20).

Notwithstanding the concrete results or shortcomings, the success or failures of the contemporary ecumenical movement, defending and strengthening this "culture of dialogue" today is vital. Particularly as we observe more and more alarming signals of a counter-culture, particularly attitudes fuelled by all sorts of fundamentalism.

Speaking about the role of the Orthodox Church in today's world, H.A.H. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew encouraged the commitment to dialogue and strongly suggested the continuation of churches journey together:

*"Orthodoxy must be in constant dialogue with the world. The Orthodox Church does not fear dialogue because truth is not afraid of dialogue (...) if Orthodoxy is enclosed within itself and not in dialogue with those outside, it will both fail in its mission and no longer be the "catholic" and "ecumenical" Church (...) The great Fathers of the Church never feared dialogue with the spiritual culture of their age – indeed even with the pagan idolaters and philosophers of their world – thereby influencing and transforming the civilization of their time and offering us a truly ecumenical Church. Today, Orthodoxy is called to continue this*

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/messages-and-letters/message-on-75th-anniversary-of-the-taize-community>

*dialogue with the outside world in order to provide a witness and the life-giving breath of its faith. However, this dialogue cannot reach the outside world unless it first passes through all those that bear the Christian name (...). Our endeavours for the union of all Christians is the will and command of our Lord, who before His Passion prayed to His Father "that all [namely, His disciples] may be one, so that the world may believe that You sent me." (John 17.21) It is not possible for the Lord to agonize over the unity of His disciples and for us to remain indifferent about the unity of all Christians. This would constitute criminal betrayal and transgression of His divine commandment"*<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup>Patriarchal and Synodical Encyclical on Sunday of Orthodoxy (2009), published in many web-sites, as for example: [http://www.thyateira.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=663&Itemid=1](http://www.thyateira.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=663&Itemid=1)