

OFFICE FOR ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA



September, 2007

In July the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued a Response to “Questions on Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church.” The content of the Response has raised a considerable amount of anxiety among Christians of all denominations, particularly as a result of press reports. A few days after the release, Cardinal Levada, Prefect of the CDF, issued a Commentary on the document. I encourage everyone to read both documents, as it should aid in answering questions which you may be asked. Both documents are available on the Vatican website. Links can be found on the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs website under [Resources](#).

Cardinal Levada points out in the Commentary “it must be remembered that these said ecclesial Communities, by virtue of the diverse elements of sanctification and truth really present in them, undoubtedly possess as such an ecclesial character and consequently a salvific significance.” Reports in some press articles that the Catholic Church stated that there are no salvific elements in Protestant Communities are clearly incorrect.

An important thing to note here is that there is no rejection of the ecumenical movement that has come so far since Vatican II. In fact, the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) was written to encourage dialogue with other Christian communities. The Response carefully clarifies the definition of terms to be used in ecumenical dialogue. Protestants are free to call themselves whatever they like, just as we Catholics are also free. By clarifying terms, hopefully the work towards the unity that Christ intended for His Church can be furthered and hopefully achieved. We must understand each other’s vocabulary to have meaningful dialogue. In the Catholic Church, as in other denominations, there are those who view ecumenism with suspicion as well as those who maintain a relativistic attitude towards truth and the nature of the Church. This document guards against those extremes on either side.

Hopefully the above comments help alleviate some of your concerns. It is my hope that this document by the CDF can be an opportunity for furthering the theological dialogue within the Christian Community. As with many issues, it is always better to read the actual texts and not only what is reported about them in the press. Thank you for all you do to further Christian unity.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregory J. Fairbanks".

Father Gregory J. Fairbanks

SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS

Interfaith Dialogue at Graterford ~ June 14–July 26

Our office continues to conduct annually a six-week interfaith dialogue program at the State Correctional Institution at Graterford. This provides an opportunity for Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim inmates to share, listen and learn about their own and each other's religious traditions, in order to encourage mutual respect and understanding.

Bearing Witness Program ~ July 30-August 2

Co-sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, this professional development program was attended by Catholic school teachers from the eight dioceses in Pennsylvania. This intensive four-day seminar provides educators with an understanding of Judaism, the history of anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and related issues of prejudice and discrimination. Auxiliary Bishop Robert Maginnis offered remarks on the final day of the program. Daylesford Abbey was the host facility this year.

Advanced Ecumenical Leadership Institute ~ August 5-11

Father Gregory Fairbanks attended this event hosted by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement at Graymoor in Garrison, New York. The Institute is designed to offer diocesan ecumenical staff persons from around the country an indepth discussion of current ecumenical dialogues and updating regarding other matters of ecumenical concern.

From the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
MESSAGE TO BUDDHISTS FOR THE FEAST OF VESAKH 2007

Christians and Buddhists:

Educating communities to live in harmony and peace

Dialogue is the sure path to fruitful interreligious relations. It deepens respect and nurtures the desire to live in harmony with others. . . .

Together we can help to create a space and the opportunities for people to talk, listen, share regrets and offer forgiveness for each other's past mistakes.

Education for peace is a responsibility which must be borne by all sectors of society. This starts in ordinary homes where the family, the fundamental pillar of society, strives to transmit traditional and sound values to children by a deliberate effort to inform their consciences. The younger generations deserve and indeed thrive upon value-based education which reinforces respect, acceptance, compassion and equality. It is important therefore that schools, both government and faith-based, do all possible to support parents in the delicate but satisfying task of raising children to appreciate all that is good and true. . . .

Ultimately, the aim of true education is to bring the individual to encounter the ultimate purpose of life. This motivates the person to serve broken humanity. Together may we continue to contribute towards peace and harmony in our society and the world. We Catholics join you with our heartfelt greetings as you celebrate this feast and I wish you again a happy Vesakh.

Paul Cardinal Poupard, President

(Note: Vesakh celebrates birthday of the Buddha.)

We are going electronic!

Our newsletters will still be available in paper format, but we are building our database to allow the electronic transmission of the newsletter. This helps save us printing and postage costs (and saves some trees!). Please e-mail us your updated contact information: (We promise not to spam you!)

Please e-mail us your name, what parish you represent, and your e-mail address to:
ecumen@adphila.org.

COMING EVENTS

September 11 Interfaith Prayer Service for Peace and Remembrance
Sixth Anniversary of September 11, 2001
7:00 PM
Service begins at Maternity BVM Church, 9220 Old Bustleton Avenue
Candlelight Procession to Temple Beth Ami, 9201 Old Bustleton Avenue
for concluding service and refreshments

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September 13 Month of Ramadan begins: Muslims observe a special period of fasting,
with an emphasis on prayer, charity and self-accountability. It concludes
on October 12.



Some Local Initiatives for Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia

Its mission is “to advance mutual trust, understanding and cooperation among faith communities, in order to work together for the common good of the region.”

You can learn more at www.interfaithcenterpa.org

Philadelphia Dialogue Forum

An organization founded by Turkish-American Muslims in Philadelphia in 2003 to “build bridges of understanding, acceptance and trust among communities by fostering dialogue between people of different faiths and backgrounds, who seek common values, and look to achieve mutual understanding of their differences.”

Information about their monthly programs is available at <http://philadialogforum.org>

LOOKING AHEAD

Brochure is enclosed for:

CATHOLIC LIFE CONGRESS 2007

Theme: One Lord, One Faith, One People
Date: Saturday, November 3, 2007 ~ 8:15 AM - 4:00 PM
Place: Archbishop Carroll High School, Radnor, PA

Of special interest for us is the presentation by Sister Josephine Kase, IHM entitled
Embracing the Whole Church: One Body of Christ in East and West.

Current events in Eastern Europe and the Middle East call us to a new awareness of and appreciation for the significance of Eastern Christians, both Catholic and Orthodox, in the life of the Church at home and abroad.

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WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Theme for January 18-25, 2008
"Pray without ceasing" 1 Thessalonians 5:17

We have enclosed the usual order form for the resources that will enable you to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in your parishes. Please note that the materials which formerly were combined into a single resource packet are now available on the web site, as indicated in the first column of the order form: www.geii.org

Parish pastors will also receive the order form in October.

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VISIT OUR WEB SITE

<http://www.archdiocese-phl.org/evangelization/ecum/ecum.htm>

or

<http://www.archdiocese-phl.org>

► Evangelization, then ► Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Deadline for next newsletter: October 15, 2007