

OFFICE FOR ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA



NEWSLETTER FOR PARISH ECUMENICAL REPRESENTATIVES

January, 2007

As we begin a new year, we appropriately focus our efforts immediately on prayer for Christian Unity. Just a few weeks ago we witnessed a powerful moment in the road towards Christian Unity with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. On the Feast of St. Andrew in Istanbul (formerly Constantinople) Pope Benedict XVI and Patriarch Bartholomew I affirmed together:

We give thanks to the Author of all that is good, who allows us once again, in prayer and in dialogue, to express the joy we feel as brothers and to renew our commitment to move towards full communion. This commitment comes from the Lord's will and from our responsibility as Pastors in the Church of Christ. May our meeting be a sign and an encouragement to us to share the same sentiments and the same attitudes of fraternity, cooperation and communion in charity and truth. The Holy Spirit will help us to prepare the great day of the re-establishment of full unity, whenever and however God wills it. Then we shall truly be able to rejoice and be glad.

The Ecumenical movement is alive and well! While there are still many bridges to be crossed, the will and desire for unity continues to grow. With this in mind, we turn our attention to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, celebrated annually January 18 - 25. The theme for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is "*Open our ears and loosen our tongues.*" (Mark 7:31-37). While our ecumenical hopes often rise and fall in relation to international gestures and initiatives for unity, local Christian communities continue to draw attention to the simplicity of opening our ears and speaking with the voice of the unity that Christ desires for His Church.

This is why it is so important to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in our local communities each year. As we begin this New Year let us gather together in prayer asking the source of unity, Jesus Christ, to be with us as we work towards fulfilling the prayer of Christ "that they all may be one" (John 17: 21). I encourage you to work with your local Ministerium to have a joint celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Bulletin and Pulpit Announcements can be found on the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious web site (<http://www.geii.org>). Thank you for all your ecumenical and interreligious endeavors!

Father Gregory J. Fairbanks
Director, Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Christian Unity Week

- Intercessions: Enclosed with this mailing is a list of intercessions, one for each day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which you may include in the Prayers of the Faithful during that time.
- Also included is the Bible Study Guide for use on each of the eight days. The resources for this year have been prepared by an ecumenical group in South Africa.
- Other resources, including a sample prayer service for Christian Unity, can be accessed at www.geii.org
- We plan to post on our web site a list of local Christian Unity Week observances as we become aware of them. If your congregation is participating in any of these services, we invite you to e-mail the appropriate information to our office (ecumen@adphila.org) so it can be included. Also, it has been the custom of the Catholic Standard and Times to publish the list that we give them.



Activities of Office Staff

December 9 - Father Fairbanks and Sister Josephine Kase conducted a workshop at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations for the fifth-year candidates for the Permanent Diaconate.

December 15 – Sister Josephine Kase visited the Sikh Gurdwara in Upper Darby in response to an invitation to become better acquainted with the local Sikh community. Gurdwara is the name for a Sikh congregation and place of worship.

January 15 – Father Fairbanks will initiate a three-part series on Interfaith Dialogue at St. Hilary of Poitiers Parish with a review of the history and development of Catholic Interfaith Dialogue. Succeeding presenters include Rabbi Robert Leib, Temple Beth Am, and Imam Saulih Rauf, the Islamic Family Center.

January 18 – The annual Lutheran-Catholic Clergy dialogue will take place at Augustus Lutheran Church in Trappe from 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM.

January 19 – The Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue, co-chaired by Father Fairbanks, meets at Palmer Seminary (formerly Eastern Baptist) from 9:00 to 11:30 AM.

SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Workshop for Parish Ecumenical Representatives

Date: March 24, 2007

Time: 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Place: St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Vianney Lounge

Topic: The Sweetness in Islam: The Path of Purification

Presenter: Imam Muhammad Abdur-Razzaq Miller

Registration forms will be sent in a later mailing.

VICARIATE NEWS

BUCKS COUNTY

Upper Southampton

Members of local churches and synagogues gathered on the Sunday before Thanksgiving in a 17th century building for the annual interfaith service. The Old School Baptist Meeting House, located at Second Street and Maple Avenue in Southampton, dates to colonial times and is preserved in its original condition: no electricity, so services must be held during daylight. Peter Hughes, PER for Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, was chairman of the event.

Lower Bucks Center for Church and Community sponsors:

Christian Unity Breakfast and Ecumenical Prayer Service

January 27, 2007 9 to 11 AM

Bensalem United Methodist Church

4300 Hulmeville, Road, Bensalem, PA 19020

To register, call 215-245-1215.

CHESTER COUNTY

Exton-Lionville Ministerium

Thanksgiving Eve Service, January 24, 7:30 PM

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Preacher: Rev. Mark Singh-Hueter, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Prayer service for Christian Unity

Wednesday, January 24, 7:30 PM

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Exton

Preacher: Rev. Joan Trout, United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

New Vicariate Coordinator: Deacon Joseph Lonergan, Mary, Mother of the Redeemer Parish in North Wales, has been appointed by Cardinal Justin Rigali in place of Deacon Richard Haddon, who has recently moved to Bucks County. We express our sincere gratitude to Deacon Haddon for his generous and dedicated service over the years

Plymouth Whitemarsh Ministerium

Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on November 22 at Congregation Or Ami.
Combined choirs included songs in Hebrew.

PHILADELPHIA NORTH

Tacony Ministerium: Ecumenical Martin Luther King Service
January 15, 12:00 noon
Star of Hope Baptist Church, Hagerman and Friendship Streets

PHILADELPHIA SOUTH

Old City Congregations: Christian Unity Week Service
Tuesday, January 23, 7:00 PM
St. George Methodist Church, 4th and Vine Streets

New Vicariate Coordinator: Deacon James Stewart, St. Edmond Parish, has been appointed by Cardinal Justin Rigali in place of Deacon Michael Arno, who has moved to Florida. We are grateful to Deacon Arno for his generous efforts on behalf of the mission of our office.

Cardinal Justin Rigali will preside at
Archdiocesan Interfaith Prayer Service
In Remembrance of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sunday, January 17, 2007 ~ 2:30 PM

St. Charles Borromeo Church, 20th & Christian Streets

Deadline for Next Newsletter: March 8, 2007

SOME FRUITS OF THE PAPAL TRIP TO TURKEY

In response to the Common Declaration of Pope Benedict XVI and Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople which climaxed the visit, the local Catholic and Orthodox leadership issued the following statement:

Affirmation of the Common Declaration by Pope Benedict XVI and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I

On this Great Feast of the Martyrdom of Andrew, the first called, with great joy and sublime satisfaction, we affirm and enthusiastically echo the fraternal bond forged by the successors of the Holy Brothers, Peter and Andrew of Bethsaida, in their common declaration. We await in solidarity with our Holy Fathers for the gift of the Holy Spirit that “will help us prepare the great day of the reestablishment of full unity, whenever and however God wills it.” We stand in awe and with admiration recognizing the courage and fortitude of these two spiritual and intellectual leaders of the world in building bridges and forging peace among all the peoples of the world.

As chief pastors and Prelates of our respective local flocks, we pledge to follow the great challenge laid down in the common declaration that as “pastors, we first of all reflect on the mission to proclaim the Gospel in today’s world and make disciples of all nations.” Here in Philadelphia, we your bishops, exhort the local Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic faithful “to take an active part in this process (of unity) through prayer and through significant gestures.” Locally let us respond in a tangible way to the call in the common declaration continuing to reach out in Christian love and fraternal affection as we draw closer to one another in mutual understanding.

His Eminence Cardinal Justin Rigali
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey



Excerpt from Bartholomew I’s homily at the Divine Liturgy

Truly, particular and whole hearted gratitude fills our hearts toward the loving God, for today, on the festive commemoration of the Apostle founder and protector of this Church (St. Andrew), the Divine Liturgy is attended by His Holiness our brother and bishop of the elder Rome, Pope Benedict XVI Once again, we gratefully greet this presence as a blessing from God, as an expression of brotherly love and honor toward our Church, and as evidence of our common desire to continue – in a spirit of love and faithfulness to the Gospel Truth and the common tradition of our Fathers – the unwavering journey toward the restoration of full communion among our Churches, which constitutes the divine will and command. May it be so.

Excerpt from Papal Address to Turkey's Religious Affairs Director

Christians and Muslims, following their respective religions, point to the truth of the sacred character and dignity of the person. This is the basis of our mutual respect and esteem, this is the basis for cooperation in the service of peace between nations and peoples, the dearest wish of all believers and all people of good will.

For more than forty years, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council has inspired and guided the approach taken by the Holy See and by local Churches throughout the world to relations with the followers of other religions. Following the Biblical tradition, the Council teaches that the entire human race shares a common origin and a common destiny: God, our Creator and the goal of our earthly pilgrimage. Christians and Muslims belong to the family of those who believe in the one God and who, according to their respective traditions, trace their ancestry to Abraham. This human and spiritual unity in our origins and destiny impels us to seek a common path as we play our part in the quest for fundamental values so characteristic of the people of our time. As men and women of religion, we are challenged by the widespread longing for justice, development, solidarity, freedom, security, peace, defense of life, protection of the environment and of the resources of the earth. . . .

We are called to work together, so as to help society to open itself to the transcendent, giving Almighty God his rightful place. The best way forward is via authentic dialogue between Christians and Muslims, based on truth and inspired by a sincere wish to know one another better, respecting differences and recognizing what we have in common.



Second National U.S. Catholic-Sikh Consultation

The first consultation between Catholics and Sikhs in the United States was held in May in New York City. The second meeting, held on October 5-7 at Immaculate Conception Seminary on Long Island, was a retreat to explore the spiritual teachings of the two communities by sharing worship experiences, readings from sacred texts, and community issues. Both sides were convinced that “strong faith convictions are not an obstacle to dialogue; rather, dialogue is strengthened by a willingness to share that which is distinctive to our traditions.” In several testimonies on the topic “Why Faith is important to me” it was clear that there is a strong link between personal faith and the experience of suffering.

Both communities expressed their ongoing concerns over the challenges faced by immigrant communities in the US, the curtailment of religious freedom and human rights in South Asia, and the challenges of secularism. Future plans for this dialogue include hopes for engaging youth and young adult leadership in the programming.