

OFFICE FOR ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA



NEWSLETTER FOR PARISH ECUMENICAL REPRESENTATIVES

January, 2008

This month's annual observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is the centennial celebration of this event. While many people think of ecumenism as a post-Vatican II phenomenon, in fact the hope and prayer for Christian unity has always been part of the Church's mission. The methodology of ecumenism has evolved, but the desire for Christians to be united date to the prayer of Jesus Himself: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." (John 17: 20-21).

In 1908, Father Paul Watson, an Episcopal priest, and Sister Lurana White, an Episcopal nun, initiated the Church Unity Octave, a prayer movement for the unity of the Church. The dates chosen for this annual eight-day observance were January 18th, then the Feast of the Chair of Peter, to January 25th, the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. In 1909, the Atonement Friars and Sisters, which had been founded by Father Watson and Mother Lurana, were received corporately into the Catholic Church. After the Second Vatican Council, the movement was re-named the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Today the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity collaborates with the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in promoting this worldwide observance.

Unitatis Redintegratio, the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism, stated that "every renewal of the Church is essentially grounded in an increase of fidelity to her own calling. Undoubtedly this is the basis of the movement toward unity." (UR 6). It is in this spirit that we optimistically embrace the ecumenical movement as an opportunity to answer the prayer of Jesus for unity and embrace that prayer for unity.

Hopefully you will be taking part in a regional Week of Prayer for Christian Unity prayer service. I encourage you to join your local ministerium and work for understanding among Christians. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* stated that "at the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself *irrevocably* to following the path of the ecumenical venture, thus heeding the Spirit of the Lord, who teaches people to interpret carefully the 'signs of the times'" (UUS, 3). In this spirit, let us all join together in prayer for the unity that only Christ can give us.

Fr. Gregory J. Fairbanks



The leaders of the major religious communities have formed a new entity in our area: the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia. Since its inaugural meeting hosted by Cardinal Rigali at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in April 2006, the leaders of the Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim communities have been meeting to unite religious leaders, to build relationships of mutual support, to offer a moral and spiritual voice and to take action on issues of critical concern in our region.

Among the many common issues that the Religious Leaders Council have discussed, the issue of violence in our city and region has been identified as an issue that is affecting all of our communities. This issue demands a response from persons of faith. With that in mind, the enclosed pledge, **A Call from People of Faith to Stop Violence** will be introduced at the first public event of the Religious Leaders Council, an Interfaith Inaugural Service. This Interfaith Service will be held:

Interfaith Inaugural Service

Thursday, January 3, 2008

10:00 AM

**Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul
18th Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway**

All are invited to join in this Prayer Service

This interfaith prayer service is being held to pray for our city and its new mayor, Michael Nutter, as he begins his administration. The enclosed pledge, **A Call from People of Faith to Stop Violence** will be offered at this service, and is intended to be the beginning of a joint religious witness against violence. It is especially hoped that parishes can use this prayer in whatever way you deem appropriate, especially during the January observance of Martin Luther King Day.



A Call from People of Faith to Stop Violence

The Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia prays fervently for an end to violence in our region. The Council calls on all to work for peace as it leads its constituencies into the ways of peace. The Council allies itself with all who work to eliminate today's culture of violence: its causes, incidents, and tragic consequences. Those who commit acts of violence and their victims need us to be peace-makers. Let us listen to their cries, their hopes and their dreams; and let each of us say:

I pledge as an individual:

To promote peace
In my home and community.

I pledge to work with others:

To eliminate the causes of hatred,
To honor the dignity of all people,
To lay down our weapons,
And to find non-violent solutions
When tempted to hurt another.

I pledge to be an instrument of God's peace:

To make my home and neighborhood zones of peace,
Free from fear, filled with respect,
And marked by deeds of kindness.

This pledge is an initiative of the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia, formed in 2006 to unite religious leaders, to build relationships of mutual support, to offer a moral and spiritual voice and to take action on issues of critical concern in our region.

Christian Unity Week

- ▶ Enclosed with this mailing is a Bible Study Guide for use on each of the eight days.
- ▶ 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.

SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Workshop for Parish Ecumenical Representatives

Date: March 1, 2008

Time: 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Place: St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Vianney Lounge

More information and Registration forms will be sent in a later mailing.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, January 3, 2008, 10:00 AM

[Interfaith Inaugural Service](#)

For Mayor-elect Michael Nutter

Sponsored by Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia

Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul

18th Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway

Philadelphia, PA 19103

Tuesday, January 15, 2008 7:30 PM

The Bustleton Ministerium is having an ecumenical service at Paul's Run retirement center. It will be a dual observance for Christian Unity and Martin Luther King Remembrance.

Paul's Run

9896 Bustleton Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19115

January 18-25, 2008

[WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY](#)

Theme this year's week is:

"Pray without ceasing" 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Sunday, January 20, 2008, 3:00 PM

25th Annual Interfaith Prayer Service in Remembrance of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Presider and Homilist: Cardinal Justin Rigali

Saint Katharine Drexel Catholic Church

20th Street & Providence Road

Chester, PA 19013

610-872-3731

Thursday, January 24, 2008, 7:00 PM

Archdiocesan Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Celebration will be held:

St. Hilary of Poitiers Church

820 Susquehanna Rd.

Rydal, PA 19046

215-884-3252

Principal Celebrant and Homilist: Bishop Robert Maginnis

Sunday, January 27, 2008, 2:00 PM.

Old St. Joseph's Parish will be celebrating its 275th anniversary with an Interreligious service on Sunday, January 27th, 2008 at 2:00 PM. The service will be held at the Quaker Arch Street Meeting House to celebrate religious freedom.

Quaker Arch Street Meeting House

4th & Arch Streets

Philadelphia, PA 19106

Friday, March 21, 2008

The Bustleton Ministerium is having an ecumenical Good Friday Service at Calvary Lutheran Church.

Calvary Lutheran Church

9610 Northeast Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19115

215-673-6789

VISIT OUR WEB SITE

<http://www.archphila.org/evangelization/ecum/ecum.htm>

or

<http://www.archphila.org/>

► Archdiocese, then ► Evangelization, then ► Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Our Newsletter is in the process of “going electronic.” Beginning with the last newsletter, we sent it out both via e-mail and the US mail. We will continue to send it in both formats for a few more issues. Paper newsletter will remain an option for those without e-mail access.

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



All are welcome to the
25th Annual Interfaith Prayer Service in
Remembrance of
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sponsored by the
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Presider: Cardinal Justin Rigali
Sunday, January 20, 2008
3:00 PM

Saint Katharine Drexel Catholic Church
20th Street & Providence Road
Chester, PA 19013