

Ecumenism

Ecumenism is the effort to restore unity among all Christians. Jesus prayed that his followers would be one, saying, "That they may all be one" (John 17:21). Because of this prayer, working toward Christian unity is not optional for the Church; it is part of Christ's desire for his people.

The Catholic Church teaches that the unity Christ gave to his Church has never been lost. At the same time, divisions among Christians remain a painful reality. As a result, Catholics are called to pray and work for greater unity among all who follow Jesus Christ.

The Catechism reminds us that ecumenism begins with ourselves. Before we can work toward unity with others, we must continually renew our own faith and grow in fidelity to the Gospel. Christian divisions are not healed simply through discussions or agreements. They are healed through conversion of heart, holiness of life, and openness to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is at the heart of ecumenism. When Christians pray for one another and pray together whenever possible, they grow in mutual understanding and love. The Church calls this "spiritual ecumenism," recognizing that true unity is ultimately God's work. Ecumenism also involves learning about other Christian traditions with respect and charity. By understanding one another's history, beliefs, and practices, Christians can move beyond misunderstandings and recognize the many ways God's grace is at work in different communities. Dialogue among church leaders, theologians, and ordinary believers helps build relationships and foster trust.

Another important aspect of ecumenism is working together in service to others. Christians from different traditions often collaborate in caring for the poor, promoting peace, defending human dignity, and responding to the needs of their communities. Such cooperation is a powerful witness to the Gospel.

The Church teaches that the search for unity involves all Christians—clergy and laity alike. Yet we must also recognize that complete unity cannot be achieved by human effort alone. Ultimately, we place our hope in Christ's prayer for his Church, the love of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, who continues to guide Christians toward the unity that Christ desires.