Solidarity and Ecumenism

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This article illustrates ways in which the modern ecumenical movement promotes solidarity among formerly divided Christian churches through ecumenical dialogue. It begins by recalling divisions which took place in the fifth, the eleventh, and the sixteenth centuries, breaking down unity and solidarity among Christians, and continuing since those times. It then shows the way in which the modern Ecumenical Movement, working to restore Christian unity, began early in the twentieth century through movements promoting cooperation in mission, in efforts of the churches to better society, and in resolving doctrinal divisions which have kept churches separated. It later became established in the World Council of Churches and by activities such as official ecumenical dialogues by many Churches. It illustrates the latter by examples of two international bilateral dialogues and renewed relations, those between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, and also the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion.

Introduction

Efforts to achieve solidarity in different ways are characteristic of the twentieth century. The League of Nations was established in 1919 with the hope of maintaining peace after World War I. The United Nations Organization came into existence in 1945, after World War II with the same intention, though, while contributing to human solidarity in many ways, the UN has not been able to maintain peace. Wars have taken place in various parts of the world since 1945, though not a third world war. The intensity of solidarity, which began to take shape in the 20th century, has continued to deepen in the 21st century.

The modern ecumenical movement and its search for Christian unity is a primary effort to foster solidarity among long divided Christian churches. There had been major Christian divisions in the fifth century, when those today called Oriental Orthodox Churches separated from Christendom over interpretations of positions taken by the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451). In the eleventh century, clashes in 1054 led to separation between the Church of Rome and the Eastern Orthodox. In the sixteenth century Reformation many Protestants separated from Rome. These divisions have lasted for centuries.

The modern ecumenical movement began in the early twentieth century, focusing on three issues. First, conflicts among missionaries. When nineteenth century Protestant missionary efforts had been thwarted because of divisions also among themselves, a missionary movement began to promote unity, with the 1910 World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh, Scotland, 1910, generally considered the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. That conference included Protestants and Anglicans, though Catholics were not invited.

The second movement concerned ecumenical responsibilities of churches to promote the good of humanity, known as the Life and Work Movement. In the face of World War I, Christian leaders such as the Lutheran Archbishop of Uppsala, Sweden, Nathan Söderblom, made efforts to get Christians, whose nations were at war with each other, both the allies (in England, France, Italy,
Russia, etc.), and the central powers (Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and other countries) to promote peace. First in 1914, then in 1917 and 1918, he tried unsuccessfully to organize Christians from the different countries at war, to speak out together against war. His renewed efforts after the war led eventually to the 1925 *Universal Conference on Life and Work*, in Stockholm, Sweden, which had a great positive impact (Söderblom, 2002). In 1930, the Archbishop received the Nobel Peace Prize for his work for peace.

The third was the *Faith and Order* movement. Bishop Charles Brent, of the Episcopal Church USA, inspired by the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary conference, realized that Christian unity could not come about unless Christians resolved disagreements on doctrinal questions of faith and morals over which they had been divided for centuries. He helped organize the *First World Conference on Faith and Order* in 1927 (Brent, 2002). This time Catholics were invited but chose not to accept.

These three movements continued, until in 1948, the *Faith and Order* movement and the *Life and Work* movements joined in the creation of the *World Council of Churches (WCC)*, which, from then, has held General Assemblies every seven years, the eleventh in 2022. The WCC has helped foster new levels of solidarity within the ecumenical movement, touching many aspects of Christian life, eventually in strong cooperation with the Catholic Church which is not a WCC member church. Thus, “the virtue of solidarity goes beyond material goods. In spreading the spiritual goods of the faith, the Church has promoted, and often opened new paths for the development of temporal goods as well” (*CCC*, 1994).

The Catholic Church, though not involved in those movements, entered the ecumenical movement with the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), called by John XXIII in 1960. Before Vatican II, there were virtually no consistent contacts between the Catholic Church and other Christian communities. Pope John XXIII, in 1960 also created the *Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity,*¹ intending that Vatican II include ecumenical concerns. The Pope invited other Christian communions and the WCC to send official observers to Vatican II, creating a unique ecumenical aspect within it. Though not voting members at the Council, the observers had an influence on its proceedings (Stransky, 2001). The Observers’ good experience during the Council resulted afterwards in International and national dialogues, and Catholic participation in Faith and Order’s multilateral dialogue, which continued mutual understanding and good relations. Over the years these dialogues have published many reports resulting in clarifications of issues of truth (doctrine) over which Christians had been separated for centuries. Some major agreements such as the 1999 Catholic and Lutheran *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, and the WCC’s 1982 Faith and Order multilateral report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* are especially considered historic breakthroughs, leading to further understanding.

The ecumenical movement, according to Vatican II’s *Unitatis redintegratio*, Decree on Ecumenism 4, consists of activities promoting Christian unity, including, first, efforts to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of other Christians fairly. Second, dialogue between competent experts from different churches and communions, to understand what each church actually teaches, what they share in common, and where they differ. Third, joint activity between different churches for the common good of humanity. Fourth, prayer, especially

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¹ The Roman Catholic Church’s Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity was established by Pope John XXIII on June 25, 1960, in the document *Ecclesiae Sanctorum* (Liberius). The Secretariat was initially located in the Vatican Palace. It was later moved to a new building on the Aventine Hill in Rome. The Secretariat was later renamed the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* (PCCU). The PCCU continues to serve as the spokesperson for the Catholic Church on matters of Christian unity. The PCCU is also responsible for coordinating the activities of the other Vatican Congregations and Pontifical Councils concerned with Christian unity.
common prayer. This movement to achieve unity (solidarity) among Christians, represents a revolution which started in the twentieth century and continues into the twenty first.

In reference to the general theme of this issue of the Journal of Social Encounters, “The Theory and Practice of Solidarity,” I understand the search for Christian unity as a particular manifestation of the search for new solidarity required among Christians to overcome harmful divisions of past centuries. In the ecumenical movement, while efforts towards solidarity are made in many ways, our emphasis here will be to illustrate efforts to promote unity and solidarity in Christian truth through bilateral theological dialogue. Unity in truth is fundamental as a basis for Christian unity.

Seeking Unity (Solidarity) in Dialogue

After Vatican II, the Catholic Church engaged in many official international bilateral dialogues with other Christian churches, all of them seeking to discern to what degree they hold a common understanding of Christian truth. In these dialogues, the churches are seeking to move from centuries- long separation to a new unity/ solidarity in which they will be interrelated and interdependent once again (Rottländer, 2002).


The bilateral dialogues work in phases. A phase of dialogue meets for about five to seven years, with one meeting each year of approximately six to ten days in which they focus on the theological topic chosen for that phase. They eventually publish a report of their findings during that phase, and then normally continue into the next phase of dialogue. As the dialogue continues, the partners gain more and more theological interdependence between them. Though considering many theological issues, the subject of the Church has been a primary focus.

There are some similarities between the ecumenical search for unity among Christian churches, and the political search for solidarity among nation states. Regarding the latter, this has been said:

In view of the growing awareness of worldwide problems affecting everyone, in particular the nuclear and ecological threats, a concept of universal solidarity is becoming increasingly important, emphasizing general involvement in the sense of global interdependence. This view of solidarity complements an increasingly popular conception of politics that transcends the limits of the nation state, analyzing particular problems in the perspective of wider contexts (Rottländer, 2002).

For its part, the ecumenical movement transcends the limits of all the churches in their divided state. Long standing divisions among churches have affected all Christians negatively such that, as seen above, divided churches could not speak out effectively against evils such as war, or other


Evils facing humanity. The ecumenical theology and the ecumenical steps which transcend the limits of divided churches, are aimed at enabling the Churches to achieve the unity they should have, according to the gospel (cf. John 17:21), and to take more effective action in contributing to benefit the needs of humanity.

Two Examples of International Dialogue
I will illustrate the experience of Christians seeking unity and solidarity and a new interdependence today by describing two of the fifteen international dialogues/relationships mentioned above involving the Catholic Church, namely, the Eastern Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue, and the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue.

Eastern Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue
While a new relationship between the Eastern Orthodox Church and Catholic Church began with the encounter of Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I and Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem in January, 1964 (see below), the official Eastern Orthodox-Catholic international dialogue began in 1980. Its goal, stated by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Dimitrios I, is “the reestablishment” of full communion between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches (Stormon, 1987). Before the theological dialogue began, and after it was in session, the two churches also had undertaken what they called the “dialogue of love,” renewed mutual contact and conversation in contrast to the silence and hostility of previous centuries. This has continued alongside the theological dialogue and has been important in deepening this relationship.


In January, 1964, Pope Paul VI, and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I, Archbishop of Constantinople, met in Jerusalem, the first meeting between a pope and patriarch in hundreds of years (their discourses in Stormon, 1987). Their Common Communique indicated their intention to continue such contacts. On 7 December, 1965, they took another historical step in reconciliation, expressing the decision “to remove from memory and the midst of the Church” the mutual excommunications which the papal delegate and the Archbishop of Constantinople had pronounced against each other in 1054 (Stormon, 1987). In 1967, they exchanged visits. In July, Pope Paul VI visited the Phanar, the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s headquarters in Istanbul (Constantinople). In one address, the Pope described his theological understanding of what it meant to say that the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople are “sister churches” (Stormon, 1987). The Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I visited Rome in October, 1967. Their Common Declaration expressed joy that “their meeting has played a part in helping their Churches
to make a further discovery of themselves as sister churches (Stormon, 1987). In the following
decade, such visits continued, as the Holy See’s representatives visited the Phanar on November
30, the feast day of St. Andrew, and Patriarch Dimitrios sent a delegation on one occasion to Rome
on June 29, the feast day of its patron saints, Peter and Paul. This practice became virtually
permanent, as Patriarch Dimitrios confirmed in 1978 when sending a delegation to Rome for the
feast of Saints Peter and Paul. He said in his letter to Paul VI introducing his delegation:

Two years ago it was decided that we should make visits to one another, with renewed
contacts, twice during the course of the year, on the feasts proper to the sees of our two
Churches, testifying by this means among others to the community of love and honor
existing between us.

Showing that these would be substantial visits, the Patriarch also indicated his instructions to his
delegates for that 1978 visit. His representatives:

had the responsibility of assisting at the mass to be celebrated by Your Holiness in the
basilica of the Holy Apostle Peter on 29 June, and of conveying to you our brotherly
greetings and warmest best wishes for your health and long life. Afterwards they are to
enter into communication with the Secretariat for Christian Unity and continue the series
of exchanges which took place last year when your delegation visited us on the patronal
feast of this see. They will, together with your representatives pass in review and judge the
worth of the steps so far taken, and will then make suggestions about what seems next
indicated (Stormon, 1987).

These exchanges of visits have continued annually ever since. The messages exchanged underline
the profound common Christian heritage they share. For example, Pope John Paul II’s letter for
the feast of St. Andrew in November 1983, recalling the teaching of Vatican II, indicated that “our
Churches share ‘true sacraments, and above all, in virtue of the apostolic succession, priesthood
and the Eucharist. In spite of…obstacles that arose between them in the past, our Churches remain
united by ties that reach deeply down….’” (Stormon, 1987).

Besides this continuing, communication between the sees of Rome and Constantinople on patronal
feasts, Popes and Ecumenical Patriarchs have also made common statements on other occasions.
In 2002, Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew published a Common Declaration on
Environmental Ethics (GAI, 2007). In 2004, on 29 June, they made a Common Declaration in
Rome witnessing to “our firm determination to continue on our way towards full communion….”
noting too, “the many challenges to face together” (including) “…to instil a hope of peace, to help
set aright the multitude of grievous conflicts” (GAI, 2007). In 2014, Pope Francis and Patriarch
Bartholomew made a Common Declaration in Jerusalem, commemorating the 50th anniversary of
the meeting there in 1964 of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I. Furthermore, Popes have
made common declarations with leaders of other particular Eastern Orthodox Churches. In May,
1999, Pope John Paul II and Romanian Orthodox Patriarch Teoctist signed a joint declaration, in
Bucharest, on the urgent need for peace in the Balkans, and another in Vatican City on 12 October,
2002 (GAI, 2007). In February, 2016 Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all
Russia, signed a joint declaration in Havana, Cuba, saying that “We share the same spiritual
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tradition of the first Millennium of Christianity” (n. 4); “It is our hope that our meeting may contribute to the reestablishment of this unity (cf. John 17:21) willed by God, for which Christ prayed,” (n.6); “We lift our prayers to Christ the Saviour...asking for the return of peace to the middle East; we exhort all Christians and all believers in God to pray...to the...Creator of the World...to not permit a new world war (n. 11).” On 8 November, 1999, in Tbilisi, Georgia, Pope John Paul II and Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II of All Georgia, together made an urgent joint appeal for peace “to governments, international organizations, religious leaders, and all people of good will.” In 2002, Pope John Paul II visited Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria, and although there was no common declaration, the Pope pronounced a discourse. John Paul II and His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens of the autocephalous Church of Greece, signed a Common Declaration on 4 May 2001 (GAIII, 2007). Besides these contacts, there have also been good contacts between the pope and the other Eastern Orthodox Churches.4

Notable is that some of these common statements specifically mention themes basic to achieving solidarity in society: (1) “Common declaration on environmental ethics”; (2) “urgent need for peace in the Balkans”; (3) “an urgent joint appeal for peace ‘to governments, international organizations, religious leaders and all people of good will;’” (4) the “many challenges to face together...to instill a hope of peace, to help set aright the multitude of grievous conflicts”; (5) “prayers...for peace in the Middle East” prayers “to the Creator of the world to...not permit a new world war.”

Those statements also reflect the “principal of solidarity in Roman Catholic social doctrine which denotes a basic conception of political order...as emphasizing not only that the individual is dependent on other human beings but also that society exists for people.” This principle of solidarity is based entirely on a conception of solidarity as mutual interdependence. And, “In view of the growing awareness of worldwide problems affecting everyone, in particular the nuclear and ecological threats, a concept of universal solidarity is becoming increasingly important, emphasizing general involvement in the sense of global interdependence” (Solidarity, 2002).

As the “dialogue of love” between the Bishop of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople has continued, the theological dialogue has also made a particular contribution in addressing the primary issue in the clash in 1054 which led to the beginnings of Orthodox-Catholic division, namely, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. The dialogue’s 2007 “Ravenna Statement,” (# 44) said, regarding this primacy, that:

In the history of the East and of the West, at least until the ninth century, a series of prerogatives was recognized, always in the context of conciliarity, according to the conditions of the times, for the protos or kephale at each of the established ecclesiastical levels: locally, for the bishop as protos of his diocese with regard to his presbyters and people; regionally, for the protos of each metropolis with regard to the bishops of his province, and for the protos of each of the five patriarchates, with regard to the metropolitans of each circumscription; and universally, for the Bishop of Rome as protos [first] among the patriarchs.5
These examples represent Eastern Orthodox and Catholic steps towards unity and solidarity. Important, too, is that no new theological obstacles have arisen in Eastern Orthodox-Catholic relations in modern times which would make unity more difficult to achieve.

**Anglican Communion-Roman Catholic Dialogue**

Since Vatican II, very good relations between the Catholic Church and other communions have also developed. Among Western communions, for example, with the Anglican Communion.

The Church of England separated from the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century, during the time of King Henry the Eighth. Today, the instruments of Anglican unity are the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference which meets every ten years, the Anglican Consultative Council which meets every two or three years, and the Primates meeting (Buchanan, 2002, p. 24).

New relations began to develop during the age of Vatican II. In December, 1960, Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher quietly visited Pope John XXIII, the first contact between Archbishop and Pope since the fourteenth century. The Anglican Communion sent official observers to Vatican II, 1962-1965. It also opened an Anglican office in Rome giving it a continuing presence there of an observer of the Archbishop of Canterbury. These renewed relations were supported by Vatican II’s statement in the Decree on Ecumenism, 13, that “Among those [communions separated from the Roman see] in which some Catholic traditions and institutions continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place.”

In 1966, Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI, in Rome, set up an official international dialogue, the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) “whose work,” they said, “might lead to the unity in truth for which Christ prayed”. ARCIC, which began in 1970, and continuing meetings between Popes and Archbishops of Canterbury, have been two major ways Anglicans and Catholics have maintained ongoing relations after Vatican II. The specific goal of ARCIC is “a restoration of complete communion of faith and sacramental life.”7 ARCIC’s method is that of attempting “to discover each other’s faith as it is today and to appeal to history only for enlightenment, not as a way of perpetuating past controversy” (ARCIC, Final Report, Preface). This method, grounded in scripture and the ancient common traditions, has led to the discovery of common faith that can be expressed in doctrinal agreements.8 ARCIC’s first phase produced these reports: in 1971, “Eucharistic Doctrine”, with a 1979 Elucidation on this; in 1973 “Ministry and Ordination”, with an Elucidation in 1979; In 1976 “Authority in the Church I”, with an Elucidation in 1981; again in 1981, “Authority in the Church II.” These were also published together as Final Report in 1981.

When Pope John Paul II visited England in 1982, he and Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie authorized a second phase of dialogue, ARCIC II. This produced reports on “Salvation and the Church” (1986), “Church as Communion” (1990), and “Life in Christ: Morals Communion and the Church” (1993). Also, efforts began to formally receive the results of some previous reports. The 1988 Lambeth Conference, Resolution 8, had already recognized ARCIC I’s agreed statements on “Eucharistic Doctrine, Ministry and Ordination” and their Elucidations as “consonant in
Implement Communion in Mission

The meeting shared experience exercising strategy in this relationship world Edward Cassidy, I (Geernaert, episcopal consultation and where full communion has still to be reached.”

theological dialogue commitment to Dr. George Car Ano “Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ.” Among “The Gift of Authority’s” important insights were those related to primacy and synodality, aimed at resolving differences regarding the role of the bishop of Rome. That report “deepened and extended our agreement” on important questions, including:

“synodality and its implications for the communion of the whole people of God and of all the local churches…” (ns.34-40);
“a universal primacy, exercised collegially in the context of synodality, as integral to episcopate at the service of universal communion, such a primacy having always been associated with the bishop and see of Rome” (ns.46-48);
“how the ministry of the bishop of Rome assists the ministry of the whole episcopal body in the context of synodality, promoting the communion of the local churches…” (ns.46-48);
“how the bishop of Rome offers a specific ministry concerning the discernment of truth” (n.47) (GAIII, 2007).

ARClC III was announced on 4 February 2011. In 2018 it produced an agreed statement: “Walking together on the Way: Learning to be the Church—Local, Regional, Universal.”

Another development began to take shape after Pope John Paul II and Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey signed a common declaration on December 5, 1996 reaffirming their commitment to seeking Christian unity and encouraging ARClC “to continue to deepen our theological dialogue, not only over issues connected with our present difficulties but in all areas where full communion has still to be reached.” Since both churches are hierarchical in structure, and their bishops have primary responsibility for promoting unity, it was decided to hold an episcopal consultation to evaluate the accomplishments of thirty years of ecumenical dialogue, and on how their special relationship has been developing in different parts of the world (Geernaert,2012).

In May 2000, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, and PCPCU President Cardinal Edward Cassidy, invited pairs of Anglican and Catholic bishops from thirteen regions around the world, to a retreat in Mississauga, Ontario. Goals identified by the planners, and this was a new strategy in this relationship, included “the hope that the bishops would have an experience of exercising episcopate together, which might encourage commitment to a more regular exercise of shared episcopate locally.” (Geernaert,2012).

The meeting produced a concluding statement, Communion in Mission and an Action Plan to Implement Communion in Mission (GAIII, 2007). They developed, also, as a basis for acting
together, the emerging Christian solidarity in faith, rooted in convergences which ARCIC I and II had discovered (Geernaert, 2012). These were identified in Communion in Mission, no. 9 as:

our trinitarian faith grounded in the scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds; the centrality of Christ, his death and resurrection, and commitment to his mission in the Church; faith in the final destiny of human life; common traditions in liturgy and spirituality, the monastic life, preferential commitment to the poor and marginalized; convergence on the eucharist, ministry, authority, salvation, moral principles, and the Church as communion, as expressed in agreed statements of ARCIC; episcopacy, particularly the role of bishop as symbol and promoter of unity; and the respective roles of clergy and laity.

On this theological basis they believed that it is now “the appropriate time” for authorities of both communions “to recognize this new stage, by signing a joint declaration of agreement.” setting out their “shared goal of visible unity,” acknowledging “the consensus in faith that we have reached, and a fresh commitment to share together in common life and witness…. (Communion in Mission, 2007).

Their Action Plan’s first recommendation was that a joint unity commission be established to “oversee the preparation of the joint declaration of agreement, and promote and monitor the reception of ARCIC agreements, as well as facilitate the development of strategies for translating the degree of spiritual communion that has been achieved into visible and practical outcomes.” At the same time, they acknowledged that this new stage “is but a step on the way to full and visible unity” (Communion in Mission, 2007). They described their vision of the full and visible unity they were seeking to include, among other things:

a eucharistic communion of churches: confessing the one faith and demonstrating by their harmonious diversity the richness of faith; unanimous in the application of the principles governing moral life; served by ministries that the grace of ordination unites together in an episcopal body, grafted on to the company of the apostles, and which is at the service of the authority that Christ exercises over his body. The ministry of oversight has both collegial and primatial dimensions and is open always to the community’s participation in the discernment of God’s will (Communion in Mission, 2007).

The bishops’ Action Plan included both theological and pastoral aspects, for example, “to oversee the preparation of a joint declaration of agreement and to plan the signing and celebration of the same;” “promote and monitor the formal response and reception” of ARCIC agreed statements; “to examine the range of possible ways, within current canon law provisions, to deal generously and pastorally” with interchurch marriages involving Angliicans and Roman Catholics(see GAIII, 2007).

In 2007, IARCCUM produced an agreed statement, entitled “Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 years of Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue” (GTUM). It recalled the “Faith we hold in Common,” (Belief in God as Trinity; Church as communion in mission; Baptism; Eucharist; Ministry; Authority in the Church; Discipleship and Holiness, Blessed Virgin Mary). It spoke of specific steps to deepen their fellowship in life and mission. In October, 2016 IARCCUM

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produced another statement: “Walking Together: Common Service to the World And Witness to the Gospel”. In October, 2016, Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby together commissioned the IARCCUM bishops at the Church of San Gregorio al Celio in Rome to take new steps together. In ways such as these, efforts were made to promote solidarity between Anglicans and Catholics for the sake of mission. These efforts continue.

In the years following, Pope Francis and Archbishop Welby twice undertook remarkable efforts to promote peace and solidarity in South Sudan, seeking there “a more just social order where tensions are better able to be reduced, and conflicts more readily settled by negotiation” (see CCC, 1994, Rottländer, 2002). As Francis indicated later (in General Audience, 8 February 2023), Welby had conceived this effort. Having visited South Sudan several times and seen the tragic results of war there, Welby recommended that Francis invite political and church leaders of South Sudan to a spiritual retreat at the Vatican, to support their peace efforts. Francis did this in February, 2019, also inviting Welby and the Reverend John Chalmers, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, since, besides the Catholic Church, there are also Anglican and Methodist Churches in South Sudan. Political and church leaders of South Sudan, some of them even enemies, as Francis later noted, came to the Vatican for a “retreat.” They prayed together with the Pope. Welby described the high point of that retreat as “the unforgettable sight” of the Pope kneeling to kiss the feet of the leaders while saying repeatedly “I beg you to make peace,” as they tried to stop him. Francis gave them a lesson in humility, basic for peace.

In February, 2023, after the Pope first visited the Congo, he, Archbishop Welby, and Reverend Iain Greenshields, the new Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, together went to South Sudan, to again encourage the leaders to continue the peace process. The Pope thanked their President for the way he was trying to manage the path to peace, trying to say “no” to corruption and arms trafficking, and “yes” to encounter and dialogue-- “Only in this way will people… be able to work in peace, the sick will be cared for, and children will go to school” (Pope Francis, General Audience, 8 February 2023). These ecumenical efforts were expressions of solidarity between the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, together promoting solidarity in South Sudan.

The Anglican-Roman Catholic theological dialogue, and this mutual effort to work for peace in South Sudan illustrate positive aspects of renewed Anglican and Catholic relations today.10

Some Conclusions
One result of both International dialogues presented here is that each of the participating Churches is now in a new situation. When each dialogue began, the two participating churches had been living for centuries in separation. While none of these dialogues has yet achieved full unity among the partners, they have achieved significant degrees of unity and solidarity as a basis to go further towards the day when full communion between them can be achieved. According to Pope Francis, “Solidarity, understood in its most profound meaning, is a way of making history, and this is what popular movements are doing” (Fratelli Tutti, n. 116). Both of these dialogues have made history by taking the dialogue partners from separation towards sharing significant levels of unity between them now.
Vatican II profoundly influenced the Catholic Church, but also, in different ways, other churches as well. One can speak of Vatican II also as an instrument of solidarity since its renewal of the Catholic Church has enabled it to engage other churches in productive dialogue. An achievement of the Eastern Orthodox-Catholic dialogue is that, after ten centuries of mutual separation and hostility, these churches now speak of each other as “sister churches,” have found new ways to communicate with each other consistently, through annual mutual visits, and a developing facility to address the world together in common statements. Furthermore, no new theological obstacles to their relationship have developed in this period since Vatican II.

The Anglican communion and the Catholic Church have engaged in a fruitful dialogue producing many fine theological reports, showing that they together hold very many basic doctrines of Christian faith. They have been able to work together, in a way they never did before, as in assisting the South Sudan churches in promoting peace. But the recent challenge of new issues (see Endnote 10), specifically questions of sexual ethics, has caused new tensions within the Anglican communion, and between it and the Catholic Church. It remains to be seen whether this will have an impact on Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue.

It must be said, however, that efforts to achieve Christian unity through dialogue are among the most effective ways of seeking ecumenical solidarity today.

John A. Radano, PhD, taught in the Department of Religious Studies at Seton Hall University from 1965-1984, and was chair of that department 1977-1984. From 1984-2008 he served as head of the Western Section of the Secretariat (now Dicastery) for Promoting Christian Unity (Vatican City) where he was involved in many of the international dialogues which that office sponsors with other Christian Communions. He has published two books and many articles on ecumenism.
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Endnotes

1 In 1988 its name was changed to The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and in 2022, to the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity.

2 The Eastern Orthodox Church includes the following particular or local churches. The Patriarchal Churches: Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem (Greek tradition); Moscow, Serbia, Bulgaria (Slavik tradition). The Patriarchate of Rumania and the Church of Georgia are related to both traditions. In the Greek tradition there are also the “autocephalous” Churches of Greece and Cyprus. The autocephalous Churches of Poland, the Check Lands and Slovakia, and Finland are in the Slavic tradition. Cf. Walter M. Abbott, SJ *The Documents of Vatican II*, Herder and Herder, 1966, The Decree on Ecumenism, n. 14, note 52.


4 Pope Francis received other Eastern Orthodox leaders in Vatican City: Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem on October 22-25, 2017; His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East on 20 June 2021; the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria, Theodorus II on 21 January 2023; His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav, Primate of the autocephalous Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia on May 11, 2018. During his visit to Cyprus, on December 3, 2021, Pope Francis was received there by His Beatitude Chrysostomos II, Orthodox Archbishop of the Autocephalous Church of Cyprus and gave an address.

5 “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority,” Ravenna, 2007. Also Cited by Ronald G. Roberson, CSP, “Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church,” in *Celebrating* 2012. Roberson points out that there were also significant criticisms of this statement in some Orthodox circles (pp.258-260), though the statement remains important.

6 The Anglican Communion, as described by the Lambeth conference of bishops of 1930, is “a fellowship, within the one holy catholic and apostolic church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional churches in communion with the see of Canterbury” (Buchanan, 2002, p. 21).


8 See Geernaert, 2012, p. 126, note 15, citing Bishop N.T. Wright of Durham expressing appreciation of this ARCIC method. Geernaert’s article is an excellent detailed account of ARCIC ‘s and IARCCUM’s activities.

9 Geernaert, 2012, p. 126, note 16. The “present difficulties” referred to had already been noted years earlier when Archbishop of Canterbury Donald Coggan wrote to Pope Paul VI on 9 July, 1975 about the development of ordination of women to the priesthood in the Anglican Communion. Pope Paul VI responded on 30 November 1975, that this would be “an element of grave difficulty” between us.

10 Almost simultaneously to the South Sudan effort, when the Church of England’s General Synod voted in February, 2023 to approve blessing same-sex couples in civil marriages, the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, at their fourth Global Anglican Future Conference
in Kigali, Rwanda, and also the Global South Fellowship (GSFA), together representing a very large percentage of the Anglican Communion, stated their rejection of the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury, since they considered the Church of England’s action as a departure from scriptural authority. They could no longer accept the Archbishop as “first among equals.” It remains to be seen what will happen next, and whether this internal Anglican struggle might have some negative impact on Anglican-Catholic dialogue.
References


