

of peace and reconciliation for the sake of a better world and the preservation of our planet.

One of the great Talmudic sages, Maimonides, taught that although it is not our responsibility to complete the healing of the world, we cannot morally refrain from participation. In a world where the majority are marginalized, religion easily becomes a tool of oppression when limited to theological abstractions, or correct belief, or internal squabbles, while most of humanity is deprived of basic human needs, and the fate of the planet is in serious jeopardy. Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is not only about mutual understanding, but about creating a better world. In this way, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue are critical to human survival. May a new day be made visible. There is much work for us to do together.

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III. Ecumenism, Liturgy, and Sacraments in the Twenty-Five Years since *Ut Unum Sint* Was Written

“The entire ecumenical liturgical conversation and dialogue is over—finished, dead, done.”²⁹

This was the sad and brokenhearted assessment of Horace Allen, a Presbyterian professor at Boston University who had devoted his career to ecumenical activities, in the wake of the Vatican’s document on liturgical translation, *Liturgiam Authenticam*, in 2001.

As we shall see, the ecumenical story of the liturgy and sacraments in the past twenty-five years since the publication of John Paul II’s encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* is very much a mixed bag. Although Allen’s assessment is pessimistic, to say the least, it would be unrealistic to begin this article in any other way. But that is not the whole story, so in what follows I will do three things. First, I will survey the liturgical/sacramental objectives promoted in the encyclical. Second, I will detail the positive moves toward ecumenical cooperation and reconciliation. And third, I will discuss the setbacks to ecumenism marked by several developments in the Roman Catholic Church.

²⁹ John L. Allen, Jr., “Liturgist Says Ecumenical Dialogue Is ‘Dead,’” *National Catholic Reporter*, May 24, 2002, http://www.natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2002b/052402/052402i.htm.

Liturgy and Sacrament in *Ut Unum Sint*

John Paul II's *Ut Unum Sint* is marked by an admirably positive attitude toward ecumenism, one that transcends the older and unproductive "ecumenism of return" which is a matter of the others seeing the error of their ways. Toward the beginning of the encyclical, the Pope homes in on the importance of common prayer, that is, worship together:

When brothers and sisters who are not in perfect communion with one another come together to pray, the Second Vatican Council defines their prayer as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement. This prayer is "a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity," "a genuine expression of the ties which even now bind Catholics to their separated brethren." Even when prayer is not specifically offered for Christian unity, but for other intentions such as peace, it actually becomes an expression and confirmation of unity.³⁰

The pope went on to say:

Along the ecumenical path to unity, pride of place certainly belongs to common prayer, the prayerful union of those who gather together around Christ himself. If Christians, despite their divisions, can grow ever more united in common prayer around Christ, they will grow in the awareness of how little divides them in comparison to what unites them. If they meet more often and more regularly before Christ in prayer, they will be able to gain the courage to face all the painful human reality of their divisions, and they will find themselves together once more in that community of the Church which Christ constantly builds up in the Holy Spirit, in spite of all weaknesses and human limitations.

Naturally, John Paul II articulated the ultimate goal of reunion as full communion with one another, which is of course manifested by sacramental Communion (§77).³¹

John Paul II went on to recount the occasions on which he prayed together with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the ecumenical patriarch. Perhaps the most famous of these was when they joined with him in opening the Holy

³⁰ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (May 25, 1995), http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html, §21.

³¹ For an interpretation of *Ut Unum Sint* by a distinguished Methodist theologian, see Geoffrey Wainwright, "Ut Unum Sint in Light of 'Faith and Order'—or 'Faith and Order' in Light of Ut Unum Sint?" in *Church Unity and the Papal Office: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II's Encyclical Ut Unum Sint (That All May Be One)*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 76–97, esp. 89.

Door at St. Paul Outside-the-Walls in 2000. Popes who succeeded him followed suit, memorably with Pope Francis praying together with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in Jerusalem in 2014.

Positive Moves

The past twenty-five years have witnessed a good number of positive developments in the wake of *Ut Unum Sint*. On one front there have been any number of symbolic liturgical occasions, or what liturgical scholar Keith Pecklers has called the ecclesiology of symbols.³² These include various services of Vespers that have involved Anglican and Catholic bishops taking turns presiding and preaching, for example an Anglican Evensong at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's Basilica in March 2017 at which Archbishop David Moxon of the Rome Anglican Centre presided and Archbishop Arthur Roche of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments preached. Even more impressive was the occasion of Pope John Paul II's funeral, when then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger gave Holy Communion to Brother Roger of Taizé. John Paul had previously given Communion to the Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, to Brother Roger, and to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom.

In addition, the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity produced ecumenical prayer services for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and other occasions during the year.³³ Perhaps the most outstanding and symbolic example of an ecumenical service, however, was the joint service at Lund, Sweden, honoring the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, with Pope Francis preaching the homily.³⁴

³² Keith Pecklers, "What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 107–21. The title of this book itself represents an improvement on the notion of an ecumenism of return. See further, Antonia Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2019).

³³ For example, for 2020, see <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/xi-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity/worship-and-back-ground-material-for-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2020>.

³⁴ Pope Francis, "Common Ecumenical Prayer at the Lutheran Cathedral of Lund: Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis (October 31, 2016), http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20161031_omelia-svezia-lund.html. On the other hand, this bold ecumenical gesture provoked a strong response from Catholic traditionalists who regard any ecumenism other than an ecumenism of return as a profound betrayal. See, for example, Roberto de Mattei, "Kneeling before Luther,"

In terms of both scholarship and practice in the past twenty-five years, two academic associations stand out. The North American Academy of Liturgy (NAAL) was founded in 1975 shortly after the tenth anniversary of the liturgical constitution of Vatican II. It became an officially interfaith association in the 1990s but is made up mainly of Christians. In its various seminars, ecumenism is taken for granted. At least one seminar in the recent past spent several years discussing how Lutheran and Catholic liturgical scholars could contribute to the advances represented by the “Declaration on the Way.” The international ecumenical *Societas Liturgica* (SL) was founded in 1967 and meets every two years. Unlike the NAAL, which does not celebrate ecumenical worship because of its interfaith nature, SL has daily ecumenical worship according to the various ecclesial traditions that it represents. Its concluding Eucharist is normally presided over by the president (if he or she is ordained) in her or his own tradition. A number of participants feel free to share in Holy Communion, regardless of their own ecclesial tradition. SL publishes its own ecumenical liturgical journal, *Studia Liturgica*. Another scholarly journal, *Worship* (founded in 1936 at St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota) prides itself in its ecumenical breadth.

On an unofficial level, the Malines Conversations, which had been initiated by British Anglicans and French Roman Catholics and lasted from 1921 to 1927, were revived in 2013. The members frequently engage topics in sacramental and liturgical theology. Of course, one of the main topics in these conversations is the status of Anglican orders—an ecclesiological question. We need to note that it is not possible to separate liturgical and ecclesiological questions neatly. This has been demonstrated by a number of ecumenical dialogues and in particular by the official responses to the 1982 statement, “Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry,” of the World Council of Churches’ Faith and Order Commission.³⁵ As the Methodist liturgical scholar James White once wrote, “Why teach ecumenism when I can teach liturgy?”³⁶ Liturgy and the theology of the church are inextricably bound.

November 2, 2016, <https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2016/11/op-ed-kneeling-before-luther-by-roberto.html>.

³⁵ In particular, see the Roman Catholic response in *The Churches Respond to BEM VI*, ed. Max Thurian (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1988), 1–40; also in <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/dialoghi-multilaterali/dialogo/commissione-fede-e-costituzione/risposta-cattolica-a-bem/en.html>.

³⁶ James White, “A Protestant Worship Manifesto,” *Christian Century* 99 (1982), 84; quoted in Maxwell Johnson, “Christian Worship and Ecumenism: What Shall We Do Now?” *The Church in Act: Lutheran Liturgical Theology in Ecumenical Conversation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 242.

In these past twenty-five years, bilateral ecumenical dialogues dealing with liturgy and sacraments have proceeded apace. They are too numerous to detail here, but I will note just a few examples. On an international level, the Methodists and Roman Catholics produced “Encountering Christ the Saviour: Church and Sacraments” in 2011.³⁷ As with most documents of this type, convergence more than consensus was sought on major issues dealing with the Eucharist, such as presence and sacrifice. Closer to home, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America issued “Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist” in 2015.³⁸ This document provides a number of helpful conclusions and steps forward in dialogue. A third document worthy of note is the 2017 “Communion in Growth: Declaration on the Church, Eucharist, and Ministry” of the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue Commission of Finland.³⁹ These two latter documents pursue a goal of what is felicitously termed “diversified consensus.” This is, in other words, the issue of how much consensus is needed before a particular issue need not be church-dividing.

In terms of positive advances, I want to cite two other examples; each deals with sharing the Eucharist. Discontent with the current restrictions on eucharistic sharing among Christians has been admirably demonstrated by Thomas O’Loughlin’s new book, *Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking Up Pope Francis’ Call to Theologians*. Basing this work on the grammar of meals, O’Loughlin finds ways to respond to a challenge issued by Pope Francis in 2015.⁴⁰ And secondly, I refer to a remarkable statement made in a letter to a German Evangelical (Lutheran) pastor by Joseph Ratzinger when he was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

³⁷ “Encountering Christ the Saviour: Church and Sacraments,” Report of the International Commission for Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, 2011, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/meth-council-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20110612_durban-document_en.html.

³⁸ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist,” 2015, https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Declaration_on_the_Way.pdf?_ga=2.227569629.1721689773.1596747003-1688128435.1596747003.

³⁹ Virpi Mäkinen, Veikko Karimies, Simo Peura, et al., “The Finnish Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue Commission for Finland: Communion in Growth: Declaration on the Church, Eucharist, and Ministry” (Helsinki: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland, 2017), <https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/en/publications/communion-in-growth-declaration-on-the-church-eucharist-and-minis>.

⁴⁰ Thomas O’Loughlin, *Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking Up Pope Francis’ Call to Theologians* (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 2019).

I count among the most important results of the ecumenical dialogues the insight that the issue of the eucharist cannot be narrowed to the problem of “validity.” Even a theology oriented to the concept of [apostolic] succession, such as that which holds in the Catholic and Orthodox church, should in no way deny the saving presence of the Lord in a Lutheran Lord’s Supper.⁴¹

Finally, perhaps the most noteworthy ecumenical development of the past twenty-five years was a statement published by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity in 2001. This statement recognized the main eucharistic prayer of the Assyrian Church of the East, the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, as valid despite the fact that this prayer does not contain the words of Jesus (or institutional narrative) in any literal way.⁴² What makes this document earthshaking is its claim that the words of institution need not absolutely be taken as a formula of consecration.⁴³ It seems to me that the decision has profound implications with regard to the role of the ordained minister at the Eucharist and therefore for ecumenical discussions of ministry as well as Eucharist.

Setbacks

Frequently over the past twenty-five years when I have introduced ecumenical issues in my liturgy and sacraments courses, I find that many if not most of the students’ eyes seem to glaze over. Ecumenical issues do not seem to be topics that grab their attention. I think this is attributable to a perceived need especially among younger members of the church for a more defined ecclesial identity.⁴⁴ This is a far cry from the 1970s and 1980s when

⁴¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, eds. S. Horn and V. Pfnür (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 248; cited in “Declaration on the Way,” 91.

⁴² Guidelines for admission to the Eucharist between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East can be found at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitalcristiani/it/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiesa-assira-dell-orientale/altri-documenti/2001---orientamenti-per-lammissione-alleucaristia-fra-la-chiesa-/testo-in-inglese.html>.

⁴³ Needless to say, the document caused a stir and a good deal of debate. See Nicholas Russo, “The Validity of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari: Critique of the Critiques,” in *Issues in Eucharistic Praying in East and West*, ed. Maxwell Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 20–61.

⁴⁴ On what she has called “the challenge of ecclesial identity,” see Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Moment*, 183–84; also Paul Bradshaw, “Liturgical Reform and the Unity of the Churches,” *Studia Liturgica* 44 (2014): 170–71.

Catholics and other Christians frequently studied together and learned respect for each other's traditions on the ground.⁴⁵

Despite the advances in liturgy/sacraments over the past twenty-five years, there have been some serious setbacks. They revolve partly around the ecclesiological issues surrounding the ordination of women and of homosexual persons, but primarily around issues of liturgical translation, which represent a reversal of years of cooperation.

In the mid-1990s, it became clear that the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (DCDWDS) was extremely critical of the translation work being done on liturgical texts, especially translations from the International Commission on English in the Liturgy.⁴⁶ In 2001, the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship issued a fifth instruction on the implementation of the liturgical reform on the subject of the translation of liturgical texts, entitled *Liturgiam Authenticam* (LA).⁴⁷ This document has been taken as the primary sign of the "ecumenical winter" lamented by so many—at least with regard to the liturgy.⁴⁸ In what can only be taken as an insult to the important work that had been done on common translations since the late 1960s by the ecumenical International Commission on English Texts (ICET), the Consultation on Common Texts (CCT), and the English Language Liturgical Commission (ELLC), LA states: "Great caution is to be taken to avoid a wording or style that the Catholic faithful would confuse with the manner of speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities or of other religions, so that such a factor will not cause them confusion or discomfort" (LA §40).

How could this statement not be seen as an attempt to unravel so much work that had been done—that was in fact based on the Catholic ICEL translations of the 1960s and 1970s? The result was that common translations of

⁴⁵ As has been the case, for example, with the Boston Theological Institute (founded 1968) and the Graduate Theological Union (founded in Berkeley, CA, in 1962).

⁴⁶ See John Wilkins, "The Missal That Never Was," in *Lost in Translation: The English Language and the Catholic Mass*, eds. Gerald O'Collins and John Wilkins (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 1–19.

⁴⁷ CDWDS, "Liturgiam Authenticam: On the Use of the Vernacular Languages in the Publication of Books of the Latin Liturgy," https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20010507_liturgiam-authenticam_en.html.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Bradshaw, "Liturgical Reform and the Unity of the Churches," 168–70; Maxwell Johnson, "Christian Worship and Ecumenism," 246–53; *Pray Tell* (blog), "Ecumenical Affirmation and Admonition Revisited," by Gordon Lathrop, <https://www.praytellig.com/index.php/2010/10/12/ecumenical-affirmation-and-admonition-revisited/>; John Baldwin, "The Recent Reform of the Roman Missal," *Sewanee Theological Review* 61 (2017): 75–91.

the liturgical prayers and acclamations of the people, for example the Glory to God in the Highest, and the response to “The Lord be with You” are no longer shared by the churches. Unfortunately, such distancing from the prayers of our brother and sister Christians is a sign of the increasing desire for the more defined ecclesial identity mentioned previously.

Conclusion

We have seen that the liturgical and sacramental fortunes of ecumenism have indeed been a mixed bag since the publication of *Ut Unum Sint* in 1995. They mirror the fate of the ecumenical movement as a whole, but they are of particular significance since they deeply affect the practical religious experience of Christians. One can only hope that setbacks like those recounted previously will be reversed in the future, especially inspired by the new openness signaled by Pope Francis. After all, spring follows winter.

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IV. Reasons for Hope

A tempting response to this question is: how has it *not* changed during those years? The previous quarter century was a profoundly significant period for the ecumenical movement. The movement achieved remarkable breakthroughs on historically church-dividing issues, confronted the emergence of new church-dividing issues, fostered an exchange of gifts to help churches overcome their divisions (old and new), and deepened the churches' commitment to ecumenism, making the ecumenical movement a prophetic sign for our time. I will consider each of these points in turn. First, a word on the significance of *Ut Unum Sint* (*UUS*) itself.

When a pope invites Christians of other churches to engage with him in fraternal dialogue on papal primacy, that is indeed significant. The true significance of *UUS*, however, lies in what John Paul II understood as having demanded that invitation, that is, the ecumenical movement as an experience of Christ's call to conversion.

We Christians are divided by more than doctrinal disagreements. Our divisions are also the fruit of the sins we have committed against one another as