

THE JOINT WORKING GROUP BETWEEN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

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FOREWORD

On behalf of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) we are pleased to present its Seventh Report to its parent bodies and recommend its study.

The report results from seven years' work by a dedicated group drawn from the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

The character of the document is intentionally educational. The group believed that it would in this way best serve the interest of all who wish to know not only the Joint Working Group's agenda but the growing relationship of the WCC and the RCC within the broader perspective of the one ecumenical movement which the group has witnessed and in some measure assisted.

In doing so we have gone beyond, both in our report and in our work, a narrow interpretation of our mandate. We believe however that this will be accepted as a measure of the group's deep commitment to the cause of Christian unity

In thanking all our members for their generous contribution to our common work, we would like to mention in particular those who have accompanied our work and are no longer members of the JWG. We remember with affection Professor Todor Sabev, Dr Wesley Ariarajah, Sister Monica Cooney and Archbishop Ivan Marin.

We are conscious that this Report is published on the eve of the third millennium — a time to turn to God and rejoice in hope. It contains several suggestions for future work intended to cement further the relationship of the WCC and the RCC in our common service of our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to whom be praise for evermore.

His Eminence Elias Audi
Metropolitan of Beirut

Most Reverend Mario Conti
Bishop of Aberdeen

Co-Moderators of the Joint Working Group

I. INTRODUCTION

With gratitude this Joint Working Group (JWG) has accepted its mandated responsibilities to serve as an instrument which helps the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) to carry out the ecumenical vocation of the churches. The experience of the present members reaffirms our predecessors' conviction expressed in the Sixth Report (1991): "The ecumenical movement is more than ever necessary if the churches and Christian communities are to be a sign and seed of the unity, peace and hope which the human family needs."

The JWG joyfully looks forward to the celebration in 1998 of the fiftieth anniversary of the World Council of Churches. The theme of the WCC's eighth assembly (Harare, 3-14 December 1998) is "Turn to God – Rejoice in Hope." As a new millennium dawns the pilgrim people of God turns again to the one Triune God with renewed faith and sustains the hope of a restoration of that unity among all Christians which Christ wills. This holy objective, which transcends human power and gifts, engages our renewed efforts towards reconciliation while at the same time opens us to the future inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Since 1966 the JWG has made six reports. In this Seventh Report, it offers to its parent bodies an account of its work since the WCC assembly at Canberra in 1991. This report also seeks to inform readers who may be unaware of the history of the JWG and of specific RCC and WCC structures of relationships. A short history of the JWG is offered as Appendix A.

II. THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE RCC AND THE WCC AND ITS MEMBER CHURCHES

1. *The WCC and the RCC*

In 1965 the WCC central committee and the Roman Catholic authorities committed the WCC and the RCC to future collaboration through the visible expression of the JWG. Both partners realized then their differences. As collaborative efforts increased, the JWG came increasingly to respect the ways in which the WCC and the RCC differ in their nature, main structure, exercise of authority and styles of operation.

1. The WCC is a "fellowship" constituted by member churches. Churches which agree with the WCC Basis —

that they “confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit” – may apply for membership and are accepted if at least two-thirds of the member churches approve.

While the WCC’s constitutional documents do not define what is meant by “church” (and the *Toronto Statement* of the 1950 Central Committee indicates that the WCC “cannot and should not be based on any one particular conception of the church”), its Rules do set forth certain criteria which member churches must satisfy. These include a “sustained independent life and organization,” the practice of “constructive ecumenical relations” and a membership of at least 25,000 (10,000 for associate member churches). In fact, nearly all member churches are organized within a single country. The Rules also specify certain “responsibilities of membership,” among them participating in the Council’s governing bodies and activities, encouraging ecumenical commitment and making an annual financial contribution commensurate with their means.

The constitutional documents specify that the WCC has no legislative authority over its member churches. Organized to “offer counsel and provide opportunity for united action in matters of common interest” (*Constitution*, Art. IV), it may act on behalf of a member church or churches only when that church or those churches request it to do so; and the authority of any public statements it makes consists “only in the weight which they carry by their own truth and wisdom” (*Rules*, X, 2). General policies for the WCC are set by the Assembly of official delegates elected by all member churches, which meets every seven years. Implementation of these policies in specific activities is supervised by the Central Committee of about 150 members elected by each Assembly to serve until the next one.

2. The RCC is a communion of local churches or dioceses, each entrusted to a bishop. It is one church with a worldwide mission and structure of sanctifying, teaching and governance through the “college of bishops,” with and under the bishop of Rome, the pastor of the whole Catholic Church who must ensure the communion of all the churches (cf. Code of Canon Law, canons 331, 375). “The concern for restoring unity involves the whole church, faithful and clergy alike” (Decree on Ecumenism, 5). But “it pertains *especially to the entire College of Bishops and to the Apostolic See* to foster and direct among Catholics the ecumenical movement..., which by the will of Christ the Church is bound to promote” (canon 755; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, canon 902). Conferences of bishops are juridical institutions of a nation or territory, with specific duties and responsibilities designated by canon laws and other decrees; for example, the national conference decides whether or not to be a full member of a national or regional council of churches. No diocese, no conference is autonomous. This “hierarchical communion with the head of the college and its members” (canon 375), which fosters unity in diversity, is an essential element of the RCC’s self-identity and of its ecumenical commitment.

2. *The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the WCC*

The pope “usually conducts the business of the universal church by means of the Roman Curia ... for the good and service of the [local or particular] churches” (canon 360). Within the Roman Curia is the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) which has “the competency and duty of promoting the unity of Christians.” The PCPCU is entrusted with the correct interpretation and carrying out of the Catholic principles of ecumenism: and with initiating, promoting or coordinating ecumenical efforts at national, regional and worldwide levels. The PCPCU is responsible for relations with the WCC’ and for bilateral relations. The PCPCU facilitates WCC relations with other departments of the Roman Curia, such as those for the evangelization of peoples, interreligious dialogue, justice and peace, aid and development, the laity, and Catholic education.

The PCPCU members are from national conferences of bishops and departments of the Roman Curia: over 30 cardinals, archbishops and bishops, and 25 official consultors. They meet in plenary every 18-24 months. The PCPCU has a full-time staff of 23 persons.

3. *Functions, operations and structure of the JWG*

The JWG functions according to its original 1966 mandate as modified by the 1975 WCC assembly

1. The JWG is a consultative forum. It has no authority in itself but reports to its parent bodies the WCC assembly and central committee, and the PCPCU – which approve policies and programs.

It undertakes its spiritual and pastoral tasks in a spirit of prayerful conviction that God through Christ in

the Spirit is guiding the one ecumenical movement. The group tries to discern the will of God in contemporary situations, and to stimulate the search for visible unity and common witness, in particular through collaboration at world, regional, national and local levels between the RCC, the WCC, and the WCC member churches. This means giving attentive support and encouragement to whatever contributes to ecumenical progress.

The JWG initiates, evaluates and sustains forms of collaboration between the WCC and the RCC, especially between the various organs and programs of the WCC and the RCC. Its styles and forms of collaboration are flexible, as it discerns similarities and differences which foster or hinder WCC/RCC relations. Concentrating on ad hoc initiatives, it keeps new structures to a minimum in proposing new steps and programs, carefully setting priorities and using its limited resources of personnel, time and finances.

2. At present the JWG has 17 members, with two co-moderators. Its co-secretaries are a PCPCU staff member and the WCC's deputy general secretary responsible for relations with non-member churches. Most members are involved in pastoral and ecumenical ministries in different regions. Some are from departments of the Roman Curia and from the WCC units. The JWG also coopts consultants for its particular tasks. The co-moderators, co-secretaries and four others form the executive, which oversees the JWG between its plenaries and prepares the agenda and materials for them.

Between 1991 and 1997, the JWG has met in plenary six times: Wenningsen, Germany, 1992; Venice, 1993; Crete, 1994; Bose, Italy, 1995; Chambésy, Switzerland, 1996; Venice, 1997.

4. *Relationships between the RCC and the WCC (1991-1998)*

Among the many contacts at various levels have been those between leaders or representatives of the WCC (in Geneva) and the RCC (in Rome) which illustrate their close partnership.

1. *The visit to Rome of WCC General Secretary Dr Emilio Castro (1991)* helped to clear up misunderstandings that had arisen around the impression of some that the Canberra assembly was equating the ecumenical movement with the WCC, and around the discussions about the ecclesial nature of the WCC-RCC relationship. Pope John Paul II and Dr Castro exchanged views on the role of the churches in the crisis in Yugoslavia; on the 500th anniversary of the colonization and evangelization of Latin America; and on the re-evangelization of Europe. Discussions with the PCPCU staff focused on specific continuing collaboration with the WCC.
2. *The RC meeting of representatives of the National Episcopal Commissions for Ecumenism (Rome, 1993)*, convened by the PCPCU, focused on ecumenical formation and the activities of these commissions. In addition to representatives of 78 episcopal conferences, participants included a WCC member of the JWG and delegates from nine churches and Christian world communions with which the RCC is a partner in bilateral dialogue.
3. *The meeting in Geneva between the WCC officers and PCPCU officials (November 1993)* raised key questions on the role of the JWG: its impact on local ecumenism, its specific contribution in bringing together the work of the national councils of churches (NCCs), and its role in the reception process of various dialogues. With realism on both sides, participants listened to each other's descriptions of the practical differences in the ways they operate. They stressed the important role of the Faith and Order commission in ecumenical dialogue.
4. *A plenary session of the WCC Central Committee (Johannesburg, January 1994)* discussed the relationship between the RCC and the WCC following presentations on the experiences of the PCPCU by its staff member, Msgr John Mutiso-Mbinda, and on the experiences of RCC membership in national and regional councils of churches such as the Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland and the Caribbean Conference of Churches. Each Central Committee member received a copy of the PCPCU's recent *Directory on Ecumenism* (1993), with a recommendation to read its first chapter of those principles which commit the RCC to ecumenism. The discussion focused on three issues: the potential for local ecumenism, especially in the light of the *Directory*; the new challenges arising from the participation of the RCC in national and regional councils or conferences of churches; the double pattern of relationships, in which it is possible to agree on theological issues and sometimes on socio-political matters, such as churches' attitudes towards war – and yet not be able to dialogue on some other moral questions (cf. Minutes of the WCC Central Committee, Johannesburg, 20-28 January 1995, pp. 26-27).

5. *The visit to Rome by General Secretary Dr Konrad Raiser and WCC executive staff* (April 1995) affirmed that the JWG is progressing in a trusting atmosphere as it facilitates relationships and cooperation between the two parent bodies. Questions arose: how better to cooperate in responding to problems which face both the WCC member churches and the RCC, for example, on civic religious freedom, Christian witness and proselytism; how better to use the existing links and the findings of many years of collaboration in local situations where most ecumenical expectations emerge; how the JWG can use its experience and instrumentality not only to provoke common thinking but also to prompt joint action in pressing situations related to the daily life and witness of the local churches? In the discussions between Pope John Paul II and Dr Raiser, the General Secretary affirmed the WCC's deep commitment to a "culture of life" and to a witness for peace – a major theme of the Pope's encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (1995). The principle of mutual accountability and solidarity among churches on theological, social and ethical questions was underscored as crucial for ecumenical cooperation.
6. *Joint meeting in Rome* (December 1997). In consultation with each other and considering that structural changes in the WCC (cf. below, III.A.5, "Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC") would have consequences on the relationships between the RCC and the WCC, Dr Raiser and Cardinal Cassidy agreed to a meeting between the PCPCU and the WCC in order to share information, to express mutual concerns, and to seek ways to strengthen collaboration.

5. *The PCPCU and Canberra assessments of the JWG's Sixth Report*

1. In a letter to Dr Emilio Castro prior to the Canberra assembly, PCPCU president Cardinal Edward Cassidy approved the Sixth Report. He underlined the role of the JWG as an instrument for the co-operative relationship between the two parent bodies in the common quest for Christian unity. In stressing the Catholic Church's conviction of the critical importance of unity of faith for progress towards Christian unity, the cardinal strongly supported the work of Faith and Order; but he also pointed to the necessity of theological foundations in the studies and activities of other WCC programs and suggested that more development of this dimension could facilitate RCC co-operation in them. The letter recalled the desire of Pope John Paul II that common Christian witness be achieved wherever and as soon as possible. This was especially necessary in common reflection on those issues which tended to divide churches, for example, ethical concerns in which the churches should collaborate in exercising moral leadership.
2. The Canberra assembly received the Sixth Report with appreciation. The impressive survey of the joint activities between the RCC and the WCC since the 1983 Vancouver assembly did not hide unresolved difficulties and failures. The assembly cited the dissolution of the Joint Consultative Group on Social Thought and Action as an illustration of the particular difficulties facing collaboration in this urgent area. It recommended that the JWG be liberated from monitoring some of the ongoing staff work between Geneva and Rome in order to concentrate on a thorough review of the RCC-WCC relationship and how it might be given more substantial visible expression.

6. *Mandated JWG priorities, 1991-1998*

Both the Canberra assembly and the PCPCU approved and encouraged the priorities which the Sixth Report had recommended to the next JWG:

- the unity of the church: goal, steps and ecclesiological implications;
- ecumenical formation and education;
- ethical issues as new sources of division;
- common witness in missionary endeavors;
- social thought and action.

The November 1993 meeting between WCC officers and PCPCU officials underlined that the JWG should now focus on its style of working and on identifying those programmatic areas where cooperation was necessary and possible. It acknowledged that in encouraging and facilitating reception of its work, the JWG experiences challenges similar to those faced by the bilateral dialogues.

This Seventh Report demonstrates that the JWG has offered concrete results in meeting its mandated

priorities. The exception is “social thought and action,” but even in this case progress has been made in better understanding past difficulties and in opening the way towards new perspectives and possible positive initiatives for future collaboration.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE JWG, 1991-1998

A. The unity of the church – the goal and the way

1. *The unity of the church as koinonia*

1. The specific focus on the ecclesiology of koinonia (communion) and the unity we seek provides continuity to the central and ongoing JWG concern for “the unity of the church – the goal and the way.” This same concern is basic to the mandate of the Faith and Order commission. This commission draws some of its members from churches which are not WCC members, and since 1968 RC theologians, approved by the PCPCU, have been full commission members. Through Faith and Order the RCC continues to have direct active participation in the WCC.
2. In the period between 1983 and 1990 the JWG itself commissioned and received the study *The Church: Local and Universal* (1990), which was published as an appendix to its Sixth Report. The document dealt with the fundamental aspects of the mystery of the church as an icon of the Trinity, the ecclesiology of koinonia and the relationship of the church local and universal. It explored the topic from Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant perspectives and indicated the ecclesial elements required for full communion within the visibly united church.
3. Since 1990 this same focus has been developing in: (1) the Canberra assembly statement *The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling*; (2) the JWG commissioned a study document, a series of reflections by Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestants: *Ecumenical Perspectives on the 1991 Canberra Statement on Unity* (Faith and Order Paper no. 163); (3) the Report of the 1993 fifth world conference on Faith and Order (Santiago de Compostela); (4) the various international bilateral dialogues; (5) the current Faith and Order study *Koinonia: the Nature and Purpose of the Church*; (6) Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, on the commitment to ecumenism; (7) the process of study and consultation *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC*; and (8) the PCPCU response (April 1997) to this draft (November 1996).
4. The 1991 Canberra statement developed the understanding of koinonia which is a central focus of the JWG's *The Church: Local and Universal*. The nature and purpose of the church, as a community which mirrors the reality of the Trinity, is “to unite people with Christ in the power of the Spirit, to manifest communion in prayer and action and thus to point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity and the whole creation in the glory of the kingdom” (*The Canberra Statement: The Unity of the Church as Koinonia. Gift and Calling*, n. 1.1.). Despite the continuing divisions between the churches, they now “recognize a certain degree of communion already existing among them,” and they desire to make this communion more visible by seeking consensus on the common confession of the apostolic faith, a common sacramental life, a common mission and moving towards a common ministry and structures of accountability. These elements develop the four classical visible properties or attributes of the church – one, holy, catholic and apostolic.
5. The work of the Faith and Order commission after Canberra has drawn on the impact of its 1982 document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) and the responses of the churches to it, including the lengthy one from the RCC. An implicit ecclesiology in BEM requires further clarification: the nature of sacraments and the relation of necessary oversight to be exercised in the church in an office which is personal, collegial and communal. The completed study project *Confessing the One Faith* examines the common apostolic faith through the Nicene creed, and invites the churches to recognize in their own lives the faith of the church through the ages and to recognize that same faith in other Christian communities (Faith and Order Paper no. 153, cf. the 1996 study guide *Towards Sharing the One Faith*; Faith and Order Paper no. 173).
6. The 1993 fifth world conference on Faith and Order in Santiago de Compostela (Spain) drew participants from every continent and ecclesial tradition who are engaged in Faith and Order concerns in the churches and ecumenical organizations. The conference could rejoice in the results of ecumenical dialogue, particularly since the last world conference in 1963 (Montreal), which was held during the Second Vatican Council when the RCC was only beginning officially and actively to enter the ecumenical movement. The sizeable RC presence in Santiago included the PCPCU president Cardinal Cassidy and 23 delegates, as well as more than 40 others who were hosts, speakers, younger theologians, co-opted staff and consultants.

7. Prior to Santiago the Faith and Order commission developed a study process involving a series of regional consultations (RCs took part in many of them), which resulted in the preparatory document *Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness*. The report of the world conference itself explores the nature and meaning of koinonia. The church, as communion rooted in the life of the Holy Trinity, is to be sign and instrument of God's intention for humankind. The report reflects the insights of the bilateral dialogues, including those in which the RCC is a partner; of united and uniting churches; of the Christian world communions (including the RCC); and of regional and national councils of churches (many of which have RCs as full members). It also explores steps towards the manifestation of koinonia, and identifies implications of the understanding of the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic which are still to be addressed.
8. Clearly in the 1990s, koinonia or ecclesial communion has become central to the discussions of the JWG, of the bilateral dialogues and of the Faith and Order commission. Pope John Paul II wrote in his message to the Santiago conference that "a deepened awareness of the profound mystery of ecclesial communion [koinonia] moves Christians to confess that God and not man is the source of the church's unity; it leads them to repent of their sins against fraternal charity; and it encourages them, under the inspiring work of the Holy Spirit, to work through prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires."

Koinonia is also being used to describe different, and perhaps mutually exclusive, models for the unity of the church, such as communion of communions, reconciled diversity, visible unity of local churches and conciliar fellowship. The implications of koinonia for models of unity require further examination.

2. *Major Faith and Order studies*

1. Future Faith and Order studies will continue to focus on ecclesiology. A convergence text on the nature and purpose of the church, in a format and style similar to BEM, will draw on other Faith and Order studies – on hermeneutics, worship and ethics – to seek to move forward on the ministry of oversight, the nature of conciliarity and the nature of the church as local and universal. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary process has been initiated on *Ethnic Identity, National Identity and the Search for the Unity of the Church*.
2. Common prayer and worship anticipate, express and prepare experiences of Christian communion or koinonia that both reflect and extend beyond theological agreements and convergences. *So We Believe, So We Pray* (Faith and Order Paper no. 171) explores a common ordering and scheduling of the primary elements of Christian worship, inculturation and the ways in which worship already actively fosters the search for unity of the church. The baptism study focuses on the continuing pilgrimage of Christians as they seek to express their incorporation in Christ and their primary consecration as Christians through baptism into the ministry of Christ and the church.
3. Three reports have come out of a collaborative process of reflection between Faith and Order and the WCC's Programme Unit on Justice, Peace, Creation (Unit III) on the relation between ecclesiology and ethics. The Ronde report *Costly Unity* (1993) explores koinonia in relation to the ethical nature and witness of the church as a "moral community" and emphasizes the essential connection between the search for the visible unity of the church and the calling of the churches to prophetic witness and service. The Tantar report *Costly Commitment* (1995) offers a fresh discussion of the relation of eucharist, covenant and ethical engagement. The Johannesburg report *Costly Obedience* (1997) takes up the ethical implications of Christian worship and the role of baptism/Christian initiation in shaping character, and asks: What are the ethical implications of the growing koinonia among the churches? What does the churches' common ethical reflection and action mean for the koinonia which already actively exists among them?

During this same period the JWG published in 1996 its own study, *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions* (cf. below, III, B, 5; and Appendix B).

3. *Bilateral and multilateral dialogues*

1. The RCC cooperates with the WCC through its full membership of the Faith and Order commission; and many WCC member churches are engaged in bilateral dialogues with the RCC, like the Orthodox churches and the ancient Oriental churches. Others are involved in these dialogues either on the national level or internationally through their respective Christian world communions (CWCs), like the Lutherans, the Methodists, the Reformed, the Anglicans, the Baptists and the Disciples of Christ. These multilateral and bilateral dialogues have complementary purposes and thus offer possibilities for coherence in the service

of the one ecumenical movement.

2. The conference of general secretaries of the CWCs, at which Bishop Pierre Duprey of the PCPCU represents the RCC, is an informal instrument of information, exchange, reflection and orientation, and organizes periodic forums on the bilateral conversations. The Faith and Order secretariat services these forums.

The fifth bilateral forum (1990) highlighted the common themes and approaches in reference to the Church emerging in and through the dialogues (cf. *The Understanding of the Church Emerging in the Bilateral Dialogues – Coherence or Divergence?*, Faith and Order Paper no. 156, 1991). The sixth forum (1994) explored the different processes by which churches seek to receive the results of the dialogues and suggested how they might appropriate these results of the dialogues by a process of recognition and reception. This process of recognition also requires attempts to overcome “non-doctrinal” issues which inhibit the movement towards communion, for example, the memory of historical events that have polarized communities, the relations between Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches, and the relation of majority to minority churches in many areas. The report of this forum also raised the issue of the relation between the local and universal church – in particular, the ability of the local church to take initiatives in furthering ecumenical relations (Faith and Order Paper no. 168, 1994).

The seventh bilateral forum (1997) explored *The Emerging Visions of Unity* in the churches through their participation in bilateral dialogues and interfaith dialogues and their common witness on issues of justice and peace. These “emerging visions” were discussed in the light of the Canberra statement *The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling*. The report reaffirms the challenges posed by that statement to the churches, in the dynamic process towards “conciliar unity” (recognizing the ambiguity of the term “council”). Rooted in different cultural and geographical milieus, local churches are interdependent in legitimate diversity. And the strong trends of globalization today prompt fresh insights into the unity of the church and human communities. (cf. *The Seventh Forum on Bilateral Dialogues: Emerging Visions of Visible Unity in the Canberra Statement and Bilateral Dialogues*. Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997, Faith and Order Paper no. 179).

4. *The Ecumenical Directory and the papal encyclical Ut Unum Sint*

During this period, two authoritative documents have articulated the theological foundations and pastoral directions for the internal ecumenical life and structures of the RCC and for its relations with other churches and ecumenical organizations: the PCPCU's *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* (1993), and Pope John Paul II's encyclical “on the commitment to ecumenism,” *Ut Unum Sint* (1995).

1. Approved by the Pope, the *Ecumenical Directory* (ED) “gives general norms of universal application to guide Catholic participation in ecumenical activity,” so as to guarantee “accordance with the unity of faith and discipline that binds Catholics together.” But ED “fully respects the competence of local and territorial church authorities” and recognizes that “many judgments can best be made at the local level.”

ED comprehensively presents the RC theological foundations for ecumenical life and action (teaching, attitudes/motivations and spirituality); the ecumenical formation of all the faithful – clergy and laity (studying the scriptures, preaching, catechesis, liturgy) in various settings (family, parish, schools, seminaries, theological faculties, Catholic universities, pastoral ministers' continuing education, hospitals, lay associations and institutes); “spiritual activities” (prayer in common; baptismal celebrations; sharing in sacramental life, especially the eucharist; marriages and mixed marriages; funerals); ecumenical cooperation and common witness (social and cultural life; peace, justice and the stewardship of creation; missionary activities; common Bible translation and distribution; catechetics; medical work; relief and development work; communications media); and church structures (college of bishops, bishops' conferences, patriarchal synods, dioceses and their ecumenical commissions; religious communities and lay organizations; the PCPCU).

2. The encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* emphasizes the RCC's “irrevocable commitment” to ecumenism as “an organic part of her life and work,” necessary for credibility in evangelization.

The everyday ecumenical path is by way of repentance for wrongs mutually committed, prayer (especially in common), reciprocal visits, study of shared faith and remaining differences, and cooperation in mission and in service to human needs.

A key word in the encyclical is “dialogue,” which is not simply “an exchange of ideas” (n. 28) but also an exchange and development of gifts “for the utility and the advantage of all” (n. 87). Presupposing loving respect between the partners and a desire for reconciliation, living dialogue includes an examination of conscience by each. The encyclical observes that “certain features of the Christian mystery have at times been more effectively emphasized” in communities other than the RCC (cf. n. 14). In “the common quest for truth,” sensitivity to different formulations can make possible “surprising discoveries” which enrich the apprehension of revealed truth.

The Pope foresees a “continuing and deepening dialogue” (nn. 77-79) on the way to “that full communion in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church which will be expressed in the common celebration of the eucharist” (n. 78). Reception of the interim results of dialogue requires a critical analysis and testing for consistency with the apostolic tradition.

The encyclical lists five areas for further work towards “a true consensus of faith”: (1) “the relationship between sacred scriptures, as the highest authority in matters of faith, and sacred tradition, as indispensable to the interpretation of the word of God” (a formulation entirely in line with developments in Faith and Order); (2) “the eucharist, as the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, an offering of praise to the Father, the sacrificial memorial and real presence of Christ and the sanctifying outpouring of the Holy Spirit” (a vision consistent with the Eucharist section of BEM); (3) “ordination, as a sacrament, to the threefold ministry of the episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate”; (4) “the magisterium of the Church, entrusted to the pope and the bishops in communion with him, understood as a responsibility and an authority exercised in the name of Christ for teaching and safeguarding the faith”; (5) “the Virgin Mary, as mother of God and ikon of the Church, the spiritual mother who intercedes for Christ’s disciples and for all humanity” (cf. 79).

Declaring the RCC’s conviction that in the ministry of the bishop of Rome the Church “has preserved the visible sign and guarantor of unity... in fidelity to the apostolic tradition and the faith of the fathers” (n. 88), John Paul II acknowledges that “the ministry of unity of the bishop of Rome... constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians” (*ibid.*). Thus he invites “church leaders and their theologians” (n. 96) to “a patient and fraternal dialogue” concerning the “exercise of this necessary ministry.” A number of WCC member churches have expressed appreciation for this invitation. For ecclesiological and historical reasons, however, many churches have great difficulty in discussing the primacy of the bishop of Rome and would prefer a wider dialogue on the need, nature and structure of a universal ministry of oversight.

The Encyclical spells out the significance of Faith and Order a number of times. It refers in an affirmative way to “the steady work of the Commission on Faith and Order” (n. 78, note 129). Speaking of the renewal and conversion required in ecumenism, the Pope cites various documents which help foster these attitudes, including “the principle documents of the Commission on Faith and Order” (n. 17) and “in particular, the Lima Document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (January 1982); and *Confessing the One Faith*” (note 28). The Contribution of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order is mentioned several times (n. 78, note 129; n. 45, note 77; n. 89).

In 1998, the Faith and Order Commission completed its response to *Ut Unum Sint*. The response acknowledges the fine place given to its work in these words: “We in the Faith and Order Commission are grateful for the recognition given to our work throughout the encyclical letter. This recognition of Faith and Order work implies a relationship with all ecumenical communities engaged in the ecumenical task.” It welcomed the spirit of humility of the Encyclical evident in such phrases as “dialogue of consciences” and “dialogue of conversion.” The Commission highlighted the Encyclical’s decision on the relation between unity and diversity and on the recognition of ministries. On the issue of primacy, where satisfaction was expressed for the manner in which this question is treated in the Encyclical through emphasis on a ministry of unity – not of power – and of service, the Commission affirmed its intention to study the issue in the context of the question of the need for “a universal primacy in the organizational dimension of the life of the Church of God on earth.”

5. *Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC*

1. Within the World Council of Churches, the meaning of ecumenical commitment and the WCC’s role in the ecumenical movement have been the subject of an extended process of study and consultation under the theme “Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC” (CUV). Mandated by the WCC Central Committee in 1989, this study has focused on the formulation of a policy document to be presented to the Eighth Assembly of the WCC in 1998 – on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the WCC’s founding and

at the dawn of a new century and a new millennium – as a kind of “charter” for ecumenical commitment. The text as adopted by the WCC Central Committee in September 1997 reflected more than 150 responses to an earlier draft from WCC member churches and ecumenical partners.

The JWG has followed this process closely through briefings by WCC staff, sharing of materials and discussions, recognizing the direct bearing of its results on future working relations between the RCC and the WCC and its member churches.

In mandating the CÜV process, the Central Committee in 1989 referred explicitly to the Council’s relationship to churches which are not members. Accordingly, Roman Catholic perspectives were solicited from the beginning; and an observer from the PCPCU attended the December 1995 consultation which produced the original draft of the document. When a second version was shared with WCC member churches and ecumenical partners in November 1996, general secretary Konrad Raiser invited the PCPCU to respond; and an extended response was sent to Geneva in April 1997.

From the perspective of the WCC, the draft (and the text as adopted by the Central Committee in September 1997) states:

We give thanks to God that the Roman Catholic Church is, since the Second Vatican Council, an active participant in the ecumenical movement and a valued partner in numerous ways with the WCC (especially through the JWG and participation in the commission of Faith and Order). The member churches of the WCC and the RCC are inspired by the same vision of God’s plan to unite all things in Christ. It is inconceivable to us that either the WCC or the RCC could pursue its ecumenical calling without the collaboration of the other, and we firmly hope that both will look for ways to deepen and expand this relationship in the years ahead, particularly since the RCC has in recent years become part of a growing number of local, national and regional ecumenical bodies of which many WCC member churches are also part. While membership in the WCC is by no means the only way for churches to work together on a worldwide level, some member churches of the WCC which already have bilateral relations with the RCC believe that the fellowship of the WCC is impoverished by its absence from this circle of churches.

2. The PCPCU response acknowledges a “developmental continuity” in the RCC’s “reception” of “a new ecumenical tradition of reflective experience... with other Christians and communions at the local, national and world levels, and as a result of the RCC’s active participation in the WCC,” which likewise has experienced “the developmental continuity of its ecumenical vocation during its fifty years of common life.”

Especially in the light of *Ut Unum Sint*, the PCPCU response reflects on the common ground or basis of ecumenism and “the one ecumenical movement”; on a common vision seeking to hold together the interrelated dimensions of the churches’ faith, life and witness; and on a common calling based on the reality, though imperfect, of the *koinonia* already existing between the churches.

The PCPCU response concludes that the “ecumenical understanding and commitment of the RCC is, in general, coherent with the present affirmations of the WCC member churches and of the WCC as they are expressed in the proposed *Vision Statement*.”

The PCPCU also responded to proposals in the CUV draft for revisions of present WCC structures and possible new structures, in the light of the implications these would have for future RCC collaboration in the life and work of the WCC and solidarity with the WCC and its member churches.

B. Common witness

1. National and regional councils of churches

In February 1993 the WCC and the PCPCU cosponsored the third international consultation of NCCs, held in Hong Kong. The theme was *The NCCs as Servants and Advocates of Unity*. Out of the 88 NCCs around the world, 55 include the RCC as full members through its bishops’ conferences. Also through the bishops’ conferences the RCC is a full member of the regional councils of churches in the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Middle East. Within these national and regional councils the RCC has direct contact with many WCC member churches. Of the 120 participants in Hong Kong, 17 were Roman Catholics, six of them bishops representing their national episcopal conferences.

The consultation considered the NCCs as instruments of expressing communion (koinonia) between the churches and of giving common witness, noting that their work of reconciliation often makes NCCs national advocates in times of social-political crisis. At the same time, there was acknowledgment of the problems facing many NCCs: among them, finding competent resource persons for both the theological and the social ethical reflection; limited financial resources; fostering relations with regional councils of churches and the WCC. Many NCCs must act on a crowded ecumenical stage where more and more agencies with overlapping goals are competing for fewer and fewer resources of personnel and money. Yet the consultation acknowledged that a preoccupation with the sharing of financial resources and development projects too often overshadows the essential task of NCCs to search for Christian unity.

In a written message to the Hong Kong meeting, PCPCU president Cardinal Edward Cassidy observed that collaboration through full RC membership in an NCC causes difficulties if the ecclesiological implications of the fact that local Catholic churches are "within the framework of the communion of faith and discipline of the whole Catholic Church" are forgotten. Furthermore, since a NCC should be governed by the norms set down by the member churches and should have only the authority which these constituents give it, an NCC's constitution should "seek to foresee how a satisfactory exercise of common concern can leave room for member churches to dissent from such action when they cannot in conscience be part of the same."

NCCs often engage in joint action or issue statements on difficult ethical and moral questions. "It is important," Cardinal Cassidy noted, "that such issues be studied with due regard for the moral teaching of the member churches, and above all taking into account the objective content of their ethical positions." Regarding this last point, the JWG recommends that NCCs use its study document *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues* (1996; cf. Appendix B).

Nevertheless, as the preparatory document for the Hong Kong conference suggested, the insistence of churches on "greater ownership" of an NCC carries the risk that the council will lose "its ecumenical vocation of being a pioneer that can take on issues and explore new avenues when the churches as such are as yet reluctant to do"; indeed, the churches may be even content to be "one step removed" from such engagement.

2. *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*

The Week of Prayer is one of the oldest and most widespread expressions of that "spiritual ecumenism" which is the heart and wellspring of the ecumenical movement. The preparation of annual materials for the Week of Prayer has created a stable and enduring collaboration between the RCC (through the PCPCU) and the WCC (through the Faith and Order commission).

For many persons the Week of Prayer each year is their main, if not only, ecumenical experience. In the context of frequent talk about the present difficulties and delays in the ecumenical movement, the Week serves as a strong affirmation of the churches' continuing commitment to the search for visible unity and provides a local experience of the catholicity of the universal church.

The annual text originates in the work of ecumenical groups in a single country or region – in recent years, Germany, Belgium, Zaire, Ireland, England, Portugal, Sweden and France. The text they provide is then developed by the international preparatory group and offered to all the churches for responsible local adaptation. This task often inspires fruitful collaboration among the churches within NCCs and other ecumenical bodies. Recent themes reveal an awareness of preparations for the year 2000; but the wide variety of ecumenical and social contexts in which the Week of Prayer is celebrated requires sensitivity and discretion in relating it to the millennium year 2000.

The JWG notes several issues which continue to challenge the churches as they celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: how to inspire prayer and work for unity not only during one week, but throughout the whole year; how to encourage creative local adaptation of the material; and how to bring new Christian partners into the experience of common prayer for unity. Attention has been given to broader collaboration in observing the Week and to the fact that there are several widely-observed prayer events throughout the year. Thus the material for 1996, "Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock" (Rev 3:14-22), was prepared with the participation of official representatives from the world bodies of the YWCA and YMCA.

The JWG affirms the Week of Prayer as one of the most enduring and widespread ecumenical experiences, and urges that all the churches participate actively in the local adaptation, distribution and use of the materials.

3. *Cooperation between the PCPCU (Rome) and WCC Program Unit on Churches in Mission: Health, Education and*

Witness (Unit II)

The PCPCU has continued to facilitate increasing RC collaboration with the work of the WCC's Programme Unit II, through the availability of RC mission experts as consultants and, since 1984, of a full-time RC consultant based in Unit II of WCC staff in Geneva. This latter post has been occupied by a member of a RC missionary community of women; at present the consultant is Sister Elizabeth Moran of the Missionary Sisters of Saint Columban. The role includes liaison with the other appointed RC consultants, and with leaders of RC missionary congregations and RC missiologists in Roman universities and elsewhere. In addition, since 1989 four representatives from the International Unions of Superior Generals of Women and of Men have been full members of the WCC's Conference on World Mission and Evangelism.

These collaborative relationships with WCC staff have been enhanced by an exchange of visits. A delegation of eight persons from Roman Curia staff and missionary communities and a professor of missiology visited Geneva in 1995 to become acquainted with the work of the WCC, especially Unit II; in turn, WCC staff concerned with the church's role in education in pluralistic societies visited Rome in 1996 and 1997. The PCPCU and the Unit II stream on education jointly sponsored in 1996 a consultation in Rome, at which WCC staff met representatives of RC religious congregations of men and of women whose primary ministry is education in schools. Participants listened to one another's experiences in responding to those education challenges which face the churches in increasingly pluralistic societies.

The invited participation of ten official RC consultants to the 1996 conference on world mission and evangelism (Salvador Bahia, Brazil) continued this important development of WCC-RCC relationships. The conference theme "Called to One Hope – The Gospel in Diverse Cultures" points to yet another area in which Christians could be seen working together in bringing much-needed hope to a complex, culturally diverse and broken world.

4. *The year 2000*

1. In its Sixth Report the JWG highlighted that the end of the millennium provides a natural occasion for all Christians to reflect on the state of their ecumenical relationships, and to recommit themselves to unity and strengthen their common witness. As the new millennium begins, the churches could offer to the world a Christian vision of unity and renewal, of social, economic and spiritual life which contributes to a stable and just world.
2. The JWG considered the celebration of the year 2000, especially in the light of the invitation in Pope John Paul's apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (1995) to promote ecumenical initiatives of Christians "to turn together to Christ, the one Lord, and to strengthen their common witness; to celebrate the Spirit as the source of hope and unity; and to work together for a 'civilization of love', founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty which find the full attainment in Christ."

A WCC representative was invited to participate in the RCC's central committee for the celebration of the Jubilee Year (February 1996). RC representatives were invited to informal meetings organized by the WCC (June 1996, May 1997) with secretaries of CWCs and ecumenical partners who are planning celebrations to mark the year 2000.

3. The JWG recommends that its parent bodies propose to the local churches ecumenical studies on the significance of common baptism, possibly leading to mutual recognition of baptism in each local place; and on common profession of faith as proposed in both *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* and the Faith and Order study *Confessing the One Faith* (1991). It also raises the question of whether there could not be common local events for, reconciliation among Christian traditions in places where there have been tensions.
4. The JWG has also highlighted the ecumenical potential of a worldwide "common celebration" of the new millennium, noting that its preparation would require careful involvement on the part of all ecumenical partners. Such a celebration, the JWG proposes, could focus on the possibility for Christians to confess together the apostolic faith and could offer common social witness by affirming the principles of the jubilee such as reconciliation, rights to and responsibility for the land, forgiveness of debts and the like.

5. *The ecumenical dialogue on moral issues*

1. As noted above, the past 35 years have seen a consistent development of multilateral and bilateral dialogues on those *doctrinal* differences which helped to cause and perpetuate divisions among the churches. These dialogues, in many of which the RCC has been an active partner with WCC member

churches, are revealing convergences and developing common affirmations on such classically divisive issues as scripture and tradition; baptism, eucharist and ministry; the local and universal church; Christian unity and mission.

2. But during these same decades Christian responses to pressing personal and social *moral* issues were prompting discord, even threatening new divisions within and between the churches. Yet these same issues could become church-reconciling means of common witness. The challenge is urgent for three main reasons: (1) the fraying of the moral fabric of many societies as traditional moral values and positions are questioned and new and complex ethical issues arise, which press upon the consciousness and conscience of all human beings; (2) the genuine expectation, both in and beyond the churches, that they together can and should offer moral guidance to their members and to society at large; (3) the need for the churches, as a family of one moral community in a pluralistic society to be in dialogue with others and to evaluate their moral insights and judgments – since moral discernment is not the exclusive preserve of Christians.
3. During its present mandate the JWG has offered its own study document *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues. Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions* (1996; cf. Appendix B). This document offers ten guidelines for ecumenical dialogue on moral issues.
4. The JWG study does not analyze specific controversial moral issues as such in an attempt to arrive at ethical norms, but rather suggests ways of conducting the dialogue. It outlines the common sources and the different pathways of moral reflection and deliberation, as well as the different authoritative means of moral discernment which churches use in arriving at ethical decisions and in communicating them to their members. While intended primarily for dialogues at local, national and regional levels in which RCs are partners, this document may also be useful for other bilateral and multilateral discussions.

6. *Common witness, religious freedom and proselytism*

1. Already during its first five-year mandate, the JWG recognized the urgency of a joint study on Christian witness, common witness, religious freedom and proselytism.
2. The 1970 JWG study document *Common Witness and Proselytism* clarified the meaning of some key terms in this discussion. These descriptions, although they addressed and reflected the concerns of that time, could be kept in mind in reading the two subsequent JWG study documents *Common Witness* (1982) and *The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness* (1996; cf. Appendix C):
 - by *common witness* is meant the witness that the churches, even while separated, bear together, especially by joint efforts, by manifesting before men and women whatever divine gifts of truth and life they already share and experience in common;
 - by *civic religious freedom* is meant that each person or community has the right to be free from any coercion on the part of social groups or human power of any kind; so that no individual or community may be forced to act against conscience or be prevented from expressing belief in teaching, worship or social action;
 - by *proselytism* is meant whatever violates the right of the human person, Christian or non-Christian, to be free from external coercion in religious matters, or whatever in the proclamation of the gospel does not conform to the ways God draws free men and women to respond to God's calls to serve in spirit and in truth.
3. The most recent study document has been produced because of the rise of new situations where people are vulnerable in a variety of ways. Allegations are being made about the practice of proselytism and antagonistic competition in missionary activity. For example, those involved in evangelistic activities appear to ignore the Christian reality of other churches, or their particular pastoral approaches. Missionary strategies may include reevangelizing baptized members of other churches. In the new climate of civic religious freedom in some countries at the present time certain churches maintain that their members are being put under pressure to change their church allegiance.
4. The present study places the problems of civic religious freedom and proselytism in the context of church unity and common witness. Such an approach makes it possible for the churches, in the dialogue of "speaking the truth in love" (*Eph* 4:15), to deal with tensions over accusations of proselytism in specific situations with reciprocal trust. The study has in fact been one of the basic texts used by the WCC's Unit

II for its own 1997 document *Towards Common Witness*, a call to adopt responsible relationships in mission and to renounce proselytism.

5. The JWG recommends the use of its 1996 study document in ecumenical formation programs, and in the education of missionaries and of those engaged in diaconal service. It may also serve as a basis for conversations with churches and missionary groups who are not in direct relations with the WCC or with national and local councils of churches.

C. Ecumenical Formation

1. *Ecumenical formation (Appendix D)*

1. Carrying out a mandate given to it in 1985, the JWG completed in 1993 *Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions* (cf. Appendix D).

The perspectives underlying ecumenical formation center on an understanding of the church as a *koinonia* which embodies unity and diversity. Ecumenical formation is described in the JWG document as an ongoing process of learning within the various local churches and world communions aimed at informing and guiding people in the one movement which, inspired by the Holy Spirit, seeks the visible unity of Christians. In this process of formation, mutual sharing and mutual critique take place in the context of the participants' rootedness in Christ and in their own traditions. The document identifies the importance of both informal contacts in daily life and formal courses of study in institutes, focusing on the specific literature of the ecumenical movement, including its history.

2. The JWG's basic concerns are developed further in the 1993 *Ecumenical Directory* (ED). Exploring the nature and content of ecumenical formation with regard to the whole Christian community, ED emphasizes formation through preaching, catechesis, liturgy and the spiritual life. The PCPCU text also offers guidelines for the formation of those engaged in pastoral work. It emphasizes the ecumenical dimension of theological disciplines, and outlines a specific course in ecumenism for theological faculties, for RC universities and for specialized ecumenical institutes.
3. This section of ED was in turn developed in greater detail in a November 1997 document which the PCPCU addressed to each bishop, to the synods of the Eastern Catholic churches and to the national bishops' conferences: *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Those Engaged in Pastoral Work*.
4. Together, ED and *The Ecumenical Dimension* constitute the fullest explication of ecumenical education and formation by any church or Christian world communion. The JWG encourages that wherever prudent and feasible, such RC training be conducted with Christians of other traditions, since this is one of the most fundamental learning experiences. The JWG also suggests that the Directory be discussed by religious educators on the local and national levels.

2. *Ecumenical Institute, Bossey*

1. Since 1946 the WCC's Ecumenical Institute in Bossey outside Geneva, has provided opportunities of ecumenical formation for thousands of pastors and lay persons from many parts of the world. Its residential sessions create an atmosphere in which mutual understanding of and respect for diverse Christian traditions and a realistic understanding of the ecumenical movement are fostered by living, learning and praying together. The formative element when the students pray together the Lord's prayer or recite together the creed is evident.

The JWG welcomes the recent emphasis on shaping a core curriculum for Bossey which would include exposure to some of the major concerns arising in the on-going bilateral and multilateral dialogues, among them reflection on the creeds and on baptism, eucharist and ministry.

2. WCC-RCC collaboration at Bossey continues. The faculty of the Ecumenical Institute includes a RC professor, Fr Serapio Kisirinya (Uganda); and a PCPCU staff person (Msgr John Mutiso-Mbinda) sits on the Bossey board as an observer. Since 1978, students of Bossey's annual graduate school of ecumenical studies have enjoyed, as part of the program, a one-week visit to Rome, prepared by PCPCU in consultation with the Bossey staff. The students learn more about the RCC through direct contact with persons in various offices of the Roman Curia, institutions of higher learning and worldwide religious communities of women and of men whose headquarters are in Rome. Students typically show particular interest in

hearing about RC approaches to Christian unity to issues of justice and peace and to questions related to family life. A private audience with the Pope is a high point of the week's experience.

3. *Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE)*

The WCC's program on Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) and its predecessors have worked with the RCC for many years, both directly and indirectly. The most recent visible example of this partnership was the RC participation in the preparatory study process which shaped the agenda of ETE's August 1996 global consultation on the viability of ecumenical theological education today (Oslo, Norway).

The pre-consultation process involved regional colloquiums which explored ways of fostering viable ministerial formation and theological education from ecumenical perspectives. ETE's constituency is not only churches but also associations of theological schools in various regions. At every stage RCs in these associations have been visible. The Oslo consultation brought together church leaders, theological educators, students, representatives from funding agencies and from ministerial formation boards. The PCPCU sent a delegation of six persons.

IV. SOME OTHER AREAS OF COLLABORATION

1. *Interreligious dialogue*

1. The WCC's Office for Inter-religious Relations (OIRR) and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) annually hold a joint meeting. Besides information-sharing, these meetings offer an opportunity to examine developments in interreligious relations, assess initiatives for dialogue and to reflect on future orientations and priorities. The PCID and OIRR invite each other to take part in their respective activities as well as in the meetings of their advisory bodies. Three joint projects during this period may be highlighted:
2. The OIRR and PCID study document *Reflections on Inter-religious Marriages*, published in 1997, grew out of a study launched in 1994 by sending questionnaires to different churches and communities and to a number of Christian and non-Christian spouses. The responses to these form the basis of the first part of the document. The second part takes stock of pertinent materials already produced by churches and Christian communities. The third part presents reflections of a pastoral nature. While addressed primarily to pastors, the document may also be useful for other people concerned with interreligious marriages.
3. Interreligious prayer is a growing phenomenon and there is a need to provide pastoral help to the churches. Is it possible to pray with people of other faiths which have different symbol systems and if so what does this mean? The OIRR-PCID joint study project *Interreligious Prayer and Worship* had three phases: a worldwide survey on the phenomenon with the help of the local churches (completed in 1995); a small consultation of persons who are engaged in the practice of interreligious prayer; and the formulation of conclusions by a consultation of persons with theological expertise (1997). A small number of Christian theologians, including RCs, offered biblical perspectives on interreligious prayer, the different readings of prayer in the churches and in their tradition, and different assessments of interreligious prayer.
4. The Middle East remains a major conflict area in which Jews, Christians and Muslims urgently need together to seek reconciliation, peace and justice. In particular, the city of Jerusalem requires people of these three monotheistic faiths to respond to that common religious call first revealed to Abraham: "to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just" (*Gen 18:19*). This is the background of a process initiated by the Lutheran World Federation and bringing together the OIRR, PCID and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews to co-sponsor two colloquia on Jerusalem.

The first colloquium – on the spiritual significance of Jerusalem for Jews, Christians and Muslims – took place in Glion, Switzerland, in 1993, before the Oslo political agreement between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. The Jewish, Christian and Muslim participants came mainly from Israel/West Bank-Gaza. By the time of the second colloquium, in Thessaloniki, Greece, in August 1996, the peace process was faltering and pessimism was in the air. The attempts of this colloquium to imagine the future of Jerusalem were unsuccessful. The final message recognizes Jerusalem as a "place of encounter between God and humanity and among human beings in their diversity." Jerusalem "is called to be the City of Peace, but at the moment, there is no peace. Although the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians has been initiated, there is still a long way to go before a just and lasting peace is achieved."

2. *Diaconal Service*

1. Participating in each JWG plenary was the secretary of Cor Unum, the pontifical council for promoting charitable works by Catholic institutes, which finance projects for the needy and facilitate relations with other Christian diaconal and secular international organizations. He kept the JWG up-to-date on Cor Unum activities and suggested ways of building bridges between it and the WCC's Program Unit on Sharing and Service (Unit IV).

In February 1997 the Unit IV director and a staff member went to Rome to introduce 1997 as the ecumenical year of churches in solidarity with uprooted people in meetings with the pontifical councils Cor Unum, for Migration and for Promoting Christian Unity, as well as with Caritas Internationalis. Together they explored areas for dialogue and practical cooperation.

2. The JWG received an extensive report on the main orientations and activities of Unit IV and its understanding of diakonia as an integral part of the churches' witness. This report detailed the established working relationships, in particular with RC international agencies, to assist refugees, uprooted people and migrants; and it identified common concerns for developing cooperation at the regional and national levels within those ecumenical organizations which have local RC churches in their membership.

The JWG observed that although the order of priorities may differ and the language used may not always be the same, both partners deeply shared the fundamental concerns regarding poverty and its root causes. But there is an asymmetry in the visible collaboration between offices concerned with diakonia in Unit IV of the WCC and in the Holy See (as is also the case between Unit III of the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace).

For the JWG two questions remain: (a) how can the dimension of diakonia best be included in encouraging common witness, without disregarding the potential for divisiveness over what is authentic diaconal witness and what is proselytism? (b) how can the JWG take this into account in fulfilling its duty to encourage and facilitate local ecumenism (national and regional councils of churches)?

3. *Social thought and action*

1. Cooperation between the RCC and WCC member churches in social thought and action is very intense on many levels and in different ways, especially where the RCC is a member of national councils of churches. Events such as the two European Ecumenical Assemblies (Basel 1989; Graz 1997) show the possibilities of major collaboration and common witness on a regional level.
2. A number of difficulties mark the history of direct collaboration between the offices in Geneva and in Rome. From 1968 to 1980 the co-responsible agency between the Holy See and the WCC was the Joint Committee on Society, Development and Peace (SODEPAX). It was replaced, in 1982, by a weaker instrument, the Joint Consultative Group for Social Thought and Action, which became defunct in 1989. Specific tensions arose around efforts at collaboration in the WCC's 1990 world convocation on justice, peace and the integrity of creation (Seoul, Korea), growing out of differences between the WCC and the RCC in their approach to ideological tensions in the world, as well as their differing understandings of and structures for playing a role in international affairs. Also to be taken into account are the many legitimate differences of viewpoint on social and political questions existing within each church.
3. The JWG noted the recent efforts of Unit III of the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (PCJP) to reinforce their working contacts as the principal central instruments of collaboration in social thought and action. After an interruption of several years, the annual exchange of visits between the two institutions has been revived. These visits are finding new methods for common identification of priorities to be explored together while acknowledging one or the other body might be in a better position to approach a specific subject on its own, with the encouragement and support of the other. In this way it may be possible to test moral principles concerning social questions, using different methodologies while maintaining fellowship.

Among the issues in which future collaboration might be intensified are poverty, economic justice including the international debt, the environment, human rights, and conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation. Common work, such as a jointly sponsored course of studies on Christian social thought today, could be carried out. The jubilee year 2000 could offer special occasions for collaboration.

Unit III and the POP have also decided to intensify their exchange of information and to encourage participation in each other's meetings as observers. A PCJP representative already participates in the Unit

III commission meetings.

Both sides exchanged texts and documentation on religious freedom. The WCC drew attention to some aspects of the legal position of the Protestant churches in Latin America, where the majority church is Roman Catholic.

4. PCJP encouraged RC episcopal conferences to take part in the WCC petition campaign on climate change. The POP was represented in the WCC consultation on climate change (November 1996); and WCC representatives joined the RCC consultation on social thought and action for the English- and Portuguese-speaking African countries (August 1996) and the European conference on the social teaching of the church (July 1997).
5. The WCC and the PCPCU have also cooperated in projects involving other partners. An example was the March 1993 peace delegation to Guatemala and El Salvador, organized by the Lutheran World Federation and also including representatives from the WCC, the PCPCU, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, and the Latin American Council of Churches. The delegation met with leaders of the RCC and Protestant churches in Guatemala; and a special ecumenical prayer service was organized in the Catholic cathedral in Guatemala City. The group also met with the president of Guatemala and other government officials, with the ombudsman for human rights, with widows, refugees and war victims, with the chairman of the reconciliation committee facilitating the negotiations between the government and opposition leaders, and with representatives of the civil sectors.

In December 1996, after 36 years of war, the government of Guatemala and the opposition forces signed a peace treaty. The ecumenical concern which the peace delegation had expressed three years earlier was also a significant gesture which showed the Guatemalans, especially in the churches, the support they were receiving from fellow Christians in other parts of the world.

4. *Decade of churches in Solidarity with Women*

1. The WCC inaugurated the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998) with the goals of encouraging and facilitating responses to women in their efforts to affirm their full, creative empowerment in the life of their churches, through shared leadership and decision-making, theology and spirituality; of giving visibility to women's perspectives and actions in the struggles for justice, peace and the integrity of creation; of denouncing violence against women in its various forms; of considering the effects on women of the global economic crisis and the worldwide upsurge of racism and of xenophobia; and of enabling the churches to free themselves from racism, sexism and classism and from all teachings and practices that discriminate against women.
2. The Decade has given an opportunity for shared reflection and conscientization regarding the realities of the experiences of women as they participate in the life of the churches and in various cultural and political settings. Although the Decade was adopted as a program for WCC member churches, the RCC has been involved, most noticeably in meeting and acting together at local levels. Participation of RCs in local associations and councils of churches has allowed for joint planning, meetings and celebrations as the Decade progressed. Some RC church leaders were active in inaugurating and promoting the work of the Decade. For example, the RC bishop of Khartoum launched the Decade in the Sudan; and the National Board of Catholic Women acted in a consultative role on the Decade concerns for the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
3. At its midpoint (1994-96), the Decade was "given back to the churches themselves," highlighted in a program which sent some 75 ecumenical teams to visit nearly every member church of the WCC. RC members of national and local ecumenical groups joined in welcoming and hosting many of these WCC – initiated visits and took an active part in the mid-Decade celebrations and events. For example, in Surinam, RC church workers participated in a series of discussions on the leadership of women in the churches. Awareness of shared concerns among churches was heightened in this way

During this period some papal documents mirrored concerns regarding women which are closely allied to WCC's goals for the Decade.

4. A summary report *Living Letters* was published by the WCC in 1997 on the basis of the findings from the team visits. Among the insights emerging from the Decade's worldwide activities, the report notes that although the Decade was addressed to the churches, it has in fact been limited mostly to women; the

churches have not owned the Decade, nor have they provided the support necessary for it to become a transforming promise to the churches together. Nevertheless, for some the Decade has offered the opportunity to recognize that issues relating to gender and to community are not simply “women’s issues” but belong to the Christian community of women and men – that is, to the whole church.

V. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE (1998-2005)

1. Over the seven-year period of its mandate, the JWG has tried to meet its given priorities. But its overloaded agenda, the sensitivity of many of the issues it dealt with, its short annual meetings and the limited financial resources at its disposal did not allow the JWG adequately to assess the ecumenical situation and specific developments at regional, national and local levels, or to cover the whole pattern of relationships between the RCC and the WCC and its member churches.

In the face of its limited resources of time and staff, the JWG had to limit the scope of its agenda and carefully ration the time spent together.

2. The JWG strongly recommends that two general priorities should be continued in the next period.
 - i) Both the WCC and the RCC are committed to a common, integrated vision of the one ecumenical movement which tries, in its diversity of expressions, emphases and activities, to hold together the interrelated dimensions of the churches’ faith and life, mission, witness and service. But, in the words of the PCPCU response to the WCC’s draft statement on CUV, “the oneness of the movement is both blessed with authentic diversity and often challenged and burdened with contradictions, even conflicts, and with competing criteria of judgments concerning what are ecumenical successes, stand stills and setbacks.”
 - ii) The JWG should be alert to those tensions which may threaten the coherence of the movement in its diversity. Addressing the social, economic and political concerns which profoundly affect the quality of life for all human communities is an essential ecumenical task. But attention to these should not come at the expense of attention to the theological divisions and unresolved issues of Christian faith which remain stumbling blocks to achieving the visible unity which is the goal of the ecumenical movement. These are stumbling blocks as well for the churches in carrying out their essential missionary task and in maintaining their dialogue in community with people of other world faiths and secular ideologies.

In this context, the JWG should continue to focus on those fundamental issues which are obstacles to achieving full koinonia of the RCC and the WCC member churches, and on those common concerns which, when addressed by the WCC and the RCC together, manifest common witness to the reconciling love of God.

3. The JWG recommends these specific priorities for the next period of its mandate:

Issues affecting koinonia

The ecclesial consequences of common baptism. The implications of recognizing the common baptism of Christians on ecclesial communion and liturgical practice.

The ecumenical role of interchurch marriages. The ecclesiological implications of the sacrament of marriage in between Christians of different churches and their family life.

Local, national and regional councils of churches which have RC churches as full members. The practical and ecclesiological implications of membership of councils of churches, and their instrumental role in the growth of koinonia.

Church and church law. The impact of ecumenical agreements and dialogues on actual church legislation and on relations between ecclesiology and canon law/church law/church discipline.

Common concerns facing the WCC and RCC

The stances of Conservative Evangelicals and Charismatic/Pentecostals towards the ecumenical movement and its present structures. The establishing of dialogue.

Christian fundamentalists: an ecumenical challenge? The impact of fundamentalisms on the ecumenical commitment of churches, and of dialogue with the major issues which Christian fundamentalists address.

The place of women in the churches. The further recognition and integration of the gifts of women in church life and society, and the appropriation of the findings of the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women on the life, structures and witness of the churches.

Ecumenical education. The development of appropriate ecumenical education for church members, students and clergy on the fundamentals of the Christian life in the search for the manifestation of the unity of the church within a pluralist society.

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