



The conference room in the Palazzo Doria Pamphili, overlooking Rome's Piazza Navona, where the Centro Pro Unione is located

CHURCH ECUMENISM SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL ANNIVERSARY

Rome's Centro Pro Unione marks 50 years of ecumenical welcome

As the Centre celebrates half a century of activities, Associate Director Professor Teresa Rossi explains how it is developing new programmes to form younger generations in the skills of dialogue, listening and encounter

By Philippa Hitchen

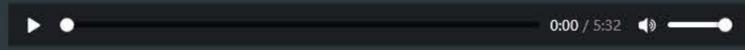
Half a century ago, in an ancient Roman building overlooking one of the city's most famous piazzas, a new centre opened up to welcome non-Catholic pilgrims to the Eternal City.

The **Centro Pro Unione**, as it's now known, had already played a key role during the Second Vatican Council as an informal meeting place for theologians, bishops, journalists and the ecumenical observers who were, for the first time, invited to attend that defining moment in the life of the Catholic Church.

50 years on, under the leadership of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, the centre still plays an important role, bringing together ecumenists and experts from many different traditions to discuss challenges facing the Christian Churches today.

Professor Teresa Rossi is Associate director of the Centro, in charge of implementing some of the new programmes it has developed to reach out to younger generations of Catholics.

Listen and download the interview with Teresa Rossi



As she welcomed guests for a 50th anniversary tea on Thursday, she told us the celebration means a lot to her as ecumenism is "the great love of my life". It also makes us reflect on "the gift of the informal encounters" that took place at the centre. Those encounters brought an authenticity, which leads to the truth, she said, adding that the Church is on "a pilgrimage together with other friends toward authenticity and the truth – and towards unity of course!"

Authenticity, unity and truth

Thinking about the so-called "Para-Council" which took place among the 'periti' and experts in this room, Rossi said, "it was a novelty, an innovation", made possible by Pope John XXIII's invitation to the ecumenical observers. "This is the message we have to take with us", she said, of receiving the past and bring it into the future, to respond to current challenges.

Budding ecumenism

Formation and reception are always linked, Rossi said, as she explained some of the current activities of the Centro "addressing different targets, theologians, pastoral operators, but also school children. She mentioned a project called "Budding Ecumenism", teaching teenagers about ecumenical dialogue in the building which was once a seminary for students training for the priesthood.

Sincerity, listening and encounter

While ecumenism is not commonly known or studied, Rossi noted, it also teaches children the much needed values of "encountering the other, learning how to be sincere, open, to listen to the others" and those are "a gift" for all baptised Christians.



Piazza Navona, seen from the window of the Centro Pro Unione

50th anniversary celebration at the Centro Pro Unione

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