Ecumenism

Teacher Background

Ecumenism

Ecumenism and the ecumenical movement indicate the initiative and activities on the part of Christian Churches that are encouraged and organised to promote Christian unity. The Catholic Church is committed to the ecumenical movement in three clear elements. These include: spiritual renewal, theological dialogue towards restoration of full communion and common mission and witness in the world. Evidence of internal spiritual renewal since Vatican II that brings Roman Catholics closer to other churches includes: Renewal of the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, reception of insights of biblical witness of worship from the Reformation Churches and renewed Roman Catholic understanding of the relationship of Church and society. This renewal has enhanced opportunities for ecumenical co-operation between Churches to promote areas of social ethics and mission to the world.

Ecumenical theological dialogue towards the restoration of full communion involves the underpinning principle that reunion will not be gained by compromise but a genuine common biblical and historical study to find a ground of truth which transcends the historic divisions. It depends on the power of the Holy Spirit working within the Ecumenical movement and those involved in the study of scripture and the past, towards restoration. Many notable dialogues have occurred since the early 1960’s. The Roman Catholic Church has been engaged in the Faith and Order dialogue of the World Council of Churches since 1963. Dialogues have occurred with Lutheran, Uniting Church, Methodist, Presbyterian/Reformed, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Disciples of Christ and Anglicans. Dialogue on mission has also occurred with Baptist, Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches. The third area of focus for the Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement is through its common mission and witness. The Roman Catholic Church promotes evangelisation and peace and justice at the local, national and global level and is a member of twenty-seven National Councils of Churches in the world.