

Pentecost and Christian Unity

We are approaching Pentecost when we celebrate the giving of the Holy Spirit and the uniting effect this has on the people of various nationalities living in Jerusalem. They are able to understand the disciples in their own language. It is the undoing of Babel, when another spirit motivated them and people mysteriously lost the ability to understand one another.

Every year, starting the Sunday before Pentecost we observe the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, praying for unity among Christian denominations. Whatever spirit fractured and drove us apart, it will be the Holy Spirit that will bring us back together again. How this will happen and what this will look like is still hidden in the mists of the future and known only to God.

Formal dialogue with each other is one way this unity can be worked at, but it needs to be complemented by a very practical approach at the 'Church in the world' level.

In the inner city we know that St Patrick's Cathedral maintains close relationships with the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Trinity and the two come together during Lent for prayer and reflection. In Waiheke Catholics and Anglicans use the same building for their respective Sunday services. In Napier four inner city churches have taken their relationships one step further and have entered into a covenant together. They have committed themselves *"to do together all that we can, and not to do apart what we should do together, and to continue to work and pray for the reconciliation and unity of the whole Church."* All these examples show to some extent that we are moving from 'doing ecumenical things' to 'doing things ecumenically.'

This year it will be 500 years since the beginning of the Reformation. The Lutheran and Catholic churches will come together in a common commemoration. In Auckland the date for this will be 31st October, the date an Augustinian monk nailed his 95 theses on the door of a German church. The commemoration will take place at St Patrick's Cathedral and more information will become available closer to the time.

Much earlier in the calendar is our annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year the prayer service will take place at the Mountainside Lutheran Church, 1 Harris Road, Mt Wellington on Tuesday 30th May at 7 pm (parking available). Lutheran Pastor Joe Kummerow and his team will be delighted to welcome their Christian brothers and sisters.

A lot of effort goes into advancing the work of Christian Unity but also into the building of relationships with non-Christian religions. Our Diocese has a commission which tries to do or coordinate some of this formal and practical work. There is almost always room for one or more extra members on this commission, so if this is something you would like to get involved in, why not contact Carlo David carlod@cda.org.nz or Adriana Janus office@parnellcatholic.org.nz for more information.

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