

Disciples-Catholic Dialogue Explores Being “Formed by the Eucharist”

Rome, Italy (June 14-20, 2014) – The Second Session of the Fifth Phase of the Disciples of Christ-Catholic International Commission for Dialogue took place in Rome from June 14 through 20, 2014. The general theme for the present phase of Dialogue is “Christians Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist”. After an introductory meeting (Nashville, January 2014), the Commission made a first approach to questions related to the theme “Formed by the Eucharist: The Structure of Liturgies Among Catholics and Disciples”. The goal of the dialogue, which started in 1979, is the full visible unity between the two communions.

Genuine exchange and frank dialogue concerning the positions and practices of the two traditions have been guiding principles of the conversations, which include daily prayer services that are led alternatively by Catholics and Disciples of Christ.

The Disciples Co-Chair of the Dialogue is Rev. Dr. Newell Williams, Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University [TCU], Fort Worth, TX, USA. The Catholic Co-Chair of the Dialogue is the Most Reverend David L. Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, WI, USA.

The second session began with two biblical studies: “The Meaning of the Cross in the Gospel of John” prepared by Dr. Mary Coloe, pbvm, (Catholic) and “Psalm 22 and the Formation of the Eucharistic Community” presented by Rev. Dr. Merryl Blair (Disciples). Papers were prepared by Rev. Michael G. Witzcak, S.L.D. on “The Roman Catholic Celebration of the Eucharist” and by Rev. Dr. David M. Thompson on “Formed by the Eucharist: the Weekly Experience of Disciples of Christ”. According to the agreed proposal outlining the six year focus, the Commission will devote its next session (2015) to “The Significance of Eucharistic Catechesis.”

The members of the Dialogue were pleased to meet in Rome. The participants attended Sunday Mass at the North American College in Rome, with the Eucharist presided over by Bishop David Ricken. Later they attended a special service of Solemn Vespers presided over by the Right Reverend Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, in San Gregorio al Celio Church. At the General Audience of Pope Francis on Wednesday morning, June 18, the Commission was acknowledged.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. Williams expressed, “This week I have been reminded anew that Disciples and Catholics are spiritually formed and nurtured by the Eucharist, which Disciples also refer to as the Lord's Supper, in ways both similar and distinctive.”

According to Bishop Ricken, “It is a very good experience to be involved in dialogue with brothers and sisters of the Disciples of Christ. Listening to one another and explaining our teaching and practice of one faith in Jesus Christ has given me a fresh understanding of not only the Disciples but also of my own faith and faith experience. At a time when our Church is asking the Holy Spirit for a renewal in the proclamation of the Gospel, among others and for others, dialoguing about discipleship and unity could not be more timely and

necessary. May God continue to move forward this exchange in a way that gives Him glory and makes of the Church a vessel of salvation”.



The members from the Disciples of Christ: Rev. Dr. Newell Williams, Brite Divinity School, TCU, Fort Worth, USA, Co-Chair; Rev. Dr. Robert Welsh, Council on Christian Unity, Indianapolis, USA, Co-Secretary; Rev. Dr. Thomas Best, Belmont, MA, USA; Rev. Dr. Merryl Blair, Stirling Theological College, Melbourne, Australia; Rev. Dr. James O. Duke, Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, USA; Rev. Angel Luis Rivera, Puerto Rico Council of Churches, Puerto Rico; and, Rev. Dr. David M. Thompson, Cambridge, UK.

The members of the Catholic team: Most Reverend David L. Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, USA, Co-Chair; Rev. Msgr. Juan Usma Gómez, Bureau Chief of Western Section, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City/Colombia, Co-Secretary; Msgr. Michael Clay, D. Min., School of Theology and Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America, USA; Dr. Mary Coloe, pbvm, University of Divinity, Australia; Dr. Julien Hammond, Ecumenical Officer, Archdiocese of Edmonton, Canada; Rev. Joseph T. Shenosky, S.T.D., Vice-Rector, Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, USA; and Rev. Michael G. Witzcak, S.L.D., The Catholic University of America, USA.