Cheryl L. Thomsen

Healing of Memories:

Beginning with Forgiveness

Jesus Christ is the model, the teacher, the norm for Christian living, for Christian character and for Christian relationship. Jesus Christ has modeled relationship for us via His relationship with the Father through prayer, the Spirit through faith and His relationship with others through dialogue, love, acceptance and forgiveness. This life-modeling defines and guides us as we approach other religions, providing our analogical imaginations with the precedent to "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10,37).[1]

Called to Relationship

Dialogue is the first task in relationship with other Christians and other religions. Dialogue is the task of "communicative praxis."[2] Dialogue engages in the truth. "To know the truth we must be engaged in the practice of communication with others; that means really talking with and listening to people who are significantly different from us."[3]

We are called to engage with people we meet daily, with other Christians and with other religions. It is part of a basic communication model—part of being in relationship with others, part of being a global community, which we cannot avoid.

Sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists speak of relationships, as do communication specialists and philosophers, in terms of the new physics that has evolved within the past hundred years. In this new model of being, quantum physics sees everything as being in relationship, no longer separate.

Even our deepest core is made up of molecules that are in relationship with each other, never isolated. "Nothing, whether an electron or a human being, can be 'an island unto itself.' 'Everything' and 'every-body' are profoundly and dynamically interrelated."[4] We are in relationship with everything that is around us. It is through dynamic relationship that we seek unity and the truth via conversation with others.

The Roman Catholic Legacy

Lumen Gentium, the Dogmatic Constitution of the (Roman Catholic) church, recognizes the church as linked with other Christian communities through the Holy Spirit.[5] Roman Catholics should be aware that they too are called to dialogue and restoration of unity as defined in *Unitatis Redintegratio*.

"The restoration of unity among all Christians"[6] was of primary concern during the Second Vatican Council. The *Decree on Ecumenism* (Unitatis Redintegratio) states that the division amongst Christian communities "contradicts the will of Christ"[7], and through the movement of the Holy Spirit the restoration of unity may be achieved by all Christians.

The commitment to ecumenism, dialogue and unity was reiterated and expanded upon in *Ut unum sint* by Pope John Paul II in 1995. Recognizing the signs of the times, we are called to further, deeper, ongoing, active dialogue between different churches and communities.

"Ecumenism is directed precisely to making the partial communion existing between Christians grow towards full communion in truth and charity."[8] Ecumenical dialogue moves beyond the mere exchange of ideas into the "exchange of gifts."

In unity both parties are partners in dialogue and "each side must presuppose in the other a desire for reconciliation, for unity in truth."[9] There is no room for opposition between partners in dialogue. Clearly dialogue has become an "outright necessity, one of the Church's priorities,"[10] leading us deeper into the possibility of Christian unity and deeper into a dialogue of love.

Margaret O'Gara focuses on four main themes in the encyclical *Ut unum sint* and the Apostolic letter *Orientale lumen*, beginning with the purification of memories. Relationships create memories and those memories—our pictures of the past—continue to shape our present thoughts and actions.

1 Spohn William C., *Go and Do Likewise. Jesus and Ethics*. New York, 2000. 4.

2 Habermas Jürgen, *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Boston, 1984.

3 Ibid.

4 Knitter Paul F., *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. Maryknoll, 2004. 10.

5 *Lumen Gentium. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/index.htm. 15.

6 *Unitatis Redintegratio. Decree on Ecumenism*. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/index.htm. 1.

7 Ibid.

8 John Paul II, *Ut unum sint. On Commitment to Ecumenism*. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/index.htm. 14.

9 Ibid. 29. / 10 Ibid. 31.

Our memories that are painful and sometimes bad, hurt us and impact the future. Therefore to enter into dialogue, John Paul II calls us to face them and to purify them. *Repentance* and *conversion* are the first and possibly the most critical steps toward a purification of memories. Through this process Roman Catholics will be able to "re-examine together their painful past and the hurt which that past regrettably continues to provoke even today."[11]

Continuing to examine our heritage by *examining the gifts* that we each bring to dialogue is the second theme of John Paul II's writings. Citing the Eastern Church, John Paul II expresses in *Orientale lumen* how some forms of diversity add to our richness rather than separate us, expressing our own culture and heritage.

"The pope believes that when we know the treasures of others' faith, we will have the 'incentive for a new and more intimate meeting ... which will be a true and sincere mutual exchange.' He believes that this is the work of the Holy Spirit."[12]

The *examination and improvement to the papacy*, which moves the church further than only asking for forgiveness, is the third theme found in the document *Ut unum sint*. Ecumenical dialogue regarding the papacy has already begun with Lutherans, "exploring ways the papal ministry could be exercised in new forms. ... The Dialogue members call for renewal of the papacy according to the Vatican II principles of legitimate diversity, collegiality and subsidiarity."[13]

The final theme is the *depth*, to which John Paul II wanted to take ecumenical work. Ecumenical dialogue goes beyond the doctrine of the Church, and unity becomes a mission throughout the Church moving into the parishes and educational systems.

Ecumenism is a fundamental, permanent, continuous platform in the formation of future priests, pastors, religious and lay workers. As the work of ecumenical dialogue permeates the Church, we may discover how close we really are. Ecumenical dialogue is the calling for each one of us as members of the Church.

[11] John Paul II, 2.

[12] O'GARA Margaret, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*. Collegeville, 1998. 37.

[13] Ibid. 40–41.

John Paul II's Ecumenical Example

John Paul II's papacy saw movement and development in his commitment to ecumenism. In 1984 a Common Declaration was issued between the church of Rome and the Syrian Orthodox church of Antioch identifying the steps that had been taken between the two churches to identify common unity and the differences that still exist that keep the two faiths from concelebrating the Holy Eucharist.

Although the identity of faith is not fully complete, this document was able to allow for the collaboration of the respective churches in pastoral care, priestly formation and theological education.[14]

Luigi ACCATTOLI writes that John Paul II believed "the mission of the Church to the nations (*ad gentes*) calls for a revision of the historical image of the Church. ... The Pope is convinced that this re-examination is necessary for the proclamation of the Gospel to the women and men of the second millennium; but even prior to that, it is demanded out of a sense of loyalty and truth in confronting oneself, one's own experience, one's own conscience."[15]

Later writings in John Paul II's life reflected deeper upon ecumenism and the need for forgiveness. His allocutions since 1995 explored the relationship of justice, forgiveness and reconciliation.[16]

In his messages for the celebrations of the *World Day of Peace*, he spoke frequently of the urgent need for dialogue, the value of one's own culture and the barriers caused by non-communication.

"The path to take is the path of forgiveness and reconciliation. … From the Christian point of view, it is the only path which leads to the goal of peace."[17] He asked that forgiveness and reconciliation become everyday practices for all people in all cultures, building peace.

"No one can silence the Pope, and only the Pope can really say *mea culpa* for the Roman Catholic church. To bring up its own

[14] John Paul II – Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, *Common Declaration*. In GROS Jeffrey FSC – MEYER Harding – RUSCH William G. (eds.), *Growth in Agreement II*. Grand Rapids, 2000. 693.

[15] ACCATTOLI Luigi, *When a Pope Asks Forgiveness. The Mea Culpas of John Paul II*. Boston, 1998. xix.

[16] SCHREITER Robert J., *The Ministry of Reconciliation. Spirituality and Strategies*. Maryknoll, 2002. 128.

[17] John Paul II, *Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*. www.vatican.va/holy_father.

past against the church, or simply to confront the church with its past, could be equivalent to opposing popes of the past; and only a pope can contradict another pope."[18]

Early in his papacy John Paul II reached out to the individual who attempted to assassinate him. Throughout his papacy, he asked for forgiveness more than ninety-five times for wrongs of the church.

One of the most significant moments was around the millennium and the Jubilee Year, when John Paul II reached out to reconcile with those of the Jewish faith for the separation and hostility that has occurred between the two religions, including the actions of the Shoah.

There is no future until we can rebuild the trust that has splintered us with other churches. Hope continues as Pope Benedict XVI addressed delegates of other church communities and religious traditions on April 25, 2005, asking that they "join with me in setting an example of that spiritual ecumenism which, through prayer, can bring about our communion without obstacles."[19]

Foundational Forgiveness

What is forgiveness? In the Bible forgiveness is a transformative process between the perpetrator and the victim consisting of the "encounter, of healing, of the releasing of new options for the future."[20]

That new future is free of the past, of the legacies that haunt. Christianity as a religion of love sees God—the victim—as the one offering forgiveness. Jesus Christ on the cross says "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23,34).

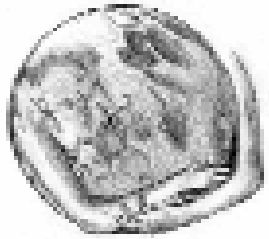
"The victimized Son intercedes for the world to the victim-God, pleading for forgiveness; for we, the human race, do not know that our violence—our sin—is breaking the heart of God and tearing the world apart."[21]

[18] ACCATTOLI xxii–xxiii.

[19] Benedict XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Delegates of Other Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of Other Religious Traditions*. www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches.

[20] MÜLLER-FAHRENHOLZ Geiko, *The Art of Forgiveness*. Genève, 1997. 5.

[21] Ibid. 7.



As we continually, daily, betray God by our choices, God continually forgives us as we are called to imitate and continually forgive the sins of others. There is no room for violence, only for love of fellow people and forgiveness of wrongs.

Forgiveness sits in the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator or sinner, unlocking the bondage to mutual liberation. In light of the atrocities of Auschwitz and excessive social violence, Geiko MÜLLER-FAHRENHOLZ identifies six components to social and systemic forgiveness.

First, the "Bible takes the victim's side when it looks at forgiveness. The way in which the Bible speaks about it indicates that forgiveness of guilt and healing of suffering are inseparably bound together in a process that heals the wounds of those who were humiliated, as it heals the scars of those who abused their powers." Forgiveness is a relational act.

Second, there is an intergenerational component to forgiveness, for atrocities are woven into the story for generations. Third, being a part of humanity's history, forgiveness is a public issue and the memories are healed as trust is developed together, as the perpetrator and victim walk together through their stories.

Fourth, "forgiveness is about renouncing unjustified power, not about weakening the pursuit of justice." And at the same time, forgiveness does not stop at justice, but "strives to heal the grief and re-establish the deepest qualities of humanity."

This fifth point is foundational for social forgiveness of any atrocity—a sincere confession by the perpetrator disarms her or him, and the victim is endowed with "priestly powers." "This means nothing less than that every process of genuine confession destroys the distorted relationships between human beings." They both regain their humanness.

Finally, "the quest for what is truly human transcends the human race. ... The holy scriptures of the Abrahamic religions insist that the human-ness of the human race is grounded in the mercy of God. ... This is our calling and mission: to become mirrors of mercy."[22]

Shifting Paradigms

MÜLLER-FAHRENHOLZ reflects upon the split in the Church at the Reformation due to the power held in the Church as supreme controller over the Gospel of forgiveness through the sacrament of penance by priests, bishops and popes.

At that time, Martin LUTHER wrote in the Augsburg Confession that only contrition and faith were needed for God to forgive sins. The people's response to this shift in thought freed their consciences from the torment and fear of the power of the Church.

The message of forgiveness moved quickly to a vertical relationship between the individual and Jesus Christ—to the individual who committed sin, and not the individual who suffered from the sin.

Liberation theology reframed the situation once more in the XXth century and refocused on the one who suffered, the victim. Just as Jesus Christ suffered and identified throughout His ministry with the victims.

"Every act of transgression constitutes a bondage that keeps the perpetrator and the victim locked together. The more violent the transgression, the deeper the bondage."[23] Forgiveness is the process that unlocks the bondage between the perpetrator and victim. They are both set free from their pain: the victim from her or his hurt, and the perpetrator from her or his guilt.

[22] Ibid. viii–xi. / [23] Ibid. 24.

Forgiveness happens in that moment—that snap of grace that liberates the victim from bondage and restores power and dignity to both sides. The snap of grace is that moment of immense beauty, joy and bliss.

Five additional aspects of the forgiveness process have been identified by MÜLLER-FAHRENHOLZ, highlighting the interrelational systemic impact of forgiveness. First, there must be a confession to make amends, for acknowledgement is what is needed by the victim.

Second, the "emphasis must not be on repairing the past, but on preparing a better way forward." Next, "time does not undo evil, but carries the impact and weight of past deeds along. Yet, time also upholds the option to face our evil deeds rather than to keep denying them until our last breath."

There must be one within a group who breaks down and breaks the chain of denial that can hold an entire group. "There is something profoundly vicarious in a genuine act of confession; for it brings the unspoken—and unspeakable—words of all into the open."

The intergenerational impact of suffering needs to be accounted for, as the pain of the victim influences future generations. For individuals and groups, "genuine forgiveness is about unburdening the past in order to inaugurate a less painful relationship in the future."[24]

Generally another element becomes part of the forgiveness process: trust. Trust frequently is negotiated by a mediating agent—a *mediator*, a counselor, friend or someone able to build a bridge of trust between two sides. This agent creates new and imaginative options or solutions for those in conflict.

"While the double bondage of shame and hurt blocks the mind, forgiveness releases new images of togetherness. While anger and defensiveness cast the shadow of doubt over each fresh suggestion, the energy of mutual disclosure expresses itself in new avenues toward the future. Such images of fresh beginnings are the fruit of liberation from the bondage of past hurts."[25]

The liberation from past hurts is part of *re-membering*, of bringing together that which was severed or broken and restoring the wholeness. Making a future possible. History is littered with memories of victimization, conflict and "selective remembering."

[24] Ibid. 28–30. / [25] Ibid. 35.

Rewriting History

When we read our history as a culture or as a Church, we find that we remember selectively, ignoring the pain of the victims. When we look at history through the eyes of forgiveness, we see in those victims what was denied and what was suppressed—a "deep remembering."

Remembering deeply, we see with new eyes and transform the past with new possibilities. Roman Catholics are called to as well to seriously look into their past and name their wrongs, remember in a new way the pain of the victims and the oppressed in history, ask for forgiveness, pray to be forgiven, and re-member.

Acknowledging the victims in our history and the wrongs of our past allows the collective memories of those harmed to be grieved, cleansed and healed. Then we are free to look forward as a Church.

We need models of forgiveness, so that we can experience forgiveness and reconciliation with those we are called to dialogue with. The pain of a victim does not disappear with time, but remains until transformed by forgiveness.

Robert J. SCHREITER writes on forgiveness and reconciliation, pulling examples from the Easter stories showing Jesus Christ as the model for social reconciliation. This model for societies ravaged by violence and hatred, oppression and intimidation provides "structures and processes, whereby a fractured society can be reconstructed as truthful and just."[26]

Reconciliation is the work of God that makes both victim and wrongdoer new creations. Jesus Christ is the victim and reconciler in the Easter appearance stories, Who transforms humanity "by healing and forgiving His disciples, commissioning them in turn to carry forth His message and mission to the whole world."[27]

Jesus Christ accompanied others, created safe zones through hospitality, unfolded memories and remade the relationships, and commissioned His followers to go and do likewise. Jesus Christ decided through forgiveness, new relationships, to restore the balance of power—restoring and creating a new future for humanity.

The Roman Catholic church, filled with ritual and history and grounded in Jesus Christ, has the ability to create a new future through trusting the grace of God, admitting their own failings and reaching out in forgiveness and reconciliation.

[26] SCHREITER, 4. / [27] Ibid.

Truth and Reconciliation

The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC) in South Africa becomes an unexpected model of large-scale forgiveness and healing. Desmond TUTU writes on the innate mandate to address the atrocities committed in South Africa:

"It would be an oddly atomistic view of the nature of a community not to accept that there is a very real continuity between the past and the present, and that the former members would share in the guilt and the shame as in the absolution and the glory of the present. The Church is a living organization; otherwise history is of no significance, and we should concentrate only on those who are our contemporaries."[28]

The TRC assumed a "victim-orientation" aimed at restoring personal dignity to the victims by allowing the victims to present their stories of what happened to them during apartheid, specifically during the period around March 1, 1960—the time of the Sharpeville massacre.

Part of the process was providing material assistance for the victims, while the other part had them speaking out and naming their pain, suffering and truth, restoring their dignity. By restoring their dignity, distributive justice could be attained, creating equal opportunities for all citizens. A movement toward healing their past.

Endemic to black African spirituality is the fundamental connectedness of all life. "In black African spirituality there can be no peaceful present as long as the spirits of the dead are not laid to rest."[29]

The breadth of the TRC process allowed the spirits of the dead to be laid to rest. "The lesson South Africa is trying to teach us is that by turning to the victims and restoring their dignity, a space is created, in which lasting peace can build its home."[30]

With the deep division that marked South Africa and the cooperation that occurred to heal those divisions, churches have another model to heal their past, provide dignity to all and create justice and lasting peace.

[28] TUTU Desmond, *No Future Without Forgiveness*. New York, 1999. 276.

[29] MÜLLER-FAHRENHOLZ. 92.

[30] Ibid. 100.

A Multiplicity of Models

The events of September 11, 2001, have escalated the importance of promoting peace, justice, cooperation and religious dialogue. No longer are other religions "over there"; they are in our neighborhood, our community and our work place.

There is also a shift in our global community, driven mainly by a global economy and a global communication; with the internet and the world-wide web, new models for interaction and dialogue will evolve.

Paul F. KNITTER identified an emerging theological model for dialogue between religions. The *acceptance* model acknowledges that there are many true religions and asks how we can make peace with the sometimes radical differences that exist. It is a new way of dealing with the current world, allowing us to make peace with differences instead of claiming superiority and rightness.

The paradigm of acceptance acknowledges the "real diversity of all faiths,"[31] for religions are different. Unity exists with the recognition of diversity, with diversity producing vitality and giving life to all relationships, for there is diversity even within God. But what about the truth—is there not one truth? Paul F. KNITTER says:

"Truth is always truths. It always takes different shapes and assumes different identities—to the point that 'it' is no longer one, but many. … If any one person or culture thinks they have the one unifying truth that will embrace all the others, it will not be a truth that others can see, but a truth that will be forced upon them. So truth, too, is dominated by diversity. ... Truth is plural, not singular, because (a) all human experience and all human knowledge are filtered; and (b) the filters are incredibly diverse."[32]

The model of dialogue between religions, then, is more free-flowing and begins with each religion "laying out as clearly and authentically as possible what it is, and what it stands for; what then are the next steps for the conversation?"[33]

Listening to each other becomes the next step, as at that point they will need to determine the direction and form of conversation. Truth, trust and listening become underpinnings for this dialogue.

[31] KNITTER, 173. / [32] Ibid. 175. / [33] Ibid. 184.

Dialogue in Practice

This model of dialogue offers up the possibility to uncover past differences and pain; and it offers cognizance of a reconciliation process needed to begin healing and forgiveness of the memories of a religion that may have experienced conflict, oppression, violence or war with the other religion.

How the past haunts a victim and the fruitfulness of future dialogue needs to be reconciled before true, deep dialogue can continue. Deep dialogue only occurs with the restoration of relationship, not in divided broken relationship.

Building this bridge to heal memories is the call for all believers in God. Paul F. KNITTER's model requires dialogue around similarities and around differences, allowing those in dialogue to truly embrace the uniqueness of Jesus.

The Global Dialogue Institute (GDI) speaks of the power of deep-dialogue interculturally and interreligiously and provides us with a model to learn from others. "Deep-dialogue is a way of encountering and understanding oneself and the world at the deepest levels, opening up possibilities of grasping the fundamental meanings of life, individually and corporately, and its various dimensions. This in turn transforms the way we deal with ourselves, others, and the world."[34]

In this design, believers of different faiths engage in dialogue to learn from each other, so to "promote better understanding of and creative cooperation among cultures and religions, while acknowledging and accepting their differences."[35]

This dedication to dialogue in recent decades has already seen the three major branches of Christianity move closer to each other. Deep-dialogue allows us to seek out what is held in common and to discern true differences ethically, globally and spiritually.

Deep-dialogue has as its first commandment the purpose "to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly. ... We enter into dialogue so that we can learn, change, and grow, not so we can force change on the other."[36]

[34] *The Power and Promise of Deep-Dialogue*. http://global-dialogue.com. 1.

[35] Ibid.

[36] SWIDLER Leonard, *The Dialogue Decalogue*. http://global-dialogue.com. 2.

By opening and listening to another's position in an attempt to understand, we take the risk that at "any point we might find the partner's position so persuasive that, if we acted with integrity, we would have to change, and change can be disturbing."[37]

Re-membering the Church

When the Anabaptists and the Lutherans in the United States came together, the Liaison Committee determined that one of their initial goals was to "heal the memories of XVI[th] century conflict."[38]

Early on they found that "right remembering" served them better by providing "an ongoing approach for examining potentially church-dividing issues within a framework of mutual respect and trust. ... It not only leads to the healing of painful memories, but also contributes in a continuing way to a deepening relationship between our two church bodies."[39]

Both groups needed to address the martyr memories the Mennonites held of the one thousand killed by Lutheran princes during the XVI[th] century. Martyr heritage is part of the Mennonite remembering of their history, whereas the Lutherans remember their own persecutions, and many are unaware of their treatment of the Mennonites.

There is a hidden complexity to remembering rightly, and this continues to be a theme for the Liaison Committee. "We were left with a complicated picture of a multilevel discussion that warrants continued conversation in order that right remembering may become a lens, through which issues that continue to divide our two churches may be reconsidered."[40]

As these two churches practiced educational dialogue on points of convergence and divergence, they concluded to continue "right remembering," and to join together in social ministries and educational exchange programs to learn first-hand from each other.

The Mennonites and the Roman Catholic church came together from 1998 to 2003 to open up dialogue that had not previously existed, starting anew. Even with differences, both found Jesus

37 Ibid.

38 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – Mennonite Church USA Liaison Committee, *Right Remembering in Anabaptist – Lutheran Relations*. www.elca.org/ecumenical/ecumenicaldialogue/mennonite/index.html.

39 Ibid. / 40 Ibid.

Christ as the foundation for their faith, and they could come together in their teachings on peace-giving witness in the world as peacemakers.

They delved together into the divisions of their history to re-read and reinterpret the past together. Four points were the focus toward the healing of memories of churches divided with hostility and conflict since the XVI[th] century.

First was the *purification of memories* by facing the past and purging "from personal and collective conscience all forms of resentment or violence left by the inheritance of the past on the basis of a new and rigorous historico-theological judgment, which becomes the foundation for a renewed moral way of acting."[41]

They began by re-reading and studying history together with a new lens. Vatican II statements acknowledging the culpability of Roman Catholics in ruptures of the Church and promoting dialogue toward unity proved foundational for this purification of memories.

Second, a spirit of *repentance* on both sides acknowledged the harm done on both sides, due to separation and conflict, to the body of Christ. Confessions by both sides, seeking forgiveness (including the John Paul II March 12, 2000 Day of Pardon, and a statement of the Mennonite church) of the wrongs they have done to each other, led to a commitment to "self-examination, dialogue, and interaction that manifest Jesus Christ's reconciling love."[42]

Third, dialogue between partners recognized the Christian *faith* that is *shared* even in spite of the years of separation, while acknowledging the differences.

Healing of memories leads finally to a *new relationship* consisting of continued study and service together. "Dialogue has fortified the common conviction that it is possible to experience reconciliation and the healing of memories."[43]

41 International Theological Commission, *Memory and Reconciliation: the Church and Faults of the Past.* Vatican, 1999. 5.1.

42 *Called Together to be Peacemakers. Report of the International Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Mennonite World Conference*. www.bridgefolk.net/calledtogether.htm.

43 Ibid. 45.

Moving Forward

When a system—marriage, family, work, education, politics or religion, of any size—breaks down and disengages from dialogue for a period of time, healing will need to occur, allowing the victims and the perpetrators to come together peacefully.

Roman Catholics would be remiss to think that they can engage in dialogue with other religions with which they have been in conflict for hundreds of years without acknowledgement of past injustices and a sincere, genuine offer of forgiveness.

Pope John Paul II modeled forgiveness as a practice to break down barriers in relationships, healing memories, building unity and new bridges for dialogue. As partners in dialogue, listening to the movement of the Holy Spirit leads us to a new relationship and remembrance of the past.

Models throughout history, beginning with Jesus Christ, call us into a new unity founded on re-membering, setting each other free—the victim and the sinner—through forgiveness, prayer, peace and dialogue.

Suggested Reading

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Cheryl THOMSEN is a graduate student in the University of San Francisco, Phoenix Cohort, scheduled to graduate in 2006 at the completion of a three-year part-time M.A. in theology program. She was born and raised as a Lutheran in Minneapolis, graduating with a B.A. in sociology from Augsburg College. In 1990 she converted to Roman Catholicism. She has been deeply involved at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale for the past fifteen years. Here she heads the Communion Service Ministry, a very active, progressive ministry with the shortage of priests, and is currently on the Board of Directors. Her email address is cheryl.thomsen@cox.net.

John George HUBER

Eucharistic Convergence

in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

This paper represents research by what could be called a "tamed ecumenical optimist."[1] This present effort hopefully will reflect a greater measure of ecumenical realism that serves as a corrective to what was an overly optimistic appreciation of the four interconfessional initiatives selected for the research project.[2]

This is our thesis: Despite the significant interconfessional agreements that have been reached on a bilateral and multilateral level, some remaining challenges—primarily ecclesiological—need to be identified in order to realize a more objective evaluation and a more complete consensus.

Recent interconfessional developments are called "initiatives" for the sake of originality and to emphasize the intentionality of these ecumenical efforts.[3] The initiatives represent a pro-active commitment to the pursuit of Christian unity and the breaking down of historic walls of separation.

Initiatives and Convergences

Some Faith and Order convergences (which also included Lutheran participation) are added to this research in order to explore important ecumenical contributions that are being made by the wider spectrum of confessional traditions through the facilitating role of the World Council of Churches. This section will focus on the Eucharist, because we are convinced that this issue should be given high priority in the ecumenical quest for unity.

[1] This term was inspired by the title, *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*, authored by Reinhold NIEBUHR. Chicago, 1929.

[2] What follows is adapted from one of the chapters of a major research paper that was written for the Master of Ecumenical Studies program at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland. The title of the paper is: *'The Real but Imperfect Communion': Significant Agreements and Some Remaining Challenges in Four Recent Interconfessional Initiatives Involving Lutheran Participation*.

[3] The term 'initiatives' is used in the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993) to describe the decisive ecumenical action taken by the Holy See and "bishops, synods of Eastern Catholic churches and episcopal conferences." *Origins* 1993/23. 134. But it is used in this paper to indicate that ecumenical efforts are also being initiated by churches outside the Roman communion.