

January 17, 2010

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## The Quest for Church Unity



Father  
Paul  
Wattson

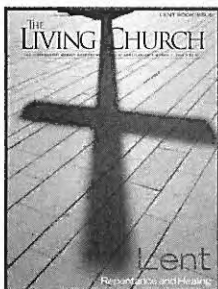


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*Joseph Addison - English essayist, poet, politician (1672 – 1719)*

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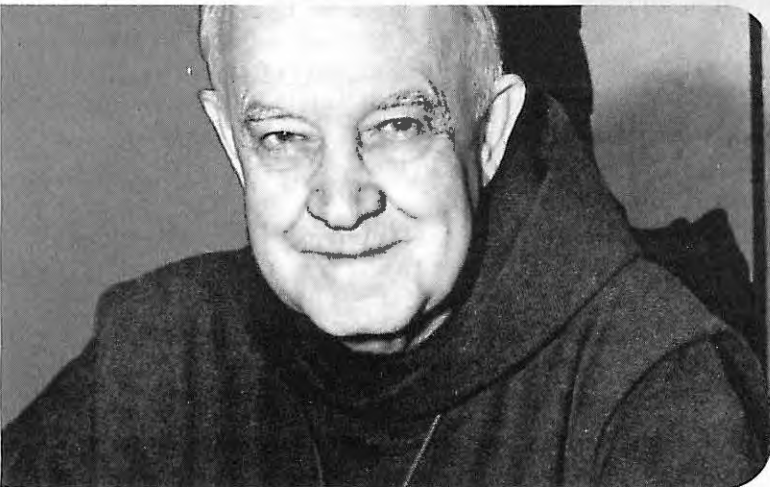
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# THE LIVING CHURCH

this week | January 17, 2010



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THE LIVING CHURCH magazine is published by the Living Church Foundation, Inc. The historic mission of the Living Church Foundation is to promote and support Catholic Anglicanism within the Episcopal Church.

## Christian Unity Resource Available

2010 Theme: "You Are Witnesses of These Things"

A 40-page document is available from the World Council of Churches for celebrating the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Jan. 18-25.

The document is prepared and published jointly by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order.

The Pontifical Council has made the same material available on its website, but has asked Roman Catholics to "contact the Ecumenical Commission of your Bishops' Conference or the Synod in your country in order to obtain a copy of the text adapted for your local context."

The theme of this year's celebration is "You Are Witnesses of These Things," which is based on the words of the resurrected Christ to his disciples (Luke 24:48).

Mr. Andrew Barr of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and other Scottish Christians, helped prepare the initial texts for the celebrations. This year's material commemorates the Edinburgh Mission Conference of 1910.

"The official delegates of Protestant mission societies from the different branches of Protestantism and Anglicanism, joined by an Orthodox guest, met during the summer of 1910 in the Scottish capital," said a background article in the document. "In 1910 the Scottish ecclesial landscape was beginning to diversify and the Roman Catholic and Episcopal Churches once more enjoyed a more important role. Edinburgh was chosen as the place for the meeting because of its intellectual and cultural vitality. The

fame of its theologians and church leaders also encouraged this choice. Scottish Protestant churches were also particularly active in mission and had a reputation for paying attention to local cultures."

A centenary conference, "Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today," is scheduled for June 2-6.

"During the 2010 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we are invited to follow the whole of chapter 24 of Luke's gospel," the document said in explaining this year's theme. "Whether it be the terrified women at the tomb, the two discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus or the eleven disciples overtaken by doubt and fear, all who together encounter the Risen Christ are sent on mission: 'You are witness of these things.' This mission of the Church is given by Christ and cannot be appropriated by anyone. It is the community of those who have been reconciled with God and in God, and who can witness to the truth of the power of salvation in Jesus Christ.

"We sense that Mary Magdalene, Peter or the two Emmaus disciples will not witness in the same way," the document added. "Yet it will be the victory of Jesus over death that all will place at the heart of their witness. The personal encounter with the risen One has radically changed their lives and in its uniqueness for each one of them one thing becomes imperative: 'You are witnesses of these things.' Their story will accentuate different things, sometimes dissent may arise between them about what faithfulness to Christ requires, and yet all will work to announce the Good News."

## Archbishop Preaches on Relationships

In a series of public remarks, including his Christmas Eve sermon and brief reflections for Vatican Radio, the Archbishop of Canterbury has stressed healthy dependence on God and openness to other people.

Both themes appear regularly in the archbishop's leadership style and in his messages to Anglicans, such as his reflections on the Anglican Communion Covenant.

In his two-minute remarks for Vatican Radio, Archbishop Rowan Williams drew from the account in Luke 2 of angels proclaiming good news to shepherds about the birth of Jesus.

"This is a story that's good news for everyone," the archbishop said. "If it's a story for everyone, it can't be a story of winners and losers, insiders and outsiders, us and them. Really taking the Christmas story on board is to go beyond all that, to let go of this compulsive human habit of thinking of everything in terms of conflicts that someone wins and someone loses, or competitions in which we have to get the better of them. Somehow, we need to believe that the love of God, turned into flesh and blood in this baby in the stable, is big enough, spacious enough, for any and every human being, so that when we look at another person, our first thought should be, 'They're welcome in the stable. They're welcome in the place where God lives.'"

In his Christmas Eve sermon, preached at Canterbury Cathedral, the archbishop contrasted dependence on God with modern culture's emphasis on independence and pride.

"Relationship is the new thing at

Christmas, the new possibility of being related to God as Jesus was and is," he said. "But here's the catch and the challenge. To come into this glorious future is to learn how to be dependent on God. And that word tends to have a chilly feel for us, especially us who are proudly independent moderns. We speak of 'dependent' characters with pity and concern; we think of 'dependency' on drugs and alcohol; we worry about the 'dependent' mindset that can be created by handouts to the destitute. In other words, we think of dependency as something passive and less than free.

"One of the worst effects of this culture of impatience and pride is what it does to those who are most obviously dependent — the elderly, those with physical or psychological challenges and disabilities, and, of course, children," the archbishop said. "We send out the message that if you're not standing on your own two feet and if you need regular support, you're an anomaly. We'll look after you (with a bit of a sigh), but frankly it's not ideal. And in the case of children, we shall do our level best to turn you into active little consumers and performers as soon as we can. We shall test you relentlessly in schools, we shall bombard you with advertising, often highly sexualized advertising, we shall worry you about your prospects and skills from the word go; we shall do all we can to make childhood a brief and rather regrettable stage on the way to the real thing — which is 'independence,' turning you into a useful cog in the social machine that won't need too much maintenance."

The answer rests in imitating Jesus and becoming "gladly and unashamedly dependent," Archbishop Williams said.

"As we learn how to be gratefully dependent, we learn how to attend to

and respond to the dependence of others. Perhaps by God's grace we shall learn in this way how to create a society in which real dependence is celebrated and safeguarded, not regarded with embarrassment or abused by the powerful and greedy," he said.

"God has spoken through a Son. He has called us all to become children at the cradle of the Son, the Word made flesh, so that we may grow into a glory that even the angels wonder at. To all who accept him he gives power and authority to become children of God, learning and growing into endless life and joy."

## Central Florida May Endorse Covenant

The Diocese of Central Florida's annual convention will have an opportunity in late January to affirm the now-completed Anglican Communion Covenant.

In a letter to members of the diocese, the Rt. Rev. John W. Howe urged delegates to support the Covenant by voting for a resolution by the Rev. Eric Turner.

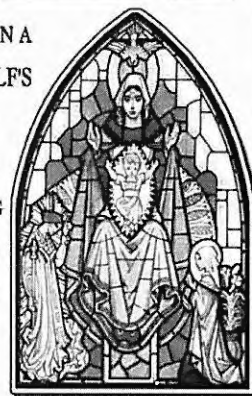
A list distributed by the Episcopal Church Center mentions eight dioceses that have scheduled conventions in January: Central Florida, Florida, Newark, North Carolina, Southwestern Virginia, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington. To date, only Central Florida has posted any resolution that addresses the Covenant in any form.

In his letter, Bishop Howe acknowledged that drafting the Covenant has taken a few years and provincial approval of it will take more time still. "It has been a lengthy

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# Father Paul Wattson

## and the Quest for Church Unity



Fr. Wattson in 1902, when he served as rector of St. John's, Kingston, N.Y.

Friars of the Atonement photos

By Patrick J. Hayes

Early one morning last summer, I walked out to the precipice of a “holy mountain.” I looked out and saw the fog lifting from an immense and undulating forest below, like incense from a thurible. I knew I was walking on holy ground and I soaked up the silence, interrupted only by the stray bird on the wing. In this sweet-smelling, bounteous setting I was a pilgrim. There at the ledge was the grave of Father Paul James Francis Wattson, founder of the Society of the Atonement, a group of friars that established themselves for the strict purpose of uniting the branches of the Christian family.

Fr. Wattson’s life is less well known than his legacy and it is deliberate that his grave should rest in a somewhat remote corner of the property at Graymoor, the Atonement friars’ headquarters in Garrison, N.Y. The career of Fr. Wattson is subordinate to his singular ambition to fulfill the Lord’s command

that “all may be one” (John 17:21) — words that today emblazon the friars’ coat of arms (*ut omnes unum sint*) and motivate their ministry. From their outpost on this holy mountain and in centers around the globe, the Atonement friars are responsible for inserting the “Church Unity Octave” into the liturgical calendar.

It began first in the United States at Graymoor in 1908 and was later called the “Chair of Unity Octave” to emphasize its Petrine dimension. It has now given way to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which since 1966 has been a joint project of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The Week of Prayer is marked in churches around the world each January 18–25.

The role of the Church Unity Octave was not merely to repair relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, but was an active and prayerful attempt at returning the Anglican world to pre-Reformation bonds with Rome. The idea for this festival of unity emerged in the simple exchange of words between friends. It is easy to pinpoint the exact date, too. On Nov. 30, 1907, Fr. Wattson was writing out replies to letters he had received the previous day. Among his correspondents was his friend and fellow priest, the Rev. Spencer John Jones, the Anglican rector of St. David’s Church, Moreton-in-Marsh, England. Fr. Jones suggested that a special sermon be given on Christian unity in every church in the Anglican Communion on June 29, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, to restore unity in the one Church of Christ. Fr. Wattson agreed and asked his correspondent what he thought of “inaugurating a Church Unity Week begin-

ning with S. Peter's Chair at Rome, January 18, and ending with S. Paul's Day." Fr. Jones picked up this idea and helped promote it throughout Europe; Fr. Wattson reached the multitudes everywhere else.

Behind this expression of Fr. Wattson's thinking lay a longstanding commitment which was in gestation since his boyhood. Born Lewis Thomas Wattson in Millington, Md., in 1863, he was the son of the Episcopal rector of the little parish of St. Clement's, whose only notable feature was the white Communion table, a gift from Queen Anne. Fr. Wattson's father, Joseph, had been expelled from General Theological Seminary, and sometimes labeled a "Jesuit in disguise," but was brought into the ministry through the graciousness of Bishop William R. Whittingham of Baltimore.

The elder Fr. Wattson was never able to escape the whispers of his leanings toward Rome. Many at the time considered any rapprochement toward Roman Catholicism a blasphemy, and such openness was roundly condemned by people like the Rev. A. Cleveland Coxe, rector of Grace Church, Baltimore. Writing in an introduction to Frederick Meyrick's *Moral Theology of the Church of Rome* (Baltimore, 1856), Fr. Coxe made no bones about his stance: "Papal Rome, like Rome Imperial, has but one instinct, and that is — Empire. Its undying part is the iron will, by which all humanity must be crushed into subjection."

We know that young Fr. Wattson read this kind of literature, just as he observed the whispers surrounding his father, whom he revered. Lewis would go on for schooling out of state at St. Mary's Hall in New Jersey and then to St. Stephen's College (now Bard College) before entering General Seminary. He was ordained in 1885 and, after a brief parish assignment in Maryland, he became the rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Kingston, N.Y. He remained there for the next ten years.

Biographers later would describe the young priest as a "High Churchman" and one endowed with an "extraordinary preaching ability." But they also noted how he seemed somewhat reclusive, almost given to a monastic lifestyle. His early spirituality, deeply imbued with biblical literalism, is seen as giving way to his growing interest in religious life, especially Franciscanism, which prized personal poverty as given in a common rule even while working to eradicate poverty in the society. In his sermons, he spoke from the heart, almost never reading from notes, and balanced his words with his deep knowledge of Scripture. Invitations soon began to pour in for Fr. Wattson to come and preach beyond his own congregation. As a way of spreading his

thought, in May 1894 he began to publish *The Pulpit and the Cross*.

These two-fold venues — the pulpit and the press — allowed Fr. Wattson to communicate his ideas of engagement with the Roman Catholic Church. In 1895, he understood the doctrine of papal supremacy — delineated in the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus* at Vatican I (1870) — as both a test of American democracy and itself a religious problem. All Roman Catholic bishops in the United States were agents of a foreign bishop, he contended, and so had "no lawful jurisdiction" on these shores. He often wrote on sacramental questions and papal authority, always respectfully critiquing the position held by Rome. Why couldn't Roman Catholics see their errors? Or was it Fr. Wattson and his tribe that were somehow misunderstanding?

A combination of questioning and a search for a deeper interior life came to a head in 1895. That

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Stained-glass depiction at Graymoor of Pope Pius X blessing Fr. Wattson and Mother Lurana, representing their 1909 reception into the Roman Catholic Church.

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summer he was approached by a group of unmarried Episcopal men living a semi-monastic life in Omaha. They wondered whether Fr. Wattson would agree to be their superior. He gave it three years before returning to New York, even more confused than before.

Fr. Wattson's reputation caught the attention of Lurana Mary White, who first contacted him in 1896. She was then living in a diocesan community of Episcopal women in Albany — the Sisters of the Holy Child — and had also been hoping to form a sisterhood that would embrace corporately and individually the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Searching for a community of this sort proved difficult in the United States and so she joined the Sisters of Bethany in London.

After a year's novitiate, and having accepted the brown habit and cord of the Franciscans, she entered a new phase of her spiritual life. Before returning to America in 1898, she made a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi where, she later wrote, she became "guilty of a pious act of duplicity." While touring St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, she left her party long enough to kiss the foot of the statue of St. Peter.

She brought Fr. Wattson to her family home in upstate New York, where a kind of mutual epiphany occurred. Forming a spiritual alliance that would last all of their lives, in December 1898 Mother Lurana took possession of a piece of property to begin a new religious community. In the spring of 1899, the two would launch their new venture — the Society of the Atonement — from an abandoned farmhouse and chapel on a hilltop in Garrison.

Over the course of the next ten years, a steady creep toward Rome was in evidence. His study of religious life was augmented by a year's trial in the Fathers of the Holy Cross at Westminster, Md., and in 1900 he also accepted the habit of a Franciscan friar, taking the name Paul James. Fr. Wattson soon found himself back in New York, building up Graymoor and touring nearby churches. In 1901, he was invited to preach before an Episcopal congregation in Long Island and chose as his topic "The Reunion of Christendom and the Chair of Peter." It was difficult to hear him over the noise of those vacating the church. Undeterred, in 1903 he began to publish *The Lamp*, a magazine advocating greater ties with Rome

through the acceptance of papal infallibility. Another publication, *The Antidote*, specifically set an apologetic tone to counteract the anti-Roman vitriol of *The Menace*, a Midwestern publication that had nearly 1.5 million subscribers.

In his work to allay suspicions over foreign encroachments in the United States, Fr. Wattson also defended those Anglicans who were scorned for trying to close the breach with Rome. Fr. Wattson looked upon the squabbles within Anglicanism less as an opportunity to grouse and more as a chance to show pastoral solicitude. Fr. Paul had a strict policy never to utter a word against Anglicanism, but chose instead to highlight the Anglican Communion's values, the eloquence of its members, and the beauty of its sacramental life. He carried this policy throughout his life, teaching not mere tolerance but love.

This is all the more remarkable given that both Fr. Paul and Mother Lurana, along with 17 other members — sisters, friars, and laymen — were

received corporately into the Roman Catholic Church on Oct. 30, 1909. In 1910, after a year's work at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, Fr. Wattson was ordained by Archbishop John Farley of New York.

"Coming over" had not been easy, but it was not a decision made in haste. Archbishop Farley communicated his own misgivings to Rome — he did not like the manner of the foundation, let alone its message. Though the corporate conversion of Fr. Paul and his companions was done through the formal rite, including an abjuration of their Anglicanism, the founder of the Society of the Atonement

had made it clear that the renunciation would not be negative. There would be no curse, but a solemn recognition of the truth of personally held convictions. Fr. Wattson had written in *The Lamp* in 1907 that "I could not bear those people who say that the Anglican Church is a mockery."

Even after becoming a Roman Catholic priest, he never publicly repudiated his Anglican orders. Only after dialogue with officials in the Roman hierarchy, including the prefect of the Congregation for Religious, Genarro Cardinal Falconio, and the Secretary of State to the Holy See, Cardinal Merry del Val, was the way paved for his reception.

This high-level contact proved fortuitous, because through their assistance Fr. Wattson was able in turn to present his hope for the Church Unity Octave directly to Pope Pius X, who blessed the initiative, and later Pope Benedict XV, who extended the

Even after becoming a Roman Catholic priest, he never publicly repudiated his Anglican orders.





Fr. Wattson (center) with friars, novices, students and professors at Graymoor in 1926.

observance to the universal Church in February 1916. In 1921, Dennis Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia proposed to the hierarchy that the octave be observed throughout the United States — a resolution that, for the first time in the history of American Roman Catholicism, received unanimous consent.

Roman Catholics in the United States were catching up with their Anglican brethren. The Lambeth Conference had by the late 1870s proposed a season of prayer for Christian unification and in the 1890s the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered that fitting prayers be spoken on Whit Sunday. In the United States in 1913, the Faith and Order Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church published a pamphlet of prayers commending church unity on Whit Sunday. By 1915, a full-scale manual of prayers was drawn up. Fr. Wattson's own ecclesiastical superior, now Cardinal Farley, was reluctant to entertain his proposal for fear of confusion among the faithful or, worse still, *communio in sacris*.

By contrast, Farley's successor, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Patrick Hayes, was among the first prelates in the United States to advocate for the Unity Octave. Archbishop Hayes, it might be noted, was notoriously scrupulous in avoiding any engagements with Protestants, but he saw in this movement an opening that was ecclesiastically legal, satisfying of Jesus' own command, and productive of good will. His instinct in approving the work of Fr. Wattson proved important for the future of the Week of Prayer, for without the archbishop's approbation, the friar could not have continued in as successful a fashion as he did. Throughout his tenure, the arch-

bishop's relation to the Church Unity Octave was as a "participant observer" — frequently allowing Fr. Wattson the use of the pulpit at the Cathedral of St. Patrick to promote the cause of unity.

Not everything was so sunny, however, for Fr. Wattson. He experienced several difficulties with members of his new fraternity, and this would prove a mild distraction compared to his legal woes. As the superior of the convent of sisters, he had charge of their welfare. The convent's property was owned by three women — all good Episcopal ladies of Garrison — who had permitted the sisters' growth but never signed over a deed. Trustees of St. John's Episcopal Church, which had stood as a ramshackle chapel on the property before the arrival of Mother Lurana, evicted the sisters in 1910, one year after they had become Roman Catholics.

Mother Lurana chose to follow the longstanding Franciscan principle of offering no resistance, thinking it better to be homeless than to be the source of conflict. Fr. Wattson saw the matter differently and vowed to pursue it in court — a decision that carried on for the next seven years. An agreement was struck, however, when Fr. Wattson met Hamilton Fish II on Election Day in 1917. Fish was not only a well known politician in the state of New York; he was also the senior warden of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Garrison. When Fr. Wattson explained his legal troubles, Fish offered to broker a settlement, which was finally won in March 1918, by an act of the New York legislature. As a side note, all of the original owners of the property became Roman Catholic and two are buried in the sisters' cemetery

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at Graymoor. But the lesson of the story is simple: cooperation in the Christian household always brings a greater yield and is one more visible token in praise of God's glory.

The 1920s and '30s were building years for the order, which constructed a seminary, a printery, shrine chapels and St. Christopher's Inn, a treatment center. The numbers of sisters and friars burgeoned. Always the message was the same: unity is the hallmark and sustenance of the work. But as Fr. Wattson began to slow (he died in 1940), his allies in the nascent ecumenical movement picked up the charge. In Belgium, Dom Lambert Beaudoin founded in 1925 a Benedictine community that took shape at Chevetogne for the express purpose of praying for unity — originally with the Orthodox, but now with all Christians. From the Archdiocese of Lyons, France, Father Paul Couturier (1881–1953) spread the message of prayer for unity “as God wills it and by the means that he wills.” Fr. Couturier changed the tenor of the prayer, however, away from reunion of all others with Rome by reflection on a once-shared past to a more concerted effort on the part of all Christians to work toward future unity *par cum pari* — literally, on equal footing. This, he said, could only be done together; it could not be expected that non-Romans would simply see the light. This plea was heard by Trappistines in Grottaferrata, Italy, and some began, in the late 1930s, to devote their prayer lives to building religious bridges. When temporal unity finally occurs, it will rest on the storehouse of supernatural graces stocked by so much fervent prayer.

### Fr. Wattson's Spirit and Ordinariates

The theme for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is “You Are Witnesses of These Things” (Luke 24:48). Coinciding with the Scottish centennial celebration of the World Mission Conference at Edinburgh, widely acknowledged as an ecumenical milestone, the theme strikes at the soul of collaboration between churches: what we memorialize together, what we work on, what we anticipate through God's grace. Whether we speak in a prophetic voice, like the Paul Wattsons of a prior generation, there is always a call to set aside a passive stance and move. Action of some sort never negates a stillness of mind

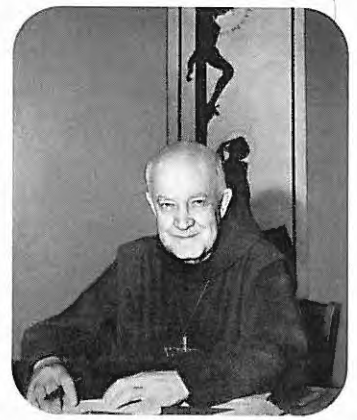
and heart, but flows from it. Achieving that quietude comes from asking ourselves sometimes difficult questions: What do I believe? To whom shall I turn? Who am I?

What is impressive about the path Fr. Wattson took is not so much his rather spectacular conversion or the issues attendant upon it, as much as the authenticity of its genesis, together with its manifold fruits. Roman Catholics cannot ignore the abiding fealty Fr. Wattson had toward the purest elements of the Anglican spirit, since part of that is its desire toward the vocation of unity. In an era of ordinariates, Roman Catholics will do well to observe how a new injection of Anglican culture into their midst will serve to heal and make whole again a body broken for too long.

In speaking of ordinariates today, canon lawyers refer to “extra-territorial” sees or “non-territorial particular churches,” which serve as instruments for service to the people of God that have, for purposes of identification, no visible boundaries but a clear governance structure that is necessarily flexible to meet extraordinary circumstances. One reason for the recent *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, the apostolic constitution of Pope Benedict XVI establishing personal ordinariates for those Anglicans entering a new relation with the Roman Catholic Church, is to supply a flexible response to legalistic questions. Both communions will do well to study whether the ecclesiological principles articulated in the constitution will be in service to the great challenge of ecumenism in our time, particularly as it conforms or departs from the legacy of visionaries like Fr. Wattson.

Among these principles is a recognition of the action of the Holy Spirit working as “a principle of unity” to establish the singular “Church as a communion.” What appears to some to be a wayward cluster of Anglican congregations may actually hold promise as a vehicle for tutelage and mutual understanding, on all sides, in rendering a new vista for ecclesial unity.

*Patrick J. Hayes has a doctorate in theology from the Catholic University of America and has taught at Fordham University and St. John's University in New York. He is at work on a study of Roman Catholics in the New York Archdiocese between 1865 and 1938.*



Fr. Wattson at his desk in the 1930s.

# Finding Visible Unity

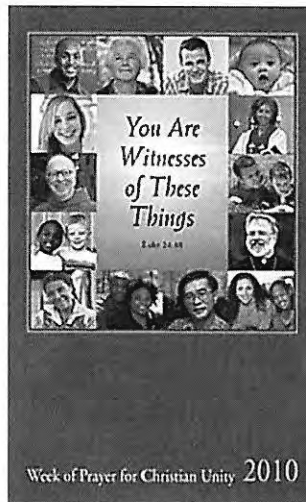
*Editor's Note: This week's guest column features a reflection on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity from The Living Church's archives. Written by the late Rev. H. Boone Porter, editor of TLC from 1977 to 1990, it appeared in the magazine's Jan. 20, 1980, edition.*

A basic element in the Christian understanding of creation is unity. Pagan religions, believing in many gods, may have envisioned one god as the maker of the earth, another as the giver of life, others as gods of love, war, or commerce. Christianity, on the other hand (along with Judaism and Islam), insists that the one true God, the only one there is, made everything. His own single loving purpose is back of it all.

Hence Christians see signs of unity everywhere. We cannot actually prove that there is an underlying unity in the entire universe, because we would have to know all about the universe as a whole to do so — which is impossible. We believe, however, that there is such a unity (the very word universe reflects such a belief) and we are alert to notice consistencies. We perceive with our senses and feelings a harmony, an order, a coherence to things everywhere in the natural world.

This perception has been dramatically vindicated by modern science. It has been discovered that there is a unity and consistency in mathematics, physics, and chemistry beyond anything we could have imagined.

This does not mean that many oddities and contradictions do not remain. Many attractive looking red berries are poisonous rather than nourishing, lemmings continue to drown themselves in Scandinavia, and strange blights and plagues spread themselves. Yet even the oddities turn out to be the result of perfectly matter-of-



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fact laws working themselves out in particular circumstances. Even the exceptions turn out in nature to be the result of the consistent application of recognized principles.

Human life is, however, always the exceptional exception. Our life does indeed sometimes reflect the order and harmony observed elsewhere in nature, but often it does not. The coherence and consistency which we notice so abundantly in the lives of most other animals are ideas for humans, things to think about and talk about, not simple and present realities. Among other species of mammals, individuals relate to one another in the way they are supposed to—herd animals moving together, solitaires leading their own lives, mothers caring for their off-spring until a certain point in their development, and so forth.

Their ways of life are instinctive.

For us, life requires thought, making decisions, effort, and skill. People who decide to live at peace with one another need certain skills in order to do so. Some never attain these skills. Others don't want to.

The effort to find visible unity in the Christian Church is a small but most important facet in the search for unity in human life as a whole. It is a frustrating effort, but one which cannot be abandoned by those who believe in one God.

# catholic voices

## The Covenant and the Fullness of Time

In the course of a very long sentence, full of visionary flight and theological ballast, Paul tells us about God's plan "for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10 NRSV). The unity envisioned here is breathtaking in its cosmic scope. Everything will be gathered up in Christ in the culmination of God's plan being worked out through history.

The implication is inescapable: the Church anticipates the end of the plan by living in peaceful unity here and now. Unsurprisingly Paul follows the theological first half of Ephesians with an application second half in which he begs his readers "to live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called ... making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:1,3). There is more, much more, in a similar vein in this chapter (e.g. "the unity of the faith," v. 13).

The situation of the Church in the world today is a travesty of the vision articulated in Ephesians, itself a vision in harmony with the prayer of our Lord "that they may be one" (John 17:11,20). For the Anglican Communion as a particular expression of God's Church, what Paul says in Ephesians is, or ought to be, a sober dose of theological medicine healing our ills of division.

It is not just that the Communion should be unified, but also that the whole Church of God in the world should be one Church. All this, incidentally, is not only so the mission of God may be strengthened through the witness of a united Church. A united Church, as a precursor to a united world, is the mission of God. For the Anglican Communion to continue fracturing is a sign that collectively we do not understand God's will for the world.

If this line of thought is correct then there is a deep irony when the final text of the Covenant talks of "the ecumenical vocation of Anglicanism to the full visible unity of the Church in accordance with Christ's prayer that 'all may be one'" (from 2.1.5). The Anglican Communion, with its roots not only in the Catholic and Reformed but also ancient orthodox Church in England, is uniquely placed to fulfill this ecumenical vocation. Yet at this time the Anglican Communion is unable to offer itself, let alone other churches, a sure sign of vocation to

"the full visible unity of the Church."

At precisely this point a huge strength of the proposed Covenant is identifiable: it is a document intended to serve the full visible unity of the Anglican Communion in accordance with the ultimate plan of God. Yet critics of the Covenant find much to complain about. It will impose uniformity, stifle prophetic action, and lead to a Communion ruled by Canterbury — so we are told.

But this, not to put too fine a point on the matter, is a form of sanctified carping. The vision for the unity of the Church in the prayers of Jesus and Paul is a vision for a Church with diversity, prophecy, and lay participation. Our Anglican vision for being what we are named, a full visible Communion with an ecumenical vocation, is no less than the vision of God itself. How dare we deflect it with prognostications of bleak outcomes!

One challenge of the Covenant, then, is whether we are committed to a theology of unity in our Communion. Such a theology, drawn from Ephesians and the Gospel of John, calls us to speak the truth in love and to love one another in truth. It offers no easy recourse either to dismiss unity in the name of "truth" or to suppress commitment to truth in the name of "unity." But a theology of unity, faithful to Christ and the Spirit, provokes us with searching questions. If we claim to know the truth, are we willing to submit that claim to the whole body of Christ for judgment? If we claim to live in unity, is it on the basis of truth we believe together? Are we making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Should that effort include commitment to signing the Covenant?

It would be strange to affirm as an Anglican that one was making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit while refusing to sign the Covenant. The effort, in an Ephesians perspective, is worth it because the goal is not stitching together an agreement which enables the Communion to limp along till its next crisis. The goal is the universe itself: one world under God, prefaced by one Church united in Christ.

*The Rev. Dr. Peter Carrell is Director of Education, Diocese of Christchurch, in the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia.*

# Superabundant Grace

“My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4)

BCP: Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 96 or 96:1-10; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

RCL: Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

Six stone purification jars, filled with cold water — one can hardly imagine something more dull and dead. But Jesus makes them flow with rich wine, regaling the guests at a marriage feast. St. John is right to call this the first of Jesus’ “signs.” As with all the miracles in his gospel, this tale from Cana is replete with deep symbolism, and reveals something crucial about Jesus’ mission, the unfolding process that results in his “glorification” as Savior of the world.

The stone jars were designed for the complicated ritual washings required by the Law of Moses. Their number is one short of seven, the biblical number of perfection. They symbolize the old covenant, good and pure, but incomplete, destined to give way in the face of God’s new

purpose taking shape in Jesus.

The wedding assembly, too, is an old symbol. God’s relationship with Israel is often described as a marriage. Our Old Testament lesson describes the renewal and vindication of the land as a royal wedding. Jerusalem, the blessed bride, is given a new name, “my delight is in her.” When God truly made himself known to his people, when grace and peace reigned on earth, it would be like a wedding.

Wine is the natural emblem of the joys of married life. It gladdens the heart and makes company more convivial. Pressed from the grape, it points back to the fruitful vine so often praised as the perfect symbol of a life blessed by God.

There had been wine at the beginning of the feast, but it was hardly wor-

thy of the celebration. It was pale and watery beside the new vintage uncorked by Christ’s miracle. And there simply hadn’t been enough. Now Christ brings gallons upon gallons, an overflowing, superabundant blessing. Episcopalian poet Richard Wilbur captured the point quite well:

It made no earthly sense, unless to show  
 How whatsoever love elects to bless  
 Brings to a sweet excess  
 That can without depletion overflow.

Jesus tells his mother, “my hour has not yet come,” but every detail in the story points forward to the purpose for which he has come. Christ will renew the covenant between God and his people, and seal it with blood as red as wine. He will supply superabundant grace, which makes us fruitful and fills us with joy.

## Look It Up

Psalm 128 is sometimes used at weddings. In the light of this gospel passage, try reading it as a prophecy addressed to Christ.

## Think About It

What do these texts suggest about the sacramentality of marriage?

## Next Sunday **The Third Sunday After The Epiphany (Year C), January 24, 2010**

BCP: Neh. 8:2-10; Psalm 113; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Luke 4:14-21

RCL: Neh. 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19; 1 Cor. 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21

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## news

(Continued from page 5)

process, and it will not be concluded soon," he wrote.

"From the beginning of the Covenant drafting process, the Archbishop of Canterbury has been clear that he hoped we would create a Covenant that each member Province could voluntarily decide to 'opt into' or not," Bishop Howe wrote. "He has envisioned a 'two tier' or 'two track' Communion in which those provinces that choose to 'opt into' the Covenant remain in 'constituent membership' in the Communion, and those provinces that 'opt out' of the Covenant move into 'associate membership' — something which he has compared to the status of the Methodist Church: it has an Anglican heritage, but it is really a separate denomination."

In making a case for diocesan-level support of the Covenant in the meantime, Bishop Howe cited a letter dated Sept. 28 that he received from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

"The Episcopal Church's Executive Council has said that the earliest time in which TEC as a whole can officially consider the Covenant is the General Convention of 2012," Bishop Howe wrote. "But, in his response to my inquiry on behalf of our Diocesan Board, the Archbishop of Canterbury has said that dioceses are certainly free to 'affirm' the Covenant if and when they choose to do so."

Bishop Howe added: "Both our Diocesan Board and our Standing Committee have already affirmed the first three sections of the Covenant, and there is a resolution to be considered by our 41st Convention next month to do likewise.

"I have repeatedly said that I believe the only hope for the Anglican Communion is in following the Archbishop's lead in drafting and adopting this Covenant. I now urge the delegates to Convention to study it and affirm it on January 30."

## people & places

### Appointments

The Rev. **Gerardo Brambila** is vicar of Our Merciful Savior, 2222 W 32nd Ave., Denver, CO 80211-3318.

The Rev. **Jon Davis** is executive director of Canterbury Retreat & Conference Center, 1601 Alafaya Trail (SR 434), Oviedo, FL 32765.

The Rev. **Doug Gray** is priest-in-charge of Christ Church, 950 S University Blvd., Denver, CO 80210.

The Rev. **James Hamilton** is rector of Trinity, 26880 La Muera St., Farmington Hills, MI 48334-4614.

The Rev. **Robert Kerr, SSC**, is rector of St. John's, 555 S Wayne Rd., Westland, MI 48186-4301.

The Rev. **Christine E. Mottl** is interim rector of St. Paul's, 84 E Oakland Ave., Doylestown, PA 18901.

The Rev. **Tom Seibert** is rector of St. Luke's, PO Box 724, Delta, CO 81416-0724.

The Rev. **Andrew Van Culin** is sub-dean at St. John's Cathedral, 1350 Washington St., Denver, CO 80203.

### Ordinations

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**Colorado** — Nancy Angle, Don Burt, Bob Larson.

**South Carolina** — Chuck Pollak.

### Renunciations

**Northern California** — Sharon Ancker Snyder.

### Resignations

The Rev. **Edwin Barnett**, as rector of St. Paul's, Doylestown, PA.

### Retirements

The Rev. **Sally Brown**, as deacon at St. Andrew's, Denver.

The Rev. **Joseph DiRaddo**, as associate at Good Shepherd, Charleston, SC. He is serving as assistant chaplain at the Bishop Gadsden retirement community, 1 Bishop Gadsden Way, Charleston, SC 29412.

The Rev. **Doug Dunn**, as missionary for the High Plains Region in the Diocese of Colorado; he remains rector of St. Luke's, Denver.

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