

EXTRACT FROM POPE FRANCIS' APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION

EVANGELII GAUDIUM

§§ 244 - 246

Ecumenical dialogue

244. Commitment to ecumenism responds to the prayer of the Lord Jesus that “they may all be one” (*Jn 17:21*). The credibility of the Christian message would be much greater if Christians could overcome their divisions and the Church could realize “the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her children who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her”.^[192] We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God’s face. Trusting others is an art and peace is an art. Jesus told us: “Blessed are the peacemakers” (*Mt 5:9*). In taking up this task, also among ourselves, we fulfil the ancient prophecy: “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares” (*Is 2:4*).

245. In this perspective, ecumenism can be seen as a contribution to the unity of the human family. At the Synod, the presence of the Patriarch of Constantinople, His Holiness Bartholomaios I, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Grace Rowan Williams, was a true gift from God and a precious Christian witness.

246. Given the seriousness of the counter-witness of division among Christians, particularly in Asia and Africa, the search for paths to unity becomes all the more urgent. Missionaries on those continents often mention the criticisms, complaints and ridicule to which the scandal of divided Christians gives rise. If we concentrate on the convictions we share, and if we keep in mind the principle of the hierarchy of truths, we will be able to progress decidedly towards common expressions of proclamation, service and witness. The immense numbers of people who have not received the Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot leave us indifferent. Consequently, commitment to a unity which helps them to accept Jesus Christ can no longer be a matter of mere diplomacy or forced compliance, but rather an indispensable path to evangelization. Signs of division between Christians in countries ravaged by violence add further causes of conflict on the part of those who should instead be a leaven of peace. How many important things unite us! If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us. To give but one example, in the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and their experience of synodality. Through an exchange of gifts, the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness.