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Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

January 2022

Dear Brothers and Friends,

I write to you concerning the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which begins on January 18th and ends on January 25th. This annual letter is a reminder and an encouragement to all of us to participate in the Week of Prayer in some appropriate way.

The theme for the 2022 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is "We Saw His Star in the East.....". It was chosen by the Christian Churches of the Middle East and finds its origins in the Gospel of Matthew (2:2) in the story of the Magi coming to worship the newborn king.

The Magi have sometimes been seen as symbolic of the world's diversity (in religion and culture) coming to pay homage to the Christ-child. They come from far-off countries, representing diverse cultures yet driven by the same hunger to see and know the One born in Bethlehem and to pay him homage. In this we can find a metaphor for Christian Unity which sees different Christian peoples drawn together in their common search to recognise Jesus the Christ, to know and worship him while bearing witness to the wider need to work for unity and to overcome injustice.

The Christian Churches of the Middle East suggest that it is the mission of the church to be the star that lights the way to Christ, who is the Light of the World. By word and action, we are called to light the way so that Christ might be revealed, once again, to the nations. Sadly, our divisions dim the light of Christian witness and obscure the path, preventing others from finding their way to Christ. Conversely, Christians united in their worship of Christ, and opening their treasures in an exchange of gifts, become a sign of the unity that God desires for all creation.

Clearly, the current restrictions on gathering and meeting owing to Covid-19 will lead us to mark Unity Week in a different way this year.

As this letter is being sent out virtually this year, the resources can be found in the link below for downloading and printing:

<https://tinyurl.com/week-of-prayer-2022>

The annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity offers us a particular opportunity to recall all that we have in common, to express regret for the pain caused by our divisions, and to ask the Lord to deepen in us the hope that we will all be one someday in the future. As our texts this year have been prepared

by the Christians of the Middle East, we are prompted to pray for peace based on justice in that part of the world which has known such conflict and division over the years and to pray especially in solidarity with the Christian Churches in the region in the context of the many challenges with which they have to contend.

I offer some suggestions as to how we can participate in the Week. You will, of course, have ideas of your own based on your own experience and context.

- Remember the intentions of the Week in personal and communal prayer
- Use some part of the order of service in the resources in the link sent along with this letter in either personal or communal prayer
- Use the prayers from a Votive Mass for the Unity of Christians at Mass
- Use one of the Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation from the Missal
- Watch online a Sunday service from a church of another tradition
- Write a letter of greeting or send an email to a person from another Christian tradition whom you know either through work or personal contact

May the Spirit of Unity continue to be active in our midst. We give thanks for the growth in unity which we have seen in the years since the Edinburgh Conference (1910) and the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). We ask the Lord's blessing on the work that still needs to be done.

If I can be of any further assistance to you, please feel free to contact me at tnlayden@jesuit.ie or by phone at 00 44 74 7991 3293.

Your brother in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom Layden, S.J.".

Tom Layden, SJ

Province Coordinator of Ecumenism
January 2022