



**HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CORMAC MURPHY-O'CONNOR, STL,PhL**

**Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster**

Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor was installed as tenth Archbishop of Westminster on 22 March 2000. In November 2000 he was elected President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. In February 2001 he was created a Cardinal by Pope John Paul II along with 43 others in the largest consistory ever.

**The Christian Churches face a crisis in ecumenism. Before rapprochement with other faiths becomes possible, they must overcome their own differences**

*This is an abridged version of a talk given by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop of Westminster, to the Churches Together in England forum on 6 November, reflecting on 40 years of ecumenical growth since the Vatican Council's decree on ecumenism.*

THERE are four areas which are crucial to Christianity within the next 20 years and which have to be faced by all Christians. They will certainly be among the main challenges facing the next pope.

The first is the de-christianisation of Europe. How extraordinary that in the space of 50 years the secularist culture of Europe should have gained such sway, especially at a time when, around the world, the Enlightenment prediction that religion would become merely a private affair seems to have been so misplaced. The rise of an assertive Islam, with all its huge challenges, speaks for itself, as does the new popularity of religious practice in the former Soviet Union. The crucial 2 per cent or 3 per cent margin which handed victory to President Bush is being attributed to the newly galvanised ranks of evangelical Christians in the United States. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, the Churches are expanding fast. Even in our old, tired Europe, religious belief is exerting a new fascination among the young, as is evident in the increased take-up of RE at A-level and theology at university.

But in European society, where organised religion can no longer claim a privileged place, the Churches need to re-imagine their roles. Christians are increasingly becoming prophetic minorities rather than bulwarks of tradition.

The first challenge is to avoid the two extremes to which Christians tend to run in times of crisis. Either they become fundamentalist, a kind of sect, and the Church's words cease to be heard outside its walls. Or they marry the ways of the world. But if you marry the spirit of one age you become a widow in the next. So the challenge is to preserve the fundamentals of Christian faith while remaining open to the world.



The second challenge is the relationship of Christians and Muslims. Fifty years ago Christians, for the most part, did not think of dialogue with Islam; they barely thought of dialogue with one another. Yet over these past decades Christians have increasingly entered into relationship with each other. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* describes the result of the dialogues as a "brotherhood rediscovered". Christians of different Churches and ecclesial communities are no longer enemies or indifferent neighbours; they meet as brothers, sisters, and friends. They are on the same common way, on the same pilgrimage towards full communion.

In 20 years' time Christians need to develop the kind of understanding with Muslims which now exists between the Christian Churches. That has to begin with Christians putting into the past the historic quarrels between the two faiths, to strive for a mutual understanding for the benefit of everyone and, together, to promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.

The third issue is the challenge of the rich and the poor. The gospel of Christ is good news for the poor; it is often not good news for those who cling to their wealth. Christians must utter a cry for the poor. How can we witness to Christ without putting our option for the poor at the top of our agenda?

The fourth challenge concerns governance in the Church, the need for "collegiality". Collegiality was defined in the Second Vatican Council's document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, as the bishops governing the Church "with and under the Pope" - the Pope in communion with the bishops. Never Peter without the 11; never the 11 without Peter. This relationship needs a new emphasis if the governance of the Church is to be more credible in today's world.

There is a Latin tag: *ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia* - where the bishop is, there is the Church. This means that every bishop must consult the faith of the People of God in his diocese; he is then able to be more thoroughly conversant with the Spirit of God that speaks in every Christian heart, and, in the mandate of Christ, to govern.

With other Churches it is the other way round. The Anglican Church has very good consultation in parishes, diocesan synods, provincial synods, the Archbishops' Council, the Lambeth Conference. But the challenge for the Anglican Church is how to maintain and deepen communion. It is a challenge clearly laid out in the recent Windsor Report: how does communion come from outwards and inwards to uphold the tradition and truths of the Gospel in the Church?

Christianity is a world religion, and somehow there has to be greater recognition at the universal level of the Churches' collaboration. I would like to see the next pope, whoever he is, calling together the leaders of the main Christian denominations, and on the basis of our real communion together - our belief in Jesus Christ, in Baptism, in the Holy Spirit, in the Word of God - to share more deeply and more communally our desire to speak and spread the Word of God.



There is no question that this pilgrimage is in difficulty. In a certain sense we can speak of a crisis. I mean "crisis" in the sense of the original Greek - when things are hanging in the balance, on a knife-edge. This state can either be positive or negative; both are possible. A crisis is a situation in which old ways come to an end but there is room for new possibilities. The crisis presents itself as a challenge and a time for decision.

The crisis of the ecumenical movement is paradoxically the result of its success. The closer we come to one another the more painful is the separation, the perception that we are not yet in full communion. We are hurt by what still separates us and hinders us from joining around the Table of the Lord, and we are increasingly dissatisfied with the ecumenical status quo.

The closer we come together, in fact, the more important questions of identity become. Every denomination wishes to have its own identity and not be absorbed in a faceless, bigger whole. It is obvious in the Orthodox world, but it is also found in most denominations today. Ecumenism can be accused of abolishing confessional identity and leading to an arbitrary pluralism, to indifferentism, to relativism. But that misunderstanding is the product of fear: the closer we come together, the more we fear being "taken over". Every intimate relationship must deal with this fear that comes from greater closeness; and all our dialogues, all our meetings, converge around one single concept, which is the word *communio* - communion. We seek not uniformity but a unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

The Holy Spirit works in separated Churches and ecclesial communities and outside the Catholic Church - where, of course, there exists great holiness, even martyrdom. The Catholic Church is also, as we know, a Church of sinners and needs purification and repentance. The full reality and fullness of what is Catholic does not refer to subjective holiness but to the sacramental and institutional means of salvation, the sacraments and the ministries. Both Catholic fullness and the defect of the other Churches are sacramental and institutional, and not existential or even moral in nature; they are on the level of the signs and instruments of grace, not on the level of the grace of salvation itself.

Unity is still a future ecumenical goal. This does not mean that the goal of the ecumenical endeavour has to be understood as the simple return of separated brothers and Churches to the bosom of the Catholic mother Church. Only the ecumenical endeavour to help the existing, real but incomplete communion to grow into the full communion in truth and love will lead to the realisation of Catholicity in all its fullness. This is the best reason for continuing dialogue between us.

But what do we do in the meantime? We have to fill this transitional period, of a real if not complete church communion, with real life. The Churches did not only diverge through disagreements over doctrine; they diverged also because of the way they lived, which led to their alienation and estrangement. They need to come closer to each other again in their lives and get accustomed to each other, pray together, work together, live together, bearing the sting of the incompleteness of the *communio* and of the still impossible eucharistic communion around the Lord's Table.



**VI ER OGSÅ KIRKEN**

- en forening af katolikker

**Nyhedsmail**

side 4

The early Christians used friendship to describe themselves. Ecumenism does not make progress principally on the basis of documents and actions, but on the strength of friendship that overcomes confessional barriers. Friendship has a huge part to play in the development of our ecumenical endeavour, and goes much beyond human empathy in creating a climate of trust and mutual acceptance that is very real.

At the heart of the ecumenical movement is spiritual ecumenism. Mere ecumenical activism is destined to exhaust itself. Academic debate, no matter how important it may be, escapes the normal faithful and touches only the margin of their hearts and minds. There cannot be true ecumenism without personal conversion and institutional reform. I would like to see sacred scripture groups that meet together; more exchanges between monasteries and communities, and movements of spirituality; more visits to pilgrim sites and centres of spirituality; and the study of classical witnesses of faith and new martyrs. Out of this can come a rediscovered brotherhood.

The work of ecumenism is not just our work, our efforts, our cooperation, our prayer, but it is God's work, it is his grace, it is his Holy Spirit that urges us on. This is the reason we must continue our search for unity, because that is what Our Lord prayed: *May they all be one, Father, as you are in me and I in you so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.*

Kilde: The Tablet 20-nov-04

VEOK's Nyhedsmails udsendes til de medlemmer, hvor vi kender e-mail adressen. Hvis du ikke ønsker at modtage disse mails fremover, så giv os venligst besked. Adressen står nederst på dette brev.

Nyhedsmail'en vil også kunne læses på vor hjemmeside: [www.VEOK.dk](http://www.VEOK.dk)

Orientering fra formand og bestyrelse vil fortsat blive sendt i nyhedsbreve, som tilgår alle foreningens medlemmer per e-mail eller post.

Indholdet i de breve og meddelelser, der bringes i VEOK's nyhedsmail, er ikke nødvendigvis udtryk for foreningens holdninger.

Henvendelse til redaktionen af VEOK's nyhedsmail:

Monique Buch, ansvarshavende

Madvigs alle 12

1829 Frederiksberg C

Tlf: 3324 3040 - [Buch@VEOK.dk](mailto:Buch@VEOK.dk)

**Foreningen VEOK - Vi-Er-Også-Katolikker - [www.VEOK.dk](http://www.VEOK.dk)**

Formand: Kristine Fog-Morrisette, Møllehaven 28, 3550 Slangerup - [formand@veok.dk](mailto:formand@veok.dk)