

March 5th, 2021

Much has happened since the January 11 Five Ways e-letter. Many thanks to those who responded, and to all who prayed that we would be safe at our residence from covid. There have been no deaths or infections since Dec. 24. We all received the first of 2 shots (Modena) on Feb. 9 and look forward to the second on March 9. Be assured of prayers from here that each of you stay free from covid.

Pope Francis devoted his Wednesday, Jan 20 audience to "Prayer for Christian Unity." He stated that "we have prayed little, perhaps never, for Christian unity. And yet, the world's faith depends on it; in fact, the Lord asked that we be one 'so that the world might believe' (Jn. 17:21)." The world will not believe because we have convinced it with good arguments, but if we have borne witness to that love that unites and draws us nearer, yes: it will believe."

Please note the pope's emphasis that our prayer and work for Christian unity is to spread the message and friendship of Jesus. Mission and Ecumenism are two sides of the same coin.

Pope Francis continued: "it is essential that Christians pursue the path toward full visible unity. In the last decades, thanks be to God, there have been many steps forward, but we still need to persevere in love and prayer, without lacking trust or tiring. It is the path that the Holy Spirit gave rise to in the Church, in Christians and in us, from which there is no turning back. Ever onward."

After explaining how the devil sows discord, especially by magnifying the weaknesses of our brothers and sisters, and by gossip, Pope Francis concluded: ""the Christians of other confessions--with their traditions, with their history--are gifts from God. they are gifts present within the territories of our diocesan and parish communities."

You may find the entire, 3 page instruction on the Vatican website: www.vatican.va, scroll down to "The Holy See" and then click on "Audiences," on the upper left side.

On Feb. 2, when Pope Francis gave the homily at the Mass for Members of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, he ended the Mass with two helpful insights: First, avoid gossip, second "Do not lose your sense of humour, please: this will help us a lot. It is the antidote to gossip: knowing how to laugh at yourself, at situations, even others--in good faith--but don't lose your sense of humour." His entire homily may be obtained as above, but this time, instead of clicking on "Audiences," click on "Homilies." And let's not forget the Christian Joy page on our Mission-Unity-Dialogue website: www.harrywinter.org. There is a new posting there regarding Catholic humor, by Fr. Gil Boucher, one of our Oblates here in Tewksbury.

How to observe Lent so that we promote Christian Unity and Evangelization? Let us beg the Holy Spirit to help us deepen our friendship with our suffering Savior during Lent, so that He will be more visible to those around us. Praying with and for other Christians can help this.

In the love of Jesus who unites us,

Father Harry Winter, O. M. I.