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The ARK

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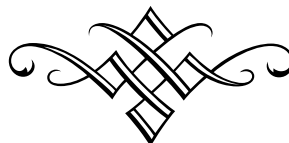
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Interchurch Families: Christian Unity Made Visible in our Households



The ARK, a Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families
What has been successful at fostering the creation of unity?

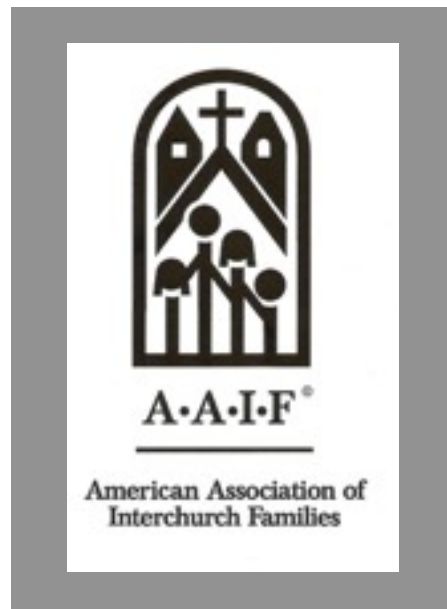
As you consider this response, do you come up with some positive examples?

How do you see God at work? Do you ever see any pain from which we might gain understanding and Love? What

is Christ's 'road map' so that we may actually achieve his clear direction "that we may be one"?

What is Christ's vision for "being one"? How do we treat each other as we wish to be treated when that other person seems to be so different that we don't even know where to begin?

May God guide us on this most blessed and noble journey together.



"Darkness is only driven out with light, not more darkness." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

(American Baptist Minister and Civil-Rights Leader. 1929-1968)



2011

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Bergamot in June in Kentucky



“He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother”

What is the origin of this well known saying?

Ah Wikipedia comes to the rescue yet once again with the following information: “The first editor of Kiwanis Magazine, Roe Fulkerson, published a column in September 1924 carrying the title "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother"; variations on the phrase are attested as early as 1884. The phrase is also associated with Father Edward J. Flanagan, the founder of Boys Town. Flanagan came across a line drawing of a young boy carrying his brother in the Christmas 1941 edition of the Louis Allis Messenger. The

caption read "He ain't heavy Mister — he's m' brother!" It was created by Mr. Van B. Hooper who later became the editor of Ideals magazine. The drawing was reprinted in the first issue of Ideals in December 1944. Flanagan felt that the drawing illustrated the work done at Boys Town and received permission from the company in August 1943 to recreate the drawing in color with the caption "He ain't heavy, Father . . . he's m' brother." The phrase became the motto of Boys Town. In an 1918 publication by Ralph Waldo Trine titled "The Higher Powers of Mind and Spirit" he relates the following anecdote: "Do you know that incident in connection with the little Scottish girl? She was trudging along, carrying as best she could a boy younger, but it seemed almost as big as she herself, when one remarked to her how heavy he must be for her to carry, when instantly

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feel the most pride?

How do we connect with those people among us who may seem to be the most different example of the face of God in order to be able to challenge any notion that we may hold of our firmly held beliefs in God, and do this in a wholesome and healthy way so that each of us is better for having had this kind of interchange of our own understanding of the Divine?

Matthew 18:20

“because where two or three have come together in my name, I am there among them.”

May we be mindful that it is God who is among us when we are gathered so that we can step back to let God step in to take charge of the situation.

- M.J. Glauber

came the reply: 'He's na heavy. He's mi brither.'"

Per Wikipedia:

“The statement is an (unwitting) use of paraprosdokian, a figure of speech in which the second half of the statement causes the hearer to reinterpret the first part. Often used for comedic effect, this is a rare use of the form as pathos.”

He's not heavy, he's my brother” has been compared to the parables that were told by Jesus.

So our brother/sister isn't such a burden from the Christian perspective. Father Flannagan thought enough of this viewpoint that he created an orphanage to highlight the work being done at “Boys Town” in Omaha.

Are we responding to the needs of our community with the same

use of pathos in our times? What does the Pew report indicate regarding church attendance in America?

Are we building “orphanages” for children who have no place to sleep at night in our communities? Christ had no place to sleep at night; he relied on the hospitality of others.

Perhaps we need to call them “homeless shelters” now instead of orphanages so that we can build up some kind of a support system for all families so that the issues of being homeless do not also cause them to be church-less as well while they must deal with survival in our time and place in history.

What creates unity within a community? How do we care for each other? How are we cared for in return?

What are the underpinnings of our communities that bring out the best in us for which we can



"Pain Incomprehensible"

*There is too much pain
I cannot understand
I cannot pray
I cannot pray for all the little
ones with bellies bloated
by starvation in India;
for all the angry Africans
striving to be separate in a
world*

*struggling for wholeness
for all the young Chinese
men and women taught that
hatred and killing are good
and compassion evil;
or even all the frightened
people in my own city looking
for truth in pot or aid.*

*Here I am
and the ugly man with the
beery breath beside me reminds
me*

*That it is not my prayers that
waken your concern,
my Lord;
my prayers,
my intercessions
are not to ask
for your love
for all your lost
and lonely ones,
your sick and sinning souls,
but mine, my love,
my acceptance of your love.*

*Your love for the woman
sticking her umbrella and
expensive parcels into my ribs*

*and snarling,
"Why don't you watch where you
are going?"*

*Your love for the long-haired,
gum-chewing boy who shoves*

*The old lady aside to grab a
seat,*

*Your love for me, too,
too tired to look with love,
too tired to look at Love,
at you,*

in every person on the bus.

*Expand my love, Lord, so I
can help to bear pain, help your
love move my love into the tired
prostitute with bunioned feet,
the corrupt policeman with
his hand open for graft, the
addict, the derelict, the woman in
the mink coat and discontented
mouth, the high school girl with
heavy books and frightened
eyes.*

*Help me through these
scandalous particulars
to understand
Your love.*

- Madeleine L'Engle



James P. Moore, Jr included this poem by Madeleine L'Engle in his compilation "The Treasury of American Prayer" published by Doubleday in 2008.

Moore reminds us that "Madeleine L'Engle is best known as a writer of children's books, particularly *A Wrinkle in*

Time and its sequels, She jotted down this 'spontaneous' prayer on the back of an envelope while riding the 104 Broadway bus in New York City." Moore points out how L'Engle focuses on the people she encounters in an urban setting and right at that moment in time as an occasion to reflect on what she owes God and her fellow human beings" who also happen to be on the bus with her, randomly selected for her.

No date is given for when L'Engle wrote this prayer, but with perhaps a few additional details it could have been written today.

In this way, L'Engle succeeds in capturing our daily lives. Of course, some of us may be driving a car and we may have written about getting cut off in traffic as we reflect over similar world situations over which we feel so powerless to help in any significant way.

L'Engle does an excellent job of highlighting the American experience of our time and place, and then of putting it into a spiritual context that is ecumenical.

We all share this same life experience. I found the scene that L'Engle was able to recreate in words to be very powerful.

Sharing a smile and a pleasantry as we check out of the supermarket, with the cashier, for example. Simply being aware of our space and

Here is a link to the May 2011 ARK <http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/aiif/ARKMay2011Volume22Edition5.pdf>

of those around us, and all of those others; they may have had a far worse day than any that we could imagine. Is there not something that we could do that is very minimal to make their day more pleasant? This might help to make us aware that God is there in that space between us and that stranger, the cashier, the bagger, the people on the bus or on the highway around us are really part of us. -M.J. Glauber



Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding

by Kay Flowers

When a committee from the World Council of Churches finished its dialogue on religious plurality in 2002, the consensus was that God as Creator of all and Father of all is present and active within this plurality and His saving activity could not be confined to any one continent or culture. In other words, God works outside the box.

What does this mean for interchurch families? Basically,

it underscores what most of us have been affirming for years: God is present and active in our hearts and lives, as well as within our chosen denomination or faith tradition. As the “domestic church” we show the true unity of believers, as shown by our love for one another.

Jesus said the whole world would know we were His followers through the love we evidenced (John 13:35). This love that comes from God extends to all people, all believers, all creation—for all was made through His love and for His purposes. Diversity and plurality are joyously celebrated by our three-in-one God, who made myriads of differing distinctions within species. Think of a world with only one color of flower!

Unity does not mean uniformity; diversity does not mean divisiveness. We all marvel at the same stars, we have all experienced God’s creation teaches us that diversity is good and pain and joy, we have to be accepted as such (although, as a gardener, I all suffered exclusion (although, as a gardener, I do tend to wonder about the vast diversity of biting or rejection in insects). To stubbornly insist that God works only within our some way. particular faith tradition is to ignore the obvious and to remain loyal to our denomination rather than to God’s truth.

People tend to gather with others who are likeminded. Readers attend book clubs. Artists study at museums. Writers go to conferences. In much the same way, congregations also tend to be made up of people who are likeminded. They like the same rituals, the same hymns, or the same style of worship. While this gathering of people with similar likes can make a wonderful bond in similarities, it can also set the stage for alienating those who are not of the same likes and interests. What unites us can also separate us. Unity does not mean uniformity; diversity does not mean divisiveness.

Rather than seeing religious diversity as a challenge, we can choose to appreciate the richness each faith tradition adds to the aspect of worship. Paul warned believers of divisive bickering in stating “I am of Paul; I am of Apollos” (1 Cor. 3:3-4). But don’t we do the same thing when we state “I am of Wesley; I am of Luther” and look down on others who don’t share the same love of our church’s way of worship?

Instead of drawing a circle around ourselves that excludes others, we can choose to draw a circle around the entire body of believers to include them all—even if they aren’t wearing the official Vatican t-shirt or the

approved Baptist belt buckle. We don't have to be all the same. We are different; God made us that way and it is good.

This doesn't mean we should compromise on our faith. The book of Revelation clearly shows the damage of a syncretistic one-world religion that waters down the gospel or even replaces it entirely with manmade tenets. By concentrating on the truth of faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and leaving the rest up to God, we can avoid both the folly of trying to combine religions and the harm of excluding believers from fellowship.

In the venue of interchurch families, what can you do when your spouse's church rejects or excludes your or the rest of the family? Going back to the image of drawing a circle, mentally include the rejecting church and know that God has not rejected or excluded you. Rest in His love and in His

arms, assured that He accepts you as His beloved child.

If we are to love as our Father loves, we must not hold ourselves aloof from other believers but allow His holy love and Holy Spirit to flow out through us. Since we're going to spend eternity together as the family of God, we would do well to learn to get along with one another during this brief lifetime.

We all marvel at the same stars, we have all experienced pain and joy, we have all suffered exclusion or rejection in some way. Believers all worship the same Lord Jesus. We are true family, "blood" relatives through His blood and His amazing love.



Ecumenical Corner

John Henry Newman: Ecumenist

Much has been written about John Henry Newman during his life and after his death. Perhaps even more has been written about him before and after his beatification. This essay suggests he deserves a particular recognition as a great ecumenist.

That might seem a contradiction since he left the Anglican Communion to become a Roman Catholic clergyman at a time when this was possible only by a return to Rome. However some of the writings that most influenced the Second Vatican Council came from John Henry Newman. His Grammar of Assent, On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine and Apologia pro Vita Sua express ideas that are part of the fabric of Vatican II as well as of the modern ecumenical movement. Newman's persistent search for truth and for God led him on a long journey through atheism and fundamentalism to an appreciation for truth wherever it can be found.



The beatification of John Henry Newman was celebrated by both the Anglican Communion and the Church of Rome. Benedict XVI reminded the people of Britain and of the world of the great religious heritage which was developed in England through the creation of Parliament and the respect for the rule of law and the individual's right to worship according to one's conscience (in his address to the government and civic leaders at Westminster Hall). Fides and ratio (faith and reason) or Caritas in Veritate (charity in truth) need each other if faith and reason are not to overstep the bounds of reasonable religion and rational

governance. Each must purify and rectify the other in the interplay of government and religion.

Newman had many gifts to bring to the Church of Rome: a thinker, preacher and writer, he applied his talents to the issues of the day. One such issue is the role of the laity in matters of faith, which he described in his book. Respect for the sensus fidelium (the understanding of the faithful) is a remedy for a clericalism that fails to see with both eyes or breathe with both lungs. This role of the laity, comes from baptism and a share in the prophetic role of Jesus Christ. It is necessary for a proper exercise of the

Newman's personality have been explored in recent months but the most revealing is his attitude toward holiness. He did not consider himself a saint, perhaps because he understood that so many mistakes are made about what constitutes holiness. Perfectionism was not his idea of holiness. His model was St. Philip Neri, the founder of Oratory of which Newman was a member. Neri was a mystic in motley, a saint who listened to jokes not to fall into ecstasy. Newman said that people who write books, especially books of poetry, could not be saints. He was only saying that he was human, but for many people, that is an obstacle to holiness. The church sided with Newman. Every saint is human. To err is human and to forgive is divine; and so the true measure of holiness – indeed of the ecumenist-- is one's ability to be fully human and forgiving in the search for truth and Christian unity.

by
Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS

Hollyhocks in bloom in June ↓



charisms of clergy and laity in the governance of the Church. The proper exercise of authority continues to be one of the sticking points on the road to unity. Newman achieved a similar balance in his idea of a university in which all are learners and teachers. Truth is not an idea to be carried in a box; it is a life-time pursuit and the right of every living person.

Many facets of
John Henry



Hydrangea in the afternoon sun light in June

Prayer for Appreciation

Oh Great Spirit, Whose Voice I hear in the winds, and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me. I am a man before You, one of Your many children - I am small and weak.

I need your strength and wisdom. Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hands respect the things You have made, my ears sharp to hear Your voice.

Make me wise, so that I may know the things you have taught my people - the lesson you have hidden in every leaf and rock.

I seek strength not to be superior to my brothers, but to be able to fight my greatest enemy - myself.

Make me ever ready to come to You with clean hands and straight eyes, so when life fades as a fading sunset my spirit may come to You without shame.



James P. Moore, Jr included this prayer in his book, "The Treasury of American Prayer" in his chapter entitled, "Wisdom, Understanding and



Humility." Moore explains that "this invocation for empathy for others and a greater respect for the wonders of the world was invoked by members of the Sioux Nation throughout the Dakotas. In 1887, Chief Yellow Lark of the Lakota, one of seven tribes that made up the Sioux, translated it into English for the first time."

Smithsonian Folkways has recordings of early songs from various tribes that I used to listen to in my car on my way to work early in the morning. I believed that they were praying in the chanted music. When I have observed Jingle Dances, which are done only by a community of women, I still believe that they are doing a form of prayer. The drum circles are intended to replicate a beating heart, the heart of a community at prayer. There isn't just one drummer

drumming, there are several drummers who are very skilled. This is a community at prayer.

For interchurch families, especially American Interchurch Families, we have a rich spiritual heritage that connects us closely with God's creation if we can be attentive and look for that of God in the world around us, and in the faces of all the people around us. God is very present with us in our ordinary lives and in all that we do. Each day, we make choices for how we will live that day. Are we attentive to God's plan, to God's wisdom, to God's bigger view of the world and not only our narrow perspective of things? This prayer calls us to be attentive for God's will in our lives. It suits ecumenists. It suits Americans.

Reflections by M.J. Glauber

“See loneliness as a privileged
avenue to depth and empathy.”

- Fr. Ron Rolheiser

**Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, explains the need
for empathy in our quest for identity and
meaning:** Reprinted with permission from Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Fr. Ron Rolheiser brings to our attention a poem filled
with advice about the nature and purpose of loneliness
written by the ancient Persian poet:

Hafiz:

Don't surrender your loneliness
So quickly.
Let it cut more deep.
Let it ferment and season you
As few human
Or even divine ingredients can.
Something missing in my heart tonight
Has made my eyes so soft
My voice
So tender,
My need of God
Absolutely
Clear.

Looking forward to
the 2012 AAIF
Biennial Conference -
Please plan to join
us !! Details to follow
at www.aifusa.org

Day Lily in June



Kentucky in June is in
bloom !!

- Hydrangea Blossoms in
bloom



"THE LESSON WITHIN LONELINESS"

by Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Reprinted with permission from Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Loneliness? Should marriage be considered as a cure for loneliness? Will marriage cure loneliness? Anyone who is considering marriage as a cure for loneliness should first consider the nature of loneliness. Fr. Ron Rolheiser examines the role and purpose loneliness can serve for us in our lives.

Several years ago, I was counseling a young man whose struggles with loneliness seemed to be the reverse of the norm. Instead of trying to escape it, he worried about losing it. He was in his early twenties, in love with a wonderful young woman, but was conflicted about marrying her because he feared that getting married might interfere with his loneliness and, in his words, make him "a shallower



Ordinary Day Lily in bloom in June

person with less to give to God and the world."



Guy and Libbye Montgomery and family at the wedding of their daughter in 2010 - interchurch families generation two

"I walk into a room," he said, "and automatically look around for a sad face, for someone whose look suggests that there's more to life than partying and the latest celebrity news." There's a danger in simplistically identifying heaviness with depth, but that wasn't true for him.

"Two images do battle within me," he said. "When I was fifteen, my dad died. We lived in the country and he had a heart attack. We bundled him into the car and my mother was with him in the back seat, holding him as I was driving the car, fifteen years old, and scared. He died on the way to the hospital, but he died in my mother's arms. Sad as this was, there was something of beauty in it. I have always

felt that this is the way I would like to die, held by someone I love. But, while that image draws me strongly to marriage, I also look at how Jesus died, alone, abandoned, inside of no one's arms, in an embrace only of something beyond, and I'm drawn to that too. There's nobility in that which I don't want to let go of. That too can be a good way to die."

He feared losing his loneliness even as he healthily yearned for intimacy. He couldn't fully explain why he was attracted to the loneliness of Jesus on the cross, except that he sensed that this was somehow a noble thing, something of depth, and something that would give him depth and nobility. Others have been at this place before him, Jesus among them. For example, as a young

man, Soren Kierkegaard renounced marriage for the same reason my young friend feared it. Rightly or wrongly, he felt that what he had to give to the world was rooted inside the pain of his own loneliness and could only issue forth from that center and, if he was less lonely, he would have less to give. Was he right?

The fruitfulness of his life, namely, the many people (Henri Nouwen among them) who drew healing and strength from his writing, attests to the truth of his intuition. By their fruits you shall know them! Kierkegaard is the patron saint of the lonely. But, like my young friend, he was also conflicted by what this did to him. Too few people understood and this immersed him in "the sadness of having understood

something true - and then seeing oneself misunderstood." He confessed too that he lived the curse "of never to be allowed to let anyone deeply and inwardly join themselves to me."

Thomas Merton, commenting on the same thing, once said that the absence of married intimacy in his life constituted "a fault in my chastity." This kind of depth comes at a price.

Why, despite such an obvious

downside, are the Kierkegaards of our world drawn to loneliness in the belief that it holds the key to depth, empathy, and wisdom? What does loneliness do for us?

What loneliness does for us, especially very intense loneliness, is destabilize the ego and make it too fragile to sustain us in the normal way. What happens then is that we begin to unravel, feel ourselves become unglued, become aware of our smallness, and know in the roots of our being that we need to connect to something larger than ourselves to survive. But that's a very painful experience and we tend to flee from it.

However, and this is a great paradox, this experience of intense loneliness is one of the privileged ways of finding the deep answer to our quest for identity and meaning. Because it destabilizes the ego and disorients us, loneliness puts us in touch with what lays below the ego, namely, the soul, our deepest self. The image and likeness of God lies in there, as do our most noble and divine energies. That's the truth behind the belief that in loneliness there is depth.

And so the lesson is this, whether married or single: Don't run from loneliness. Don't see it as your enemy. Don't look for another person to cure your loneliness. See loneliness as a privileged avenue to depth and empathy.

- Fr. Ron Rolheiser

2010-09-05



Sita and Peyton Lockett's Wedding
October 30, 2010 - Chicago, Illinois -
interchurch families generation two

WCC and KCC The Doors to Dialogue (D2D) Program of Louisville Seminary: The Rev. Dr. Marian McClure Taylor



Calling all Ecumenists!

The Doors to Dialogue (D2D) Program of Louisville Seminary sent an open invitation to a discussion to hear about the work of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey near Geneva, Switzerland, a program of the World Council of Churches. Professor Dr. Ioan Sauca, director, made a presentation on the future of ecumenical formation and why it is still vitally important in the world today. His presentation was followed by Q&A.

This Doors to Dialogue Program took place on Tuesday, May 17, 2011 from Noon- 1:30 pm at the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Fr. Ioan Sauca made a presentation on the importance of ecumenical formation in our time and then joined in discussion with us on that theme. He also shared with us

ways in which we might be connected to the cutting edge ecumenical ministry of the Institute in Bossey.

Since 1946, Bossey has been fulfilling its mission of ecumenical theological formation and education. With its holistic way of education, combining academic research, cross-cultural learning through life in community, spiritual experience, exposure to and encounter with other faith communities as well as practical formation in eco-theology and sustainable development, Bossey continues to have a special place and vocation in ecumenical formation today. Accredited by the

University of Geneva, the Institute receives 40-50 students each year from around the world who desire to do graduate-level course work for five months to five years through programmes in the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies, Master of Advanced Ecumenical Studies, or Ph.D. in Ecumenical Studies. More can be found at www.bossey.ch

This event was hosted by Dr. Cliff Kirkpatrick, Visiting Professor of Ecumenical Studies and Global Ministries at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and former Central and Executive Committee member of the World Council of Churches. For follow-on information contact Kelly Brownlee, kbr@wcc-coe.org or Cliff Kirkpatrick at ckirkpatrick@lpts.edu.

Professor Dr. Ioan Sauca, director, the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey near Geneva, Switzerland, a program of the World Council of Churches.



What has been successful at fostering the creation of unity?

At the Ecumenical Center at the Chateau of Bossey in Switzerland, this year 35 countries and 27 denominations are represented in the student body. Professor Dr. Ioan Sauca, director, the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey near Geneva, Switzerland, a program of the World Council of Churches, said that each of them brings with them their own culture's expression of the divine spirit and the unique ways as to how to express their religious spirituality within their cultural and religious paradigms.

The Ecumenical Center at Bossey has endeavored to become truly representative of the world's cultures. This presents new developments and new challenges, and the Ecumenical Center at Bossey is endeavoring to evolve along with student expectations.

The Ecumenical Center is intercultural and interconfessional. The University of Geneva, which is affiliated with the Ecumenical Center at Bossey, is now able to exchange credit hours with any university in the world.

Master level and Ph.D. programs are offered.

In response to the expressed needs from the greater ecumenical communities to the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Center at the Chateau of Boissey, they are now asking, **"How do we define ourselves as Christians in a multicultural world?"** and **"What does it mean to be Christian in a multi cultural society?"** Professor Dr. Ioan Sauca said that experts were brought in from other denominations in an effort to assure that their program became truly representative of the world in its perspective.

He defines "Ecumenism" for their program at the Ecumenical Center as being a program that allows Christians to **be Christ Centric while allowing them to be open to others.** It is a Christ Centric perspective of the world that allows us to be concerned about others, not aggressive, and not creating a mixed religion; their philosophy is based on a concept that the spirit goes beyond my boundaries while affirming our own beliefs from a Christ Centric view point.

"Slogans or paradigms worked for former generations," Fr. Ioan Sauca noted, "but now students come to the Center searching for greater

spirituality." They are seeking how "to be one church within our diversity," he reported.

The Center had been asked if they only allow the student body to be from the WCC member churches, how can we be considered the "World" Council of Churches?

The Ecumenical Center at Boissey also seeks out Non-ecumenical churches. Each side has their own hard line, but this reflects the reality we face. "The evangelical churches are growing; ecumenical leaders must see the wholeness of the subject," Fr. Ioan Sauca explained.

Students from the Pacific brought up the issue of Eco-Theology. Pastors had to face the basic issues related to human survival upon their return home before being able to address Salvation. Based on a sentiment of deeply felt spirituality, these pastors must learn methodologies so they will be able to grow crops under harsh conditions.

Therefore, a multifaceted based approach was needed by way of a response by the Ecumenical Center at Bossey. In response to this real need, an organic garden has been set up so that these practices can be taught and become a model. Care of the Earth is Biblically based, but it also encompasses many other

areas of study; the Ecumenical Center at Bossey evolved to become more “all encompassing in their perspective and approach” in response to a lived reality and to a genuine need.

In the past slogans had been used to promote the notion that religions should be instruments for peace. At the Ecumenical Center, they espouse this belief and indicate “but now make it a reality.”

The first question posed to Fr. Ioan Sauca from the group gathered to hear him speak in Louisville asked about “Worship Life at the Ecumenical Center.” He said that “the chapel is the pillar of the Ecumenical Mission.” He explained that “Chapel is shock therapy” of sorts. He explained that in chapel, each person is themselves, and that this may shock others to see a form of worship that is very different from what they have known and with which they have become comfortable.

Chapel is different every day since 35 countries are represented at the Ecumenical Center, each chapel experience can be shocking. He noted that all Christian elements are in the chapel experience.

Then how to treat the Holy Symbols of others arose not as a theoretical discussion, but as

a lived experience which became the basis for questions that arose from observable experiences of other’s “foreign”, but Christian symbols. A Pentecostal student removed all of the Orthodox Icons and Crosses from the chapel, but later in the student graduating procession, it was that student who carried an Icon by choice. He also bought one to take back home with him. Fr. Ioan Sauca, who is Orthodox, explained that an Orthodox student thought that drums did not belong in a chapel worship experience. He explained that assumption may be true for some, but for others, the drum and drumming is as holy as it gets. “Early one morning,” Fr. Ioan Sauca explained they found that the drum left in the chapel had been vandalized; someone had put paint all over it.” When they went to look at the drum, they saw that someone had painted the drum with crosses during the night in an effort to exorcise it. In that graduation procession, the Orthodox student was the one who volunteered to carry the drum.

Fr. Ioan Sauca explained that many come to an ecumenical center with some “big walls” *created out of a fear of losing their identity, but found that they had been enriched by the personal interaction with other traditions. (I thought that this was very similar to the lived*

experience reported by interchurch families.)

In our efforts to strengthen our own denominations we may become distracted from our real Christian mission and the potential that ecumenism holds.

Many students ask Fr. Ioan Sauca and the educators, who are well qualified college professors and theologians, “How do we create communities of trust in our hometown community?” His answer was to “live in a community and not just in the library.”

Fr. Ioan Sauca notes that if “someone tells a joke that the joke has the likely potential to offend half of the audience while the other half laughs.”

He is from Romania which is culturally diverse. He explained that at the Ecumenical Center at Bossey, they begin their program by sharing cultural contexts before beginning the dialogue. Since they all live there together, this allows for clearer communication across traditional walls.

The next question was about sabbatical and continuing education offerings at the Ecumenical Center at Bossey.

Fr. Ioan Sauca responded that the Ecumenical Center is continually evolving and

attempting to meet the real needs of their students. These options are available. Please see www.bossey.ch for further details if this is of interest to you.

In response to a question, Fr. Ioan Sauca explained that up until 1995 that 60 to 70% of their student body came from the northern hemisphere, but that the balance has reversed." Ecumenical enthusiasm has dwindled in the northern hemisphere countries that had formerly sent students to study at the Ecumenical Center in Bossey.

The Theologians who created Vatican II are no longer living. However, when a Roman Catholic professor came to teach as a visiting professor, then more Catholic students also attended.

The Ecumenism that gave birth to Vatican II was a global faith issue. It wasn't a political power issue. How to revive that former enthusiasm still needs to be addressed.

The next question pertained to "Women graduates of Bossey?" Fr. Ioan Sauca indicated that given the place of women and the status or issues facing women in the world community greatly affects who may apply. The Ecumenical Center asks that if a church sends two candidates that one must be a woman. He

explained that after leaving Bossey, many of the women graduates became church leaders. He noted that "some churches have limiting rules regarding the roles in which women can actually participate."

A Korean woman, a student at the Ecumenical Center of Bossey, became aware that "women have a dignity in sharing in the image of God just as much as men do" that was a new view for her that she had not found in Korea.

Then Fr. Ioan Sauca was asked to address the "Growing Secularism" in Europe and if that had impacted their work.

Fr. Ioan Sauca explained that it may be observed that "there are people who believe without belonging. It is as if they had an allergy to institutions. The question then becomes how to link ecclesiology and spirituality."

He explained that it may be easy to convert the impoverished in poor south countries of the globe, but how do we convert our own children here when Sunday School is no longer working for them?" In August, youth from ages 14 through 17 will have an opportunity to gather at Bossey. Using painting and creativity, they will be lead to explain "What is there?" in an

effort to allow them to develop their spirituality." Fr. Ioan Sauca also noted the existence of those who "belong without believing." They may have their children baptized and then never return to church. He observed a need to study how to make our religious communities more alive."

By interacting with others at the Ecumenical Center, students can meet a diversity of students from around the globe and not feel threatened that they will lose their own salvation nor their own identity.

Interchurch Families, also known as Mixed Families, will be the ones who push ecumenism so that issues we face now may make a real difference to the greater ecumenical community. Interchurch families live in a world the way they find it, but as such, we have the power to impact society. It will be through Interchurch Families where "an opening" for ecumenism will be created.

We were most fortunate in Louisville to be able to hear Professor Dr. Ioan Sauca, director, the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, speak at the LPTS. Many thanks to the KCC for bringing him here.

*Notes by
Mary Jane Glauber of the presentation
made by Fr. Ioan Sauca on May 17,
2011 in Louisville, KY.*

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AAIF.co.chair@gmail.com

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Many Thanks to Father Ron Rolheiser for his most thought inspiring and insightful article about the role of loneliness in our lives as being something positive toward helping us to find something greater than ourselves, perhaps our unique relationship with God.

- www.marriagepreparation.com/InterchurchANDInterfaith.htm ↩
- <http://www.blissweddings.com/library/religious.asp> ↩

Resources can be found at these links for those couples and those people who give them pastoral care who are planning an interchurch wedding in the near future.
~ M.J. Glauber

Water Lily in bloom in June ↑

Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding

Looking forward to the 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference
- Please 'save the date,' details to follow at www.aifusa.org

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MARY JANE GLAUBER, VOLUNTEER EDITOR OF THE ARK
[MJGLAUBER\(AT\)GMAIL.COM](mailto:MJGLAUBER(AT)GMAIL.COM)

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