

To those organizing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Adapting the text

This material is offered with the understanding that, whenever possible, it will be adapted for use at the local level. In doing this, account must be taken of local liturgical and devotional practice, and of the whole social and cultural context. Such adaptation should normally take place ecumenically.

In some places ecumenical structures are already set up for adapting the material. In other places, we hope that the need to adapt it will be a stimulus to creating such structures.

Using the Week of Prayer material

- For churches and Christian communities which observe the week of prayer together through a single common service, an order for an ecumenical worship service is provided.
- Churches and Christian communities may also incorporate material from the week of prayer into their own services. Prayers from the ecumenical worship service, the “eight days”, and the selection of additional prayers can be used as appropriate in their own setting.
- Communities which observe the week of prayer in their worship for each day during the week may draw material for these services from the “eight days”.
- Those wishing to do Bible studies on the week of prayer theme can use as a basis the biblical texts and reflections given in the “eight days”. Each day the discussions can lead to a closing period of intercessory prayer.
- Those who wish to pray privately may find the material helpful for focusing their prayer intentions. They can be mindful that they are in communion with others praying all around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ’s church.

The search for unity: throughout the year

The traditional date for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is **18-25 January**. Those dates were proposed in 1908 by Paul Watson to cover the days between the feast of St Peter and the feast of St Paul, and therefore have a symbolic meaning. In the southern hemisphere where January is a vacation time churches often find other days to celebrate the week of prayer, for example around Pentecost (which was suggested by the Faith and Order movement in 1926), which is also a symbolic date for the unity of the church.

But the search for Christian unity is not limited to one week each year. We encourage you therefore not only to be flexible concerning the date but also to understand the material presented here as an invitation to find opportunities throughout the whole year to express the degree of communion which the churches have already received, and to pray together for that full unity which is Christ’s will.

We have this treasure in clay jars

2 Corinthians 4: 4-18

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture - "I believed, and so I spoke" - we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

(NRSV)

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2003: Introduction to the theme for the year

“We have this treasure in clay jars” (2 Corinthians 4: 7)

Migration, a complex issue, is having a growing impact on the lives of many people, countries and churches around the world. Argentina is one of the countries where there have been many waves of immigration that have affected not only the national context but also the lives of the churches. The initial project for this year's prayer for unity comes from an ecumenical group in Argentina that chose the biblical text and theme that arises out of a reflection on the fact that Argentina is a nation built by native peoples and immigrants.

Several reasons for immigration might be identified such as famine, wars, and religious persecutions. Two stories from Argentina's recent past illustrate these situations and show the need for the churches to work together to seek unity in order to respond in common witness.

1. A family fleeing from violence emigrates and finds a home in Argentina. There they find security but have to face a new culture which they do not understand, a language that is not their own, and a history with which they cannot identify. Sometimes the local population does not appreciate their presence. This family feels happiness and at the same time sadness. They leave behind fear but now they discover discrimination. In some cases they have to accept being economically exploited; this is the price that they have to pay to protect their lives and raise their children. The new country takes them in and rejects them at the same time. They have faith and they wait for the light that will guide them in the darkness.

2. A young woman comes to the big city looking for a job. She grew up in the northern countryside and leaves it for a better future. She leaves her family, her friends and now she faces a different kind of society. Her skin and her accent reveal that her origins are in the country; probably she also has native blood. For this too she has to pay a high price. She experiences the bright lights of the big city but also the sadness of loneliness. She is a foreigner in her own country. She often feels she is treated as if she has no right to enjoy the good life. She has no one in whom to confide but she still has hope that she will find her place.

Such situations led the local group to reflect on how the word of God gives us strength in difficult circumstances and even reminds us that all of God's people are pilgrims on the way to the kingdom. The Bible presents us with many examples of peoples who migrate from place to place for many of the same reasons as the populations of today. Abraham and Sarah, Jacob, Amos, and Joseph, Mary and Jesus are biblical examples of immigrants.

The experience of immigration reveals a world that is divided. The unity of Christians needs to be the paradigm for the unity of humankind. Christians possess a “treasure in clay jars” (2 Cor. 4:7) which is the glory of Jesus Christ the Lord, namely his victory over sin, death, persecution and hatred. This treasure is, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 4:5-6, the knowledge of God's glory that burns brightly in Jesus as he has revealed the depths of God's love and mercy for all creation, especially the poor.

The text of 2 Cor. 4:5-18 calls us to recognize that we carry a treasure that does not belong to us but which has been given to us as a gift from God to strengthen us when we are suffering and encourage us when we are sad. We carry this treasure within the fragility of our human existence so that it becomes clear that this gift has its origin in God and is not of our own making. God invites us to witness to him through our human weakness.

The body of Christ is undivided and for this reason we must overcome the divisions among Christians that are a counter-witness to this truth. We recognize that the barriers are great and that our own intellectual and physical force is not enough to heal our sins of division. The

unity of the church must be brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, so that each step toward unity is seen as God drawing us nearer to his kingdom.

We need to accept the challenge of the apostle Paul who said that “we believe so we speak” (2 Cor. 4:13). Not to speak is to hide the visible reality of Christ at work **in us, which** is the basis of the church’s action in the world. So with the strength that is given to us, we have to go toward our neighbour to share the light of Christ and to recognize that together we are in debt to God who gave the life of his Son for the salvation of humankind. These themes are illustrated in the worship service and the eight days, which are planned as follows:

In his letter to the Corinthians Paul encourages his Christian brothers and sisters with the message of hope represented in Jesus Christ. Jesus is God’s message, revealing God’s glory and the light that continues to shine in a world of darkness (2 Cor. 4:5-6). This is the hope born in the hearts of men and women who are aware that its source is in God and not in ourselves. It is this treasure that sustains the pilgrims and the migrants in their fragile human condition (Day 1 - 2 Cor. 4:7).

Common faith in Christ is our hope and our treasure. In our world, many men, women and children experience the weight of persecution, affliction and abandonment as they are forced to leave their homes and live on the streets, constantly separated from their familiar surroundings. Paul reflects on the experience of persecution, offering the consolation of Christian faith; since Jesus assumed our human condition that it might be lifted up, the strength of God is revealed in our weakness. Hence we are neither crushed nor driven to despair, we are not forsaken or struck down because we have faith (Day 2 - 2 Cor. 4:8).

The mystery of redemption is revealed in situations where, through God’s grace, the human spirit makes visible the image of Christ in the fragility of our bodies. In this fragility we see the death of Christ carried in the body but through God’s mercy the image of Christ is also revealed. Too often the sinfulness of discrimination reveals a culture of death, that is nothing more than a desire to eliminate difference, which is the other. The mission of the churches is to find ways to affirm together the image of Christ in the other as a source of riches, a valuable gift. The presence of Christ manifested in our bodies renews us so that we make visible the image of God, a dignity that cannot be erased. It is only when we appreciate this treasure that all bear in their human nature that we can welcome others, recognizing their resemblance to God (Day 3 – 2 Cor. 4:10).

It seems like a contradiction but as long as there is life in us, we must learn to be given over to death, to die to self that Christ might live in us. In doing so, we open our minds to the very importance of life itself - a life that has been entrusted to Christ that his life might be visible in us. All Christians are called to witness to the fact that sin no longer has power over us. This is where the churches must witness together in the world to the dignity of life, new life in Christ (Day 4 – 2 Cor. 4:11).

In the precarious conditions in which both pilgrims and immigrants find themselves, Christian churches united “in the same spirit of faith” offer their voices to foreigners and the dispossessed. It is because we confess this same faith that we are able to find words to speak out. The theme of Day 5 (2 Cor. 4:14) encourages Christians to reflect on the necessity to speak out courageously against the desperate situations of the homeless, the refugee, the immigrant, the street person, migrant populations and indeed, all who are in distress. We believe in the renewing power of God in Jesus Christ and so together we speak out with courage against all that destroys the dignity of the human person.

It is the mission of the church in society to be a sign of God’s grace. The values of this passing world are not necessarily those of the kingdom of the blessed. Jesus has entrusted to each Christian and the churches together, the mission of living out the integrity of the kingdom of God as a new force, renewing human society. The justification that we have been freely given through God’s grace obliges us to live as justified in the world (Day 6 – 2 Cor. 4:15).

In spite of many difficulties and persecutions, we must not lose heart. Saint Paul encourages us to remain strong because we not only bear the death of Christ in our body but also his life. The church is called to show forth the victory of Christ over death by being a community of courage. The perseverance of those seeking Christian unity is an important reality for the faint hearted and those tempted to give up the struggle, for it illustrates the strength of God's grace in spite of many difficulties. Jesus prayed for the unity of all those who bear his name precisely so that the world might come to believe. In spite of obstacles on the path to Christian unity, in the face of adversity the churches must act together with courage and perseverance to offer this divided world a paradigm of unity and to be a sign of the power of the death of Christ over all the forces of sin and darkness (Day 7 – 2 Cor. 4:16).

On Day 8, we reflect on how the suffering that we endure prepares us for “glory beyond all measure” (2 Cor. 4:17). This is not a utopian vision of how all human struggle will end since Paul calls us to reflect on how, if we are united by faith to the sufferings of Christ, we will be transformed by the grace of his resurrection. We bear both his suffering and resurrection in our body. This is why Paul exhorts us to look beyond what we see with mortal eyes to the eternal truth that is revealed in the glory of Christ. The unity of all those who believe in Christ is made visible when Christians truly take up their task in the world through which they are passing.

Each of the eight days proposes a prayer for the unity of all those who believe in Christ. The value of prayer for unity cannot be stressed enough since it is the place where all Christians, through the power of the Holy Spirit, humbly recognize that the unity that God wills for the church is itself a gift. Let us then pray continually that we may be ready to receive this gift and carry it in the clay jar of our human frailty.

Preparation of the material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2003

The initial draft of this text was produced by an ecumenical group of biblical scholars, theologians, priests, pastors and lay persons in Argentina. Sincere thanks go to this local group for its suggestion of the theme, and its careful work over a ten-month period. Members of the group were related to the Comisión Ecuménica de Iglesias Cristianas de la Argentina (CEICA/The Ecumenical Commission of Christian Churches in Argentina). They were: Fr Rafael Magul (Orthodox), Ms Maria Luisa Cárdenas (Roman Catholic) Fr Fernando Gianetti (Roman Catholic), Rev. Carlos Halperin (Anglican) Rev. Margarita Tourn (Waldensian Church) and Rev. Pablo Andíañach (Methodist).

The text was brought to its present form by an international team appointed by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church. This team - which included a representative of the Argentinian group) met near Málaga, Spain at the ecumenical centre "Los Rubios" of the Iglesia Evangélica Española (Spanish Reformed Church). The team thanks the director, Mrs Pilar Agraz Aguilar, and the staff of the ecumenical centre for their warm and generous welcome.

The participants in the group were privileged to hear the Rev. Father Carlos de Francisco Vega of the Secretariat for Interconfessional Relations of the Spanish Episcopal Conference speak on the observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Spain, and Mrs Agraz on the origins and development of the Los Rubios ecumenical centre, in particular its work with immigrants. In the course of one Sunday participants attended worship at both the Reformed church in Los Rubios and the Roman Catholic parish "Nuestra Señora de la Victoria" in Rincón de la Victoria, and the team also expresses its thanks to them for their friendly welcome.

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Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2003

Ecumenical Worship Service

Introduction

This worship service celebrates the flame lit by God our Father in the hearts of believers and of their communities though they come from many different cultures, peoples and nations spread throughout the earth, in a state of perpetual migration and fresh settlement.

Jesus Christ shares the light of faith with us. This faith is "knowledge of the glory of God which shines on the face of Christ". It is the treasure which Paul evokes in 2 Cor 4: 5-18. Every believer and community of believers shares this treasure and bears witness to it in all its richness and from the frailty of the human condition.

From an ecumenical point of view it is most important that we can joyfully celebrate the risen Christ but it is no less important to raise to God our Father through Jesus our only mediator, our prayers for the many men and women, young people and children traumatised by displacement. This will be the theme of the intercessions which, together with our confession of Christ, the light of our lives, is the most important aspect of this worship. Communities of believers have experienced and still experience division, joys yet tribulations, yearnings and hopes that make them painfully aware of the sufferings of people who know the ordeal of emigration. This is why our prayer of intercession for the unity of the churches and our prayer for migrant communities are one and the same.

For this celebration, based upon the original proposal of an ecumenical group in Argentina, it is particularly recommended:

- ◆ To issue invitations beyond the normal circle of Christians who are usually to be found in ecumenical meetings, so as to form a united but diverse assembly of prayer, especially with the immigrant Christian communities which are to be found within our towns and regions. In meeting and preparing worship together we shall celebrate the risen Christ, Light of Light, as our only salvation within the communion of the one faith with all its diversity of expression. Our celebration will pay tribute to this diversity.
- ◆ To use the symbol of light contained in clay jars; or even better, one clay jar. This could be passed from one group to another in full view of the assembly, at the moment of intercession, allowing the symbolism of this precious treasure to be understood in the unity of the one Lord, one faith, one baptism and common hope in Christ - the Christ who is in solidarity with the poor, with migrants, the wounded of this life. At the beginning of worship this jar, containing the light, will already emphasise the unity of Christians gathered to proclaim faith in Christ, light of our lives, and of our hope for the growth of fellowship.
- ◆ The sign of peace sets the seal on this fellowship in the intercessions. The unity that is demonstrated by this act corresponds to the renewed commissioning by Christ at the end of the worship. He expects all his disciples to witness to their unity by committing themselves to face up to the hard realities of migration.
- ◆ To highlight not only the dramatic nature of migrations and their sinful causes, but the fact that, as disciples of Christ on earth, we are also migrants. Avoiding condescension or insincerity, we will welcome each other during this worship as sisters and brothers in the faith. We have so much to share of that which gives us hope during times of trial and our wonderment at that treasure which is God-given faith. Where would our ecumenical pilgrimage be without the exchanges and dialogues provoked by contemporary migrations? We will allow ourselves to be welcomed by Christ, himself a nomad on this earth. Our earthly journey also becomes a pilgrimage with our brothers and sisters towards the house of God. But we have to make sure to be like him and not to exclude anyone from the banquet (*agapé*) which the Holy Spirit has set within the heart of the baptized. And that is why we have to hear, and hear all over again, his call to become

witnesses of the gospel while becoming itinerant bearers of the good news, as Ruth, for example, anticipated in her own way.

It is to be hoped that within the liturgy of the word the person of Ruth can be honoured. At the beginning of the liturgy, the story of Ruth's journey to Bethlehem in Judah with Naomi, her mother in law (whose homeland it was) could introduce other stories of present-day migration told either at the opening of the worship or before each intercession. Those present, whether migrants or persons needing to better understand the life of migrants, could discover how - in the life of Ruth as in their own - a new confidence in God came into being and in the all embracing spirit of biblical revelation, the call to imitate God's special love for the stranger and the poor is heard anew.

The gospel can be chosen from amongst the texts suggested, but the story of the sending forth in mission (Matt 28: 16-20) is recommended. In highlighting universal mission in the presence of the Lord Christ, within the framework of this ecumenical worship particularly sensitive to migrants, this gospel story offers the opportunity within the sermon to underline the power which the gospel has to overturn cultural, social, psychological and religious barriers. The sermon should emphasize that we are sent *together* by Christ and should encourage the churches to undertake common activities with "the stranger in our midst". Doctrinal, spiritual and practical ecumenism today is impossible without taking account of the migration of peoples in our own times. Our advance towards unity is stimulated by it.

Is it not also true that in faithfulness to the double demands of mission and ecumenism, we discover our neighbour in the sisters and brothers of different traditions with whom we work to further God's reign? We are called upon to love different people whether they are migrants or whether the difference comes from an unfamiliar way of confessing the Christian faith, founded upon traditions and practices other than ours. The unity of the church must also be at the service of unity among peoples. From this perspective the liturgy for the 'sending forth' underlines the link between missionary and ecumenical commitment.

The ordering of the six parts of the service can be changed:

- ◆ The **opening** - celebration of the light of Christ
- ◆ The **confession of sins** and proclamation of God's forgiveness
- ◆ **Reading** of the word of God
- ◆ **Confession of faith**
- ◆ **Intercessions**: movement towards the front of the church of representatives from different ethnic groups and churches present for the telling of their migration stories, presentation of their symbols, transmission of the clay jar containing the light, their prayers of intercession, the story of their beginnings, development, establishment, maybe even their exclusion. Alternatively, these stories could be related at the beginning of the worship service as a prelude to the liturgy.
- ◆ **Sending forth**: procession of the assembly towards the outside, a sign of the call of Christ to witness, preceded by the benediction.

It is recommended that the hymn to Christ - the *Phos Hilaron* - is sung either in the opening part of the service, or after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the illuminator, before the confession of faith (Nicene creed or another text).

The worship service can be enlivened with songs, and symbols of the peoples represented. To take the example of Argentina, the sign of peace could be given in Spanish, the readers or other participants in the service clothed in ponchos, songs accompanied with a guitar, etc.

The service should be prepared by an ecumenical team and its preparation will have given opportunities to meet together and to pray. It would be a pity if the service were but an interlude. Rather, it should be a springboard for a desire to deepen relations between immigrant Christians and those of long-established communities in each region.

Order of Service

- L. Worship leader
- C. Congregation
- R. Reader

I. Opening

It is recommended that the service take place in the evening.

Invitation to pray

- L. Light and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord!
- C. *Glory be to God.*

- L. Alleluia, Christ is risen!
- C. *Truly the Lord is risen.*

A clay jar containing a lighted candle is placed on the communion table/altar or in some other visible place in front of the congregation while the text 2 Corinthians 4: 5-6, is read. Some members of the congregation come forward to light other candles at the flame and pass the light around to all.

Hymn

The hymn accompanies the sharing of the light. Argentinian sanctus or a hymn on the theme of light known to an immigrant community represented in the service or another one known to the congregation.

- C. Be our light in the darkness, Lord, and in your great mercy, protect us from all danger throughout our journey on this earth. Revive in us and in our communities the light of faith shining in our hearts: the knowledge of your glory in the face of Christ, he who reigns with you and with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn

Phos hilaron (*this hymn could be sung elsewhere in the service as explained in the introduction*).

O joyful light,
from the pure glory of the eternal heavenly Father,
O holy, blessed Jesus Christ.

As we come to the setting of the sun
and see the evening light,
we give thanks and praise to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit of God.

Worthy are you at all times
to be sung with holy voices,
O Son of God, O giver of life,
and to be glorified through all creation.

II. Proclamation of God's mercy and confession of sins

L. Let us confess our sins towards God and towards each other.

(Congregation or several readers in succession)

C. Merciful Lord,
We confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, deed and through omission.

Pardon our sins of disunity through pride, our sins against our brothers and sisters of other faiths, cultures, peoples, those whom we have oppressed and excluded. Pardon our apathy and our blindness to the distress of the immigrants among us. Christians of different denominations, we must ask ourselves if we have diligently sought ways of common witness "for Jesus' sake" to struggle against the suffering and injustices suffered by our immigrant brothers and sisters in our homeland.

Forgive our superficiality and laziness, ignoring or even denying the riches offered by *the other*, rather than seeking a true sharing of values and faith.

C. We have not loved you with our whole heart
We have not loved our neighbour as ourselves
We sincerely regret and humbly repent of our sins.
For the love of your Son, Jesus Christ
Have pity on us and forgive us
That we may joyfully follow your will, walk in your ways
and lead a life which shows forth your mercy to the glory of your name. Amen.

L. Our almighty God is merciful. He pardons your/our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, he strengthens you/us in all goodness and by the power of his Holy Spirit gives you/us eternal life. Amen.

III. Proclamation of the word of God

Old Testament: Lev 25: 35-43 or Ruth 1: 1-18 *(cf introduction to the service)*

Ps 43 *(read antiphonally)*

New Testament: 2 Cor 4: 5-18 *(cf introduction to the service)*

C. *Alleluia!*

Gospel reading: Matt 28: 16-20 **or** Matt 8: 5-13, **or** 4: 3-15 **or** Mark 7: 1-9

(As a sign that the good news of Christ is destined to be proclaimed in every tongue and received in every culture, the gospel could be read in the language of one of the guest communities present.)

C. *Alleluia!*

Sermon *(cf introduction to worship service)*

IV. Confession of faith

L. O God, who through Jesus Christ
The Lord of all the world and of the church
Calls us to be one single body
And to express your love,
In the confession of the same faith
We pray to you in all humility.

R. Grant us light and strength of faith
To overcome the shadows of evil
Which harm our communion of faith.

Hymn to the Holy Spirit (*as desired*)

R. Pour out your love in our hearts
That we may know you
And discern your creative and reconciling presence
In the lives of those around us.

Hymn to the Holy Spirit

R. Renew in us the gift of your Holy Spirit
So that by that same Spirit we may now proclaim together
Jesus Christ as Lord;
And that each human heart be touched
In such a way that the barriers which divide us fall down;
Rumours fade away
Hatred cease
And the wounds of disunion are healed;
So that we may live in justice and in peace,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn to the Holy Spirit

(The Phos Hilaron could be sung here.)

Nicene creed (*or another confession of faith*)

V. Intercessions

Representatives of immigrant communities come forward and present their intercessions. Each intercession is preceded by a brief recital of their experiences. The lights are lowered while their voices rise to ask for better understanding of their situation, and to express their faith and their hope in God's deeds.

Before praying for Christian unity, each church can also briefly recount its birth and development, perhaps its exclusion or suppression (e.g. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in France) and the stages of its history on a local or national level.

The great clay jar containing the candle will be passed from one reader to another as a sign of faith and solidarity before being placed on the altar/communion table.

The refrain Ven Espiritu Santo ven, ven a iluminar (Come Holy Spirit, come enlighten us) - or another similar refrain - could be sung in the original Spanish after each prayer.

We offer the treasure of our faith in the frailty of our personal witness, our communities and our ecumenical achievements.

May the Lord renew in us his gifts of light, strength and communion.

C. *Ven Espiritu Santo ven, ven a iluminar*

Confronted by so much suffering and evil we are submerged by despair, and we are aware of our weakness even to the point of doubting whether it is worth reacting in favour of justice.

May the Lord help us to hear the witness of people and communities who, under pressure from all sides, have continued to hope and to act in the midst of distress.

C. *Ven Espiritu Santo ven, ven a iluminar*

Faced with the demands of mission in the world and conscious of the importance of the gospel which is entrusted to us, we can feel quite overwhelmed.

May the Lord give us confidence to confess our faith.

C. *Ven Espiritu Santo ven, ven a iluminar*

The ecumenical movement, like migration, is a part of the "globalisation" with which the world is seeking to cope today.

Through the coming together of our churches may the Lord inspire this search for oneness.

C. *Ven Espiritu Santo ven, ven a iluminar*

Prayer of St John Chrysostom

L. Lord, you have given us grace to offer these common prayers with one heart. You have promised to grant the requests of two or three gathered in your name. Fulfil now the petitions of your servants for our benefit, giving us the knowledge of your truth in this world, and granting us eternal life in the world to come. *Amen*

C. *Our Father...*

Exchange of the sign of peace

C. **Hymn**

Collection

The collection can take place during the hymn. It is a liturgical gesture expressing communion in faith, charity and solidarity and its significance can be recalled when its intended use is indicated.

V1. Sending forth and benediction (Num 6: 24-26)

L. May God bless you/us and keep you/us.

C. *Amen*

L. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you/us and grant you/us his grace.

C. *Amen*

L. May the Lord turn his countenance towards you/us and give you/us his peace.

C. *Amen*

L. And may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you/us now and for evermore.

C. *Amen.*

Reading of Matt 28: 18-20 and a call to common witness in the name of Christ

L. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age'.

C. **Hymn**

Suggestions: Argentinian hymn of blessing (La bendición de Dios, by Lois Wilson) ; A song from one of the immigrant communities present, or another known to the congregation.

To signify the pilgrimage that is our life in the light of Christ and our willingness to respond together to Christ's sending us forth in mission, the congregation leaves the church in procession behind a person bearing the clay jar with the lighted candle.

Commentary

The human person carries in him - or her - self the image of and resemblance to God. It is the sign of an integrity which nothing - neither weakness, sin nor oppression - can destroy. This mysterious truth constitutes a lasting call to spiritual growth in order to reach the measure of Christ.

Christ himself lives within the Christian, within the Christian's very body, mind and soul. The Christian, woman and man must make plain, in real-life situations, the life of Christ which is within them. They are called to stand firm in obedience to the demands of the gospel until the Lord's coming again.

This witness involves the believer's whole being, including the body. Over the ages members of different churches have suffered (and still suffer) martyrdom, giving faithful witness in making the supreme act of obedience to Christ. Often the cause of martyrdom is to be found in the origins of exile. The Christian is thus called to be transformed in likeness to Christ, revealing Christ's life within his own.

"I am the light of the world"; "You are the light of the world". This light must shine forth through works of justice, charity, compassion, in such a way that it becomes a revelation of the saving grace of God. Men and women are thus enabled to glorify the Father who desires salvation for us all.

As the church, we are called upon to change cultural practices which prevent a great part of the world's population from being accorded human dignity, above all in the case of migrants. Those same elements which divide people and nations are to be found in the sin which divides churches and prevents their true witness. Moreover, unity between believers cannot be separated from the struggle to overcome the barriers dividing society.

Prayer

God of love

Powerful creator of all life

Encourage us to discern in ourselves and in each of our brothers and sisters

Your image and resemblance.

Give us the strength necessary to obey the imperative of your all-embracing love.

God of love,

We pray that our witness will lead to the unity of the churches; and that with one voice we may call upon all humanity to be responsible for creation and for our neighbour.

Amen.

Day 4

That the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4: 11) *Dignity of human life*

Ezra 1: 1-4	Any of those among you who are of his people - may their God go with them!
Ps. 50	The heavens declare his righteousness
Rom. 6: 6-14	Dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus
Mark 9: 33-37	Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all

Commentary

Many aspects of life are hard. The most degrading conditions are imposed on people. For many, their very existence is something rather to be endured, and they are sunk in despair and terror.

Christ invites us to take up the challenge of living in a way that meets the demands of his kingdom. His presence among his people marks each one of us. The power of his resurrection delivers us from all death-dealing temptation. If we are aware of his presence among us - risen, but bearing the traces of the despised, rejected or excluded - we can understand the importance of the least among us. If we had believed that simple fishermen were less capable of teaching than the doctors of religion, we would never have heard the message of the apostles, nor that of a carpenter from Nazareth.

That is why we must encourage each other to question the kind of society which excludes people and neglects their material and spiritual needs.

In this struggle at the heart of the societies in which we live, we may be tempted to give up, believing that we are all alone. But we must not lose courage, for others among God's children are also working to maintain the dignity of human life and are thus making visible the life of Jesus within our mortal existence.

The church is called to reveal this light shining in the darkness. Confronted with a divided world our quest for unity is vital. It is our common calling to show the power of the resurrection in order that the world might believe. Faced with war and with distress of all kinds, surrounded by struggles for temporal power and by discord, we must not attempt to escape together but, guided by Christ, commit ourselves to help the world change course.

Prayer

O God,
we commit ourselves to you as we have confidence only in your strength.
Quieten our bodies and our minds,
Come into our hearts,
And in our daily tasks help us to appreciate the power of renewal which you offer us.

O God,
open up for us the road to unity
Lead us by the hand along the way of your kingdom to be witnesses of hope.
May we not succumb to despair for through his own resurrection Christ has overcome death.

O God in whom we hope
Give us your Spirit of truth, courage and strength
That we may go forward together towards the full, visible unity of the church.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

* * *

Day 5

I believed and so I spoke (2 Cor. 4: 13)

Courage

Josh. 1: 1-9

Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed

Ps. 113

He raises the poor from the dust

Eph. 2: 11-22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens

Mark 7: 24-30

For saying that, you may go

Commentary

At a time of uncertainty and fear after the death of Moses, Joshua spoke out boldly in God's name and urged the people of Israel to cross the Jordan and occupy the land which God had promised to their ancestors: land which they had left in search of food. He urged them to be strong and brave and act in accordance with God's law.

Many generations later there were still Canaanites living in part of the land and it was a Canaanite woman who came to Jesus and courageously asked him to heal her daughter. When Jesus answered, rather harshly, that it was not right to take the children's bread, she argued back that even the dogs under the table eat the children's bread. A Gentile and a woman, her care for her daughter caused her to break down barriers of culture, tradition and gender with courage and audacity. Jesus had a plan of action and urgency in carrying it out. He believed that he must go first to the house of Israel. Nevertheless he was moved by the courage and the response of the woman. On his side also he reached out across these same barriers and said "for saying that you may go - the demon has left your daughter".

In the letter to the Ephesians, the Gentile Christians are reminded that they were once "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise". But now in Christ Jesus those who were once far off have been brought near. He has broken down the dividing wall and the hostility between Gentile and Jew and reconciled both groups to God in one body through the cross. Today Christians are compelled by the law of Christ to reach out across barriers of culture and race to welcome refugees and strangers and to minister to their needs. We can also learn much from the deep Christian faith of immigrants amongst us who have crossed boundaries to come to our land and who are equally part of the body of Christ.

As individual Christians and churches we are challenged to testify with courage to the truth of the gospel. As we do so, we must seek to live out and to show to the world the unity which Jesus desires for his children, for divided churches are weakened in their mission. To be the Church of Christ is a gift which brings the enormous responsibility of helping those without faith to discover that the love of God is the only answer to their need. We should ask God to heal us from our lack of unity and enable us to speak out with faith and courage.

Prayer

O God you inspired your servant Joshua to speak out with courage in a time of need and lead your people to the promised land. Your Son, Jesus Christ, reached out across barriers of culture, class and gender giving healing and hope to those in need. He is our peace and in his flesh he has broken down dividing walls and created in himself one, new humanity. We pray with faith for Christ's body, the church in the world today.

You have entrusted us with the task of advancing your kingdom here on earth, help us to do so united and not divided. Allow us to hear your voice and not insist on our own priorities. Move us to overcome our divisions and live according to your law of love. Strengthen us to reaffirm our commitment to you. Allow us to share your love. Lead us to meet all those in need of your blessing especially the refugee and the stranger in our midst. Together we form the body of Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

* * *

Day 6

...So that grace as it extends to more and more people... (2 Cor. 4:15)

The justice of God's grace

Deut. 10:17-22 ...who executes justice for the orphan and the widow...

Ps. 103:1-13 The Lord is merciful and gracious

Rom. 3:21-31 They are now justified by his grace as a gift

Matt. 5:1-12 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

Commentary

Sin is the source of all forms of injustice in the world. By rejecting God's righteousness we deprive people of their dignity and of their existential rights. Unjust structures and abuse of human rights are the result of this situation. We believe that God has justified us in Christ, out of his deep love for us. God's righteousness is expressed through his reconciling and outpouring grace. Through the death and resurrection of Christ he makes us all worthy of being his daughters and sons destined to eternal communion with him.

As Christians we are sent to proclaim together the righteousness of God and the power of his grace. Our mandate is to spread the justice of God by our witness. We are called to become instruments of God's kingdom, as just men and women who live for God and seek to reveal his love and justice to all. In as much as we have our homeland in heaven, we also look for a more just society and renewed life on earth, making more visible what God desires for his sons and daughters.

In the experience of migrant peoples, we see one of the many faces of injustice in our times. Societies which are economically unjust expel their members by driving them into hunger and poverty, denying them human living conditions, and blocking their access to health and education. Others must emigrate because of war, or the impossibility of practising their faith freely. Such is the world in which we must cry out for a long-awaited justice. God identifies himself with the poor, the weak, the sick, the foreigner, the child, the elderly, the widow. That is why in the Beatitudes we are invited to be promoters of that justice which goes beyond worldly justice. This includes a search for ways to overcome those structures which discriminate against people, transforming them into means of peace and justice for all.

Our unity and vital mission is a sign of our hope. Our communion in Christ is a visible expression of the new humankind. A spiritual vision of the life we have in Christ is the essence of all justice and the basis of human rights. Our active solidarity with powerless people makes the power of God's righteousness visible.

Prayer

God, thank you for your grace, which makes us your daughters and sons in Christ. You call us as your children to be advocates of your grace-filled justice in the world. Grant us grace to work, without fear, for the justice which is the only way to a real peace and a human society.

Loving God, strengthen the bonds which unite us, and call us to a life where the unity of believers is reflected in the actions of every community of faith. Powerful God, steer us once again to come nearer to each other, so that your will and not ours be put to work. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

* * *

Day 7 **So we do not lose heart (2 Cor. 4:16)**

Perseverance

Neh. 7:73-8:3, 9-10	Do not mourn or weep
Ps. 118:5-9, 19-24	Open to me the gates of righteousness
Acts 7:54-8:5	Those who were scattered... went proclaiming the word.
Mark 10:28-30	...a hundredfold now in this age... with persecutions....

Commentary

Life takes its toll on us. We have all experienced pain and struggle. Life particularly leaves its scars on the bodies of refugees, displaced peoples, the homeless, on the bodies of all those who continuously face more obstacles than solutions. Days come and go, each bringing their troubles: suddenly a woman must abandon her land; little children find themselves in a strange country; a man must leave aside the trade he learnt from his father, which is of no use to him any longer; a family is forced to exchange its native language for another, its native customs for foreign ones. These are people who have fled from death, hunger, exclusion. In our time there are thousands who silently make their way to unknown lands, lands which do not always receive them with love and understanding.

The first Christians also knew about hardship and struggle, and their way of responding to and understanding their situation offers future generations of Christians insights into the faith foundations of perseverance and solidarity. At the critical moment when Stephen was put to death and the church of Jerusalem was beset by a severe persecution, its scattered members found the inner resources and strength to continue to proclaim the word, instead of being paralyzed by fear. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, encouraged them not to lose heart despite being afflicted and struck down, but to understand these experiences as a way of carrying in their bodies the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus could be made visible. This clear connection between their own struggles and the death and resurrection of Jesus reflects how the power of the resurrection had changed their understanding of suffering and death.

Today we ask ourselves how we can bear witness to the renewing power of resurrection, when we face the hurting bodies of the refugee and the poor, when we encounter their profound suffering and their battered lives. Again and again we open our eyes and stumble across the hard truth that there is much within our world which destroys, rather than encourages, life. At the same time, we know it is still possible to both see and witness to the renewing and restoring action of God in our midst. Christians responding together in these privileged contexts have a special opportunity to be bearers of light and hope, even through the smallest acts of kindness and hospitality. Voices rise and hands reach out in solidarity with our struggling sister, our discouraged brother. We come to learn that in every act of mercy toward a crucified people we encounter Christ himself, and we are reminded that the mission which all Christians are invited to share in is God's own. Moreover, those who suffer often reveal to us, in their tired bodies, that gratitude is still possible, that there is still hope, that not all is lost if we trust in the One who makes all things new. Paradoxically, in the context of suffering and hurt, the gospel is shown to restore what is broken.

Prayer

Almighty God, we are united in our belief that you are present alongside all who suffer and are oppressed, united in the call to be instruments of hope and compassion to all in need: Direct our hands towards those of the downtrodden, the poor, the refugee. When we are inclined to ignore our neighbour in need, open our eyes and hearts yet again to their pain. Encourage the faith and hope of those struggling with discouragement or despair, those

whose lives have been bruised by hardship. Lead them with tenderness to find you even in the midst of their darkest experience. Amen.

* * *

Day 8 **Preparing for us an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor 4:17)**

Called to unity on the path to glory

Isa. 33:17-22	The Lord is our King, he will save us
Ps. 42	Hope in God; for I shall again praise him
Eph. 4:1-6	One Lord, one faith, one baptism
John 17:20-26	...to see my glory...

Commentary

At a time Jerusalem was threatened with invasion, the prophet Isaiah looked forward to the day when God would reign and Jerusalem would be "a quiet habitation, an immovable tent, whose stakes will never be pulled up and none of whose ropes will be broken". Refugees on the move in our world today, seeking political freedom or economic stability must often long for the time when they will no longer have to move from place to place, living in rough tents or hiding in lorries. They look for a place where they can live permanently in security and peace and well being.

The church understands itself as sharing this pilgrim state. We are a pilgrim people, strangers in this world, journeying in faith towards the heavenly Jerusalem, yearning to see the face of God. Often the pilgrim people of God share something of the longing of refugees for stability and peace and the coming of God's kingdom in this world.

While Christianity understands all human existence as marked by the insecurity of the pilgrim state, it sees the church as having the prophetic vocation of setting forth a vision of what God is preparing for us, an "eternal weight of glory" which casts our present struggles into a larger framework of hope and promise. This future which God is fashioning is characterized by a unity in which the human race is caught up, through the Holy Spirit, in the oneness which Jesus shares with the Father. This unity is already given to us as a gift in the Spirit here and now: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in all." The church is to live as a sign in the present of that unity which in its fullness we hold only as the promise of God.

Instead, we have presented ourselves to the world with disagreements which have created confusion where we are called to shed only light. Our ecumenical calling is to rediscover and make visible the unity which always comes as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes Christians seem to give up on this task. As a pilgrim people we must lay hold of the hope and certainty that we shall be made one in Christ as we shall see the glory which God gave to Christ "before the foundation of the world".

Prayer

Lord, show us your mercy and by the power of your Spirit remove the divisions amongst Christians so that your church may appear more clearly as a visible sign in the midst of all nations.

Lord, grant us renewed love, a true wisdom, and a new impulse for that unity so that the eternal message of your Son may be received as good news for all.

Lord, rekindle our faith and our hope, that we may journey with joy towards your heavenly kingdom, trusting in your promise of eternal glory.
Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Ecumenical Situation in Argentina

Argentina is a young country, with shores on the Atlantic Ocean in the south of the American continent. Its population descends mainly from European and Middle Eastern immigrants, who inhabit this country together with the children of the Spanish conquerors and the ancient indigenous nations. During recent decades, Latin American immigrants from bordering countries and people from Asia, mainly Korea and Taiwan, have also become part of the population. The official language is Spanish and the main religion is Christianity, though there are well-established Jewish and Islamic communities in Argentina.

Argentina is a cultural product of these immigrations. It is not surprising to find in this territory Roman Catholics, Protestants from different churches and denominations and members of Orthodox and Pre-Chalcedonian churches. They have come as immigrants, some looking for the chance of a better life, others fleeing from political persecution or religious intolerance in their homeland. Immigrants have brought not only their national origins but also the religious faith that identified them. A number of Protestant churches have developed as a result of missionary work with the local population. Christianity in Argentina has multiple facets and possibilities.

The Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church came with the Spanish conquerors and accompanied the colonisation process and the European settlement in America. Today it is the largest church in the country. It has very old parishes and an important number of social services, church buildings and schools all over the country. The history of Argentina cannot be separated from the role that the Roman Catholic Church has played in it, contributing to culture, thinking and political destiny. Many of the main national leaders were active and sincere Catholic believers.

The Roman Catholic presence can be seen in its magnificent church buildings, like the La Plata Cathedral, one of the biggest in the world, or the Basilica of Lujan, dedicated to the Virgin Mary. This basilica has become one of the most important pilgrimage centres in the country, with thousands of visitors every year. But there are also hundreds of small churches where local communities celebrate mass and contribute to the social development of their neighbourhood with solidarity, charity and community projects. Priests and nuns from different religious orders work in many centres assisting the poor and marginalized in matters such as health and education, and they commit themselves in the struggle for the human right to dignity and well-being.

The Protestant Churches

The first Protestant churches came to Argentina at the beginning of the 19th century, when independence from the Spanish opened frontiers and allowed a diverse and pluralistic immigration. The first to be organized was the Anglican Church, which started its regular meetings in 1821 and inaugurated its temple in Buenos Aires, the first one in Latin America. English tradesmen, businessmen and employees were its first members. After that Scottish Presbyterian immigrants came to the rural areas and established their churches. The Methodist mission started its work in Buenos Aires in 1836. By the mid-19th century, the first Protestant churches were developing their work through social services, schools and evangelization programmes directed towards immigrants and to the local inhabitants.

At the end of the 19th century, the Reformed and the Lutheran immigrants also brought their faith to Argentina. The Reformed Church came mainly with Dutch immigrants, and Lutherans with German immigrants. At that time Baptist and free denominations also arrived in Argentina. From Italy, the Waldensians came to rural areas and together with the Methodists, they started a seminary to promote theological education for local leadership. Some decades later, the Pentecostal churches started their work, which was characterized by strong evangelization and rapid expansion. It could be said that at the beginning of the 20th century almost all expressions of Protestantism were present in Argentina, accompanying the communities of European immigrants, taking root in the local population and with missions in

the few indigenous communities that survived the conquest of their territories. Today even in the small inland towns one can find at least one church of Protestant tradition.

The Eastern Churches in Argentina

The first of the Eastern Churches to have an organized presence (from 1888) was the Russian Orthodox Church. Orthodox faithful from several nationalities arranged this through the Russian diplomatic mission in Buenos Aires. Thanks to the contribution of Greek, Serb, Bulgarian, Syrian, Lebanese and Russian immigrants and of the Russian imperial family, the church of the Sacred Trinity was built in Buenos Aires in 1901. A bit later, in 1905, the Greek Orthodox Church brought a priest to serve their community. This church grew in different parts of the country and in 1928 they built the Cathedral of Dormition. The Greek Ecumenical Patriarchate was set up in 1938 and since 1951, Buenos Aires has been the seat of the bishop dependant on jurisdiction of the North and South American Archdioceses.

Among the Orthodox churches, the one depending on the Patriarchate of Antioch has the largest membership. Most members are from Syria and Lebanon. In Argentina, their organization started in 1921 and the diocese was established in 1949, though the headquarters were only built in 1955. The cathedral was inaugurated towards the end of 1956 and the first mass was celebrated in Christmas that year.

The Armenian Apostolic Church was formed by the first Armenian immigrants who arrived in Argentina between 1909 and 1911, fleeing from the massacres of Adana under Turkish rule. Between 1915 and 1920, survivors of the great genocide arrived; from 1925 to 1936 came the Armenians from Cilicia who escaped from Turkey, and lastly, between 1947 and 1954 many Armenians came to Argentina as a consequence of the Second World War.

The Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch was established with families that came from Iraq, Syria and Turkey, as a result of the religious intolerance in the latter and the great wave of immigration that took place at the beginning of the 20th century. This church is led by a vicar patriarch, and its headquarters are in the city of La Plata. There are several places of worship and social centres in the inland to care for the faithful. This church is in full communion with the Catholic Apostolic Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate of Antioch, with which it has signed a document for faith unity.

The Orthodox churches have contributed to cultural and educational institutions, services to the needy, radio programmes and other activities that enrich the mosaic of Argentinian culture. Their members are fully involved in social and political life.

Steps to unity

Dialogue for unity has not been easy in Argentina. Until the 1960s ecumenical relations were mainly between Protestant and Evangelical churches, but did not involve either the Roman Catholic or the Orthodox churches. There have always been fraternal relations among the different church authorities, but there was distrust in local communities, due to proselytising and the growth of Protestant churches. Churches were not involved in any formal dialogue. At that time, Protestant and Evangelical churches worked together in organizations such as the Bible Society, the Federation of Churches and the local branches of the YMCA and YWCA. They also celebrated together Reformation Day and the World Day of Prayer.

After some years, dialogue and fellowship among believers of different traditions bore fruits. It was thanks to the new currents flowing from the Second Vatican Council, and to openness in the Protestant churches due to the influence of the European ecumenical movement, that a new and fruitful period started for encounter and co-operation began. Local congregations met together and dialogue started among ministers and priests. Bilateral commissions also began to meet. In some places, there is co-operation in social services, in human rights organizations, and in the distribution of scriptures. The positive results of activities such as the seminary for theological training, the Inter-parochial Service for Mutual Care and the encounter of volunteers in organizations such as Caritas, Caref, Ceas and others are remarkable.

Several years of ecumenical growth resulted in the setting up in 1988 of the Comisión Ecuémica de Iglesias Cristianas de la Argentina (CEICA), the Ecumenical Commission of Christian Churches in Argentina, a place for dialogue and co-operation where Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Protestants meet. Its members hold regular meetings to discuss issues of common interest, exchange information about their churches, talk about advancements or difficulties in ecumenical work, local and global, and organize encounters to pray together for church unity and the needs of our time. Bishops, ministers, priests and lay people, both men and women, take part in these meetings.

During its short existence, CEICA has faced the difficulties and the challenges of any ecumenical effort - to harmonise different traditions and ways of being Christian; to overcome misunderstandings and to take decisions that express and satisfy everybody's point of view. It has also achieved enormous progress in mutual knowledge and appreciation in discovering all that the different churches have in common, including the challenge for pastoral mission in our society. This commission is in charge of organizing the Argentinian Week of Prayer for Christian Unity every year.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2003 Themes 1968-2002

In 1968, materials officially prepared jointly by the WCC Faith and Order Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity began to be used.

- 1968 To the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1: 14)
Pour la louange de sa gloire
- 1969 Called to freedom (Galatians 5: 13)
Appelés à la liberté
(Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1970 We are fellow workers for God (1 Corinthians 3: 9)
Nous sommes les coopérateurs de Dieu
(Preparatory meeting held at the Monastery of Niederaltaich, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1971 ...and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13: 13)
...et la communion du Saint-Esprit
- 1972 I give you a new commandment (John 13: 34)
Je vous donne un commandement nouveau
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1973 Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11: 1)
Seigneur, apprends-nous à prier
(Preparatory meeting held at the Abbey of Montserrat, Spain)
- 1974 That every tongue confess: Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2: 1-13)
Que tous confessent: Jésus-Christ est Seigneur
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- (In April 1974 a letter was sent to member churches and other interested parties concerning the setting up of local groups to be involved in the preparation of the Week of Prayer brochure. An Australian group was the first to take up this plan in preparing the 1975 initial draft of the Week of Prayer.)
- 1975 God's purpose: all things in Christ (Ephesians 1: 3-10)
La volonté du Père: Tout réunir sous un seul chef, le Christ
(Material from an Australian group. Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1976 We shall be like him (1 John 3: 2) or, Called to become what we are
Appelés à devenir ce que nous sommes
(Material from Caribbean Conference of Churches. Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1977 Enduring together in hope (Romans 5: 1-5)
L'espérance ne déçoit pas

*(Material from Lebanon, in the midst of a civil war.
Preparatory meeting held in Geneva.*

- 1978 No longer strangers (Ephesians 2: 13-22)
Vous n'êtes plus des étrangers
(Material from an ecumenical team in Manchester, England)
- 1979 Serve one another to the glory of God (I Peter 4: 7-11)
Soyez au service les uns des autres pour la gloire de Dieu
(Material from Argentina. Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1980 Your kingdom come (Matthew 6: 10)
Que ton règne vienne!
(Material from an ecumenical group in Berlin, German Democratic Republic. Preparatory meeting held in Milan)
- 1981 One Spirit - many gifts - one body (1 Corinthians 12: 3b-13)
Un seul esprit - des dons divers - un seul corps
(Material from Graymoor Fathers, USA - Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1982 May all find their home in you, O Lord (Psalm 84)
Que tous trouvent leur demeure en Toi, Seigneur
(Material from Kenya. Preparatory meeting held in Milan, Italy)
- 1983 Jesus Christ - the Life of the World (1 John 1: 1-4)
Jesus Christ - La Vie du Monde
(Material from an ecumenical group in Ireland. Preparatory meeting held in Céligny (Bossey), Switzerland)
- 1984 Called to be one through the cross of our Lord (1 Cor 2: 2 and Col 1: 20).
Appelés à l'unité par la croix de notre Seigneur
(Preparatory meeting held in Venice, Italy)
- 1985 From death to life with Christ (Ephesians 2: 4-7)
De la mort à la vie avec le Christ
(Material from Jamaica - Preparatory meeting held in Grandchamp, Switzerland)
- 1986 You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1: 6-8)
Vous serez mes témoins
(Material from Yugoslavia (Slovenia), Preparatory meeting held in Yugoslavia)
- 1987 United in Christ - a New Creation (2 Corinthians 5: 17-6: 4a)
Unis dans le Christ - une nouvelle création
(Material from England - Preparatory meeting held in Taizé, France)
- 1988 The love of God casts out fear (1 John 4: 18)
L'Amour de Dieu bannit la Crainte
(Material from Italy - Preparatory meeting held in Pinerolo, Italy)
- 1989 Building community: one body in Christ (Romans 12: 5-6a)
Bâtir la communauté: Un seul corps en Christ
(Material from Canada - Preparatory meeting held in Whaley Bridge, England)

- 1990 That they all may be one...That the world may believe (John 17)
Que tous soient un...Afin que le monde croie
(Material from Spain - Preparatory meeting held in Madrid, Spain)
- 1991 Praise the Lord, all you nations! (Psalm 117 and Romans 15: 5-13)
Nations, louez toutes le Seigneur
(Material from Germany - Preparatory meeting held in Rotenburg an der Fulda, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1992 I am with you always ... Go, therefore (Matthew 28: 16-20)
Je suis avec vous...allez donc
(Material from Belgium - Preparatory meeting held in Bruges, Belgium)
- 1993 Bearing the fruit of the Spirit for Christian unity (Galatians 5: 22-23)
Pour l'unité: laisser mûrir en nous les fruits de l'Esprit
(Material from Zaire - Preparatory meeting held near Zurich, Switzerland)
- 1994 The household of God: called to be one in heart and mind (Acts 4: 23-37)
La maison de Dieu: Appelés à être un dans le coeur et dans l'esprit
(Material from Ireland - Preparatory meeting held in Dublin, Republic of Ireland)
- 1995 Koinonia: communion in God and with one another (John 15: 1-17)
La koinonia: communion en Dieu et les uns avec les autres
(Preparatory meeting held in Bristol, England)
- 1996 Behold, I stand at the door and knock (Rev. 3: 14-22)
Je me tiens à la porte et je frappe
(Preparatory meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal)
- 1997 We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5: 20)
Au nom du Christ, laissez-vous reconcilier avec Dieu
(Preparatory meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden)
- 1998 The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8: 14-27)
L'Esprit aussi vient en aide à notre faiblesse
(Preparatory meeting held in Paris, France)
- 1999 He will dwell with them as their God, they will be his peoples
(Rev. 21: 1-7)
Dieu demeurera avec eux. Ils seront ses peuples
et lui sera le Dieu qui est avec eux
(Preparatory material from Malaysia: meeting held in Monastery of Bose, Italy)
- 2000 Blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ (Eph 1: 3-14)
Béni soit Dieu, qui nous a bénis en Christ
(Preparatory material from the Middle East Council of Churches: Preparatory meeting held at La Verna, Italy)
- 2001 I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (Jn 14: 1-6)
Je suis le chemin, et la vérité et la vie
(Preparatory material from Romania and meeting held Vulcan, Romania)
- 2002 For with you is the fountain of life (Ps 36: 5-9
Car chez toi est la fontaine de la vie (**Ps 35, 6-10**)
(Preparatory material CEEC and CEC, meeting near Augsburg, Germany)
- 2003 We have this treasure in clay jars (2 Cor. 4: 4-18)
Car nous avons ce trésor dans des vases d'argile

(Preparatory material churches in Argentina, meeting at Los Rubios, Spain)

Some key dates in the history of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

ca. 1740 In Scotland we find a Pentecostal movement with North American links, whose revivalist message included prayers for and with all churches.

1820 The Rev. James Haldane Stewart publishes "Hints for the General Union of Christians for the Outpouring of the Spirit".

1840 The Rev. Ignatius Spencer, a convert to Roman Catholicism, suggests a "Union of Prayer for Unity".

1867 The First Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops emphasizes prayer for unity in the Preamble to its Resolutions.

1894 Pope Leo XIII encourages the practice of a Prayer Octave for Unity in the context of Pentecost.

1908 The observance of the "Church Unity Octave" initiated by the Rev. Paul Wattson.

1926 The Faith and Order movement begins publishing "Suggestions for an Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity".

1935 Abbé Paul Couturier of France advocates the "Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" on the inclusive basis of prayer for "the unity Christ wills by the means he wills".

1958 Unité Chrétienne (Lyon, France) and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches begin co-operative preparation of materials for the Week of Prayer.

1964 In Jerusalem, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I prayed together Jesus' prayer "that they all may be one" (John 17).

1964 The "Decree on Ecumenism" of Vatican II emphasizes that prayer is the soul of the ecumenical movement and encourages observance of the Week of Prayer.

1966 The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity [now known as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity] begin official joint preparation of the Week of Prayer text.

1994 Text for 1996 prepared in collaboration with YMCA and YWCA.