



We Are All Members of the Catholic Church

I was recently watching a documentary about the life of American President John F Kennedy before his election to the Presidency. In the final third of the documentary, it covered the campaign that ended in Kennedy's election, and focused on the anti-Catholic sentiment which ran throughout this period. And one of the astonishing facts it revealed was that Martin Luther King Jr's father publicly stated that he could not in good conscience recommend to his congregation that they vote for Kennedy on account of his Catholicism! (He later recanted this position).

America prides itself on being a "Christian" country. But by "Christian" it means various shades of Protestantism. It is not unusual for an American to ask: "Are you Christian? Or Catholic?" This reflects the long-held prejudice towards Catholics held by many Americans, and the suspicion that Catholics "serve" a foreign power - ie: the Pope.

It reminds me of the letters I used to see in the letters pages of Crosslight, in which the writers referred to the "Catholic religion". I always found such letters puzzling, and wondered exactly what "religion" the letter writer thought Catholicism involved. Of course, coming from a Catholic background myself, I appreciate that I had an "insider's" view and thus found nothing at all mysterious about Catholicism - but it still made me wonder why some (more than some, actually) seemed to think being Catholic made you a member of a different "religion".

It may surprise many to know that we are all members of the "catholic church". Of course, by that I don't mean the Roman Catholic denomination - rather, I mean that we are all part of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church". This is how the Church as the Body of Christ on earth is described in the Nicene Creed - and for churches who subscribe to the Nicene Creed (among them the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek and other Orthodox Churches, the Anglican Church and the Uniting Church) the word "catholic" in this sense means "universal".

And the universality of the catholic church we are all members of resides in the headship of Christ as Lord and Leader of the church. How different Christian traditions understand and express this often varies quite markedly; but irrespective of how this expression takes its form, it comes down to one single reality: Christ is Lord. All Christians, whatever their stripe, look to Christ as the one in whom all our hopes (to quote the hymn) are founded.

Sadly, history has shown that all too often Christians have allowed the differences between them to overshadow the fact that they all had in common Christ as the One to whom they looked. Even Jesus' disciples quarrelled among themselves and vied for Jesus' favour and wanted to know which of them would sit at Jesus' right hand in heaven. It is one of the sad characteristics of humans that we seem to pay attention to what divides us rather than seeing the points in common we share.

Of course, the differences are important. But instead of seeing them as obstacles, I think we should see them as the space that makes dialogue possible. After all, if we all thought and perceived and believed the same, we would have nothing to talk about. But appreciating difference as "dialogical space" can often be the way to overcome mutual suspicion and misunderstanding.

So the next time you're tempted to think that someone's not "one of us", think again. At the most fundamental level, we have a shared humanity - which climate change is demonstrating to our cost. Jesus called "brother" and "sister" those whom the "righteous" called "sinner" and "unclean". And, whether members of the Catholic denomination (not religion) or not, we are all of us members of the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" church, and we all look to Christ. That is certainly enough - or it should be enough! - unity to be going on with.

Remember In Your Prayers

Heathmont folk may remember Willy Westerneng, who used to regularly attend services at HUC. Sadly, Willy passed away recently, and her daughter Astrid Boulton would like to advise that Willy's service will be held on **Friday 6th October**. Exact details can be found on the **Tobin Brothers** website, or by contacting Astrid directly on 0422983980. Please remember Willy in your prayers and Astrid and her wider family at this sad time.

Daylight Savings Begins Tonight

Please remember to turn your watches and clocks **forward by an hour** when you go to bed tonight, as daylight savings begins at **2am on Sunday October 1st**. People with smart phones and watches may find their device as automatically adjusted the time, depending on its settings.

Four U News

The October meeting of Four U will take place in the Fellowship Room at HUC on **Monday October 9 at 2pm**. Brendan Byrne will be presenting a talk entitled Iceland: Journeys Through Space and Time. Full details can be found by

[clicking this link.](#)

CPP Theatre News

CPP Theatre Productions will be presenting their Annual Musical Show in October with performance dates **from October 6th to 14th** at the Mahon Theatre, Aquinas College, 46 Great Ryrie Street, Ringwood,

Bringing Charles Dickens' beloved novel to life, Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* will take you on a wild adventure through Victorian England, capturing your heart as well as your handkerchief. More details from their website, cppcommunitytheatre.com.au.

Blessings,

Brendan



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