

The History of the Catholic Church

Resources: Prayer Services

Prayer Service for Unity among All Christians

Use this complete prayer service with Chapter 6, Section 3 of The History of the Catholic Church. You may also choose to use only individual parts of the prayer service.

Needs:

- copies as needed or projection
- invite a minister from a local church or youth group to join

Prayer Introduction

Perhaps you have family or friends who are not Catholic. The shared Baptism we share with our brothers and sisters in Christ calls us to ongoing conversion and a living discipleship. Each January the Catholic Church gives special attention in prayer and action to fostering unity between Christians of different denominations. Though the lack of unity between Christians is a scandal to Jesus' desire for his Church to be one, it is a sign of hope when Christians come together to pray for the reunification of all Christians. Today you will pray and reflect on promoting unity among Christians.

Opening Prayer

Leader: (Begin with the Sign of the Cross) Jesus, Risen Lord, we gather in your name.

All: Jesus, Good Shepherd, we gather in your name.

Leader: Jesus, Word of life, we gather in your name.

All: Jesus, friend of the poor, we gather in your name.

Leader: Jesus, source of all forgiveness, we gather in your name.

All: Jesus, Prince of peace, we gather in your name.

Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, you call us together in faith and love. Breathe again the new life of your Holy Spirit among us that we may hear your holy word, pray in your name,

seek unity among Christians, and live more fully the faith we profess. All glory and honor be yours with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Responsorial Psalm

Reader 1: Who can rest on your holy mountain? Those who walk with integrity and do what is right.

All: Who can rest on your holy mountain? Those who walk with integrity and do what is right.

Reader 1: Who can rest on your holy mountain? Those who walk with integrity and do only what is right, speaking the truth with courage. They never spread slander or abuse their friends or condemn their neighbors.

All: Who can rest on your holy mountain? Those who walk with integrity and do what is right.

Reader 1: They disdain the godless, but honor those who believe. Before God, they give their word and keep it at any cost. They neither lend for gain nor take bribes against the guiltless. These are the just: they stand for ever unshaken.

All: Who can rest on your holy mountain? Those who walk with integrity and do what is right.

Scripture Reading

Reader 2: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (Jn 17: 20-26),

I pray not only for them but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

Leader: I will now read a section of the *Decree on Ecumenism* from the Second Vatican Council. Much of the efforts in the Church today to dialogue, pray, and actively work toward Christian unity was a result of the efforts of the Second Vatican Council.

“The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principle concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided. Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching of the Gospel to every creature” (*Decree on Ecumenism*, 1).

Leader: (You can either pose the following questions as for personal reflection, or for the whole group to discuss.)

- Why would the Second Vatican Council be concerned with restoration of Christian unity?
- In what ways do you think division among Christians betrays the Gospel and is a scandal to the world?
- What are issues you think different Christians have in common that can be a foundation for overcoming our divisions?

Closing Prayer

Reader 3: O God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior, the Prince of Peace: give us grace to lay to heart the sadness of our unhappy division; take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from union and concord; that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Creator of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

