

Cardinal: Christians Must Be Ashamed

Says Divided Church Is Sin, Scandal, Against Christ

The Vatican's official on ecumenism called for a "renewed Pentecost" and the "fire and storm of the Holy Spirit" in a passionate homily Sunday about Christian unity. **Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity**, spoke at the "Two Cathedrals service" in Liverpool on the feast of Pentecost. In that city, the Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals are separated by just a half mile along a road called Hope Street. Pope John Paul II processed up that street in 1982, and since that time the Pentecost service has become a tradition.

Giving an overview of the division in Christendom, the cardinal declared that **this "is hardly a Pentecostal reality."**

"This reality, we must say it without hesitation, is against Christ's will, is against the testament he left us on the eve of his death, when he prayed that all be one," he stated. "It is a reality which contradicts the Pentecostal gift of the one Spirit who wants to unify all the 'oikoumene,' all mankind in the belief in the one God, the one Savior Jesus Christ, the one baptism, the one Spirit and the one hope.

"This reality of a divided Christendom is sin and is a scandal. It damages the holy task that is the mission given by the Spirit to spread the Gospel all over the world in order to reconcile peoples and to bring them together."

Recalling the question asked 100 years ago by the renowned missionary conference in Edinburgh, the cardinal asked, **"Why are we unable to bring about a renewed Pentecost? What are the main obstacles to spreading the Good News of the Gospel?"**

"Their answer," he said, "was unanimous: The main obstacle was to be seen in the division among Christians." This insight, Cardinal Kasper proposed, became the starting point for the ecumenical movement.

"We cannot preach reconciliation and peace and at the same time be divided and not reconciled among ourselves," he said. The Vatican official went on to note all that has been accomplished in 100 years and affirmed, "There is no reason for disappointment. Today Christians are closer together than ever before."

But **he suggested four points as a plan** for what to do next.

His first recommendation was **prayer**. It must be remembered, he said, that "unity of the Church is not our own work; the unity of the Church ultimately is a gift of the Spirit. We cannot 'make,' we cannot organize, we cannot manipulate or enforce it."

Secondly, Cardinal Kasper reiterated that "the walls of division do not reach up to heaven; there is **more that unites us** than what divides us."

"So we have to consolidate what we have in common," he urged. "Why not re-establish Bible groups and Bible sharing, as well as groups of faith formation and faith information for adults, and of ecumenical formation and information in order to overcome wrong information, old prejudices and religious illiteracy. In such groups we can learn from each other and can enrich ourselves. For ecumenical dialogue does not mean abandoning our own heritage but enriching it through an exchange of gifts, as the late Pope the Venerable John Paul II taught us."

Ecumenism will not be possible without conversion, the Vatican official stated in listing his third point.

Ecumenism calls for "changing our mind and ever more our hearts, there cannot be any ecumenism without profound conversion; conversion not understood as conversion to a different church, but **conversion understood in a much more fundamental and original sense as conversion to Jesus Christ**, because he is the way, the truth and the life."

Finally, Cardinal Kasper recommended growing together. "Our world needs **the cooperation of all good Christians**; it needs that we speak with one voice about human and Christian values, especially about family values which are in so much jeopardy today," he said. "Our world also needs our cooperation in the field of culture, peace, social justice and the preservation of creation. **Our time particularly needs courage and hope, it must see that not only bad things happen but also good things are possible**. So we should give witness that even after a sometimes painful history between the churches reconciliation, cooperation and friendship are possible."

Cardinal Kasper concluded by affirming that what is needed is a "renewed Pentecost; what we need is the fire and storm of the Holy Spirit in our hearts so that we can be patient and impatient at the same time." "We need men and women, young people and elderly people with burning hearts to go out and transform the world," he said. "The Holy Spirit who was the power of the beginning is promised to us and he is at work also today. There is no reason for despair and disappointment. There is every reason for courage to walk on the road of hope as we do today and as we should do every day.

"I wish you from all my heart this fire and storm of the Spirit. Let's therefore pray: 'Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.'"