

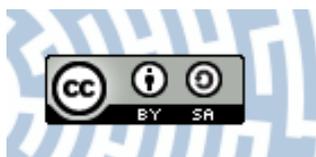


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## Polish Ecumenism as a Movement towards Unity in Diversity

**Abstract:** Since the beginning of Christianity, the consequences of the separations (regarding doctrine and tradition) have been permanent and painful. Twenty years before the Roman Catholic Church was officially involved in the ecumenical activity, the Polish Ecumenical Council, which includes the Churches of Protestant and Old Catholic tradition and the Orthodox Church, had already been working. The Roman Catholic Church entered the ecumenical path during the Second Vatican Council and since that time, together with all Churches and Ecclesial Communities, has been fulfilling the will of Christ “that they may all be one.” Polish ecumenism is performed in three fields: spiritual, scientific (doctrinal) and practical. It has become not merely “the sign of the times,” but it is seen as a duty and responsibility in the face of God and His saving plan. It is the duty and responsibility of those who through Baptism became Christ’s Body and His new people. The multitude and variety of Christian communities is simultaneously the multitude and variety of the professed content of faith. Polish ecumenists, seeking for the full unity which is still absent, take part in the process which leads towards unity in diversity.

**Keywords:** Roman Catholic Church, Polish Ecumenical Council, dialogue, ecumenism, unity, diversity

### Introduction

The Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* passed by the Second Vatican Council on 21 November 1964 became a crucial document for shaping the cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and Churches other than the Catholic Church, as well as Christian communities. The document is often referred to as a Magna Charta of involve-

ment of both the Council and the Roman Catholic Church in the unity of Christians. It presents a thorough change of Roman Catholic thinking about inter-Church references. Its important element is a new language devoid of words that condemn and exclude “those who believe differently,” in favour of words which show respect and recognition for the believers of other Churches and Christian communities. Meanwhile, Polish ecumenism was ahead of the Council’s decree on ecumenism. It is rooted in the Protestant unification movements. Even 20 years before the Roman Catholic Church was officially involved in the ecumenical activity, the Polish Ecumenical Council, which includes the Churches of Protestant and Old Catholic traditions and the Orthodox Church, had already been working. The ecumenical initiatives of Churches beyond the Catholic Church have in principle been and are still being implemented based on the structures of this very Council.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the Roman Catholic Church in Poland started its ecumenical activity. With the consent of the Polish Prime, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the services began to be organized in Warsaw, during which prayers for the unity of Christians took place. At the Pastoral College in Warsaw, an Ecumenical Section was created, and later on 1 October 1962, the Center for Christian Unity was raised at the Warsaw Metropolitan Curia by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. The Prime nominated Fr. Władysław Miziołek,<sup>1</sup> the then rector of the Warsaw Metropolitan Seminary in Warsaw and later auxiliary bishop, as the manager of the Center. After Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church in Poland together with Churches affiliated with the Polish Ecumenical Council undertook many spiritual, doctrinal, and practical initiatives. The desire for unity which was born during the Vatican II aroused great hope among Christians and a sense of responsibility for Our Lord’s words of prayer “that they may all be one” (J 17, 21). The Council ended in 1965 and since that time all subsequent popes, theologians, as well as Christians, involved in the ecumenical movement have believed that the previous divisions between the disciples of Christ openly oppose His will and are a scandal for the world. Such awareness encourages us to make efforts to find ways that lead to unity. How to reach unity? How to find it? According to the Evangelical theologian Oscar Cullman (1902—1999), “unity through multiplicity, through diversity”<sup>2</sup> charts a common path towards Christ. Considering this idea, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said: “We

<sup>1</sup> Cf. K. NITKIEWICZ: “Kościoł katolicki w dialogu ekumenicznym — ludzie, nauczanie, działania.” In: *Lublin — miasto zgody religijnej. Ekumenizm w historii, teologii, kulturze*. Eds. S. PAWŁOWSKI, S.J. ŻUREK. Lublin 2017, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> O. CULMANN: *Einheit durch Vielfalt — Grundlegung und Beitrag zur Diskussion über die Möglichkeit ihrer Verwirklichung*. Tübingen 1986, *passim*.

should try to find unity through diversity, it means to draw from the split what is fruitful, deprive it of venom and take from the diversity what is positive — of course, in the hope that eventually the tear will cease to be a tear and will become only a polarization without contradiction.”<sup>3</sup> The efforts of Churches and Christian communities aiming at unity through multiplicity should be based on “widening of the Catholic width, Evangelical depth and Orthodox dynamics in the sense of pneumatic dimension.”<sup>4</sup>

The Church in Poland, remaining on its path towards unity in diversity, should profit from its extensive history.

## 1. Roman Catholic Church in ecumenical dialogue with the Polish Ecumenical Council

Ecumenism is a word which describes reality. The word has entered the scene of today’s Christianity, also in Poland, and refers to experiences starting at the beginnings of the Church’s activity.

Polish ecumenism has its roots in the Protestant unification movement. By the end of 1942, based on the experience of the National Department of the World Association for Promoting Friendship among Nations through Churches, the Provisional Ecumenical Council was constituted in Warsaw. The Council was the result of unofficial ecumenical meetings organized for more than two years. At the beginning of its activity, it was more an association of people representing various Churches than an organized forum of Churches. In that time, “Polish Christians’ Confession of Faith” (Polish Confession) formulating the dogmatic principles recognized as the common good of all Christians, was developed. It was signed in the Methodist chapel in Warsaw in March 1944 by the clergy of the following Churches: the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession, the Evangelical Reformed, the Evangelical Methodist, the Old Catholic Church of the Mariavites and the Polish National Catholic Church. The official presentation of the Provisional Ecumenical Council took place in Warsaw on 14 October 1945. Besides the representatives of the five above mentioned Churches, Polish Baptists and Orthodox also declared their participation in the work of the Council. The meeting started with

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<sup>3</sup> J. RATZINGER: *Pielgrzymująca wspólnota wiary. Kościół jako komunია*. Trans. W. SZYMONA. Kraków 2003, p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> A. NOSSOL: “Teologiczne przeszkody na drodze do jedności chrześcijan.” In: *Kościół chrześcijański w Europie narodów*. Eds. P. JASKÓŁA, H.J. SOBECZKO. Opole 1992, p. 20.

an ecumenical service. At the plenary session of the Council, the representatives of the above mentioned Churches declared their willingness to belong to the Council in order to deepen their ecumenical commitment. Simultaneously, they decided to promote in their own confessional circles the ecumenical spirit of brotherhood and cooperation, according to the adage: “What connects us is of higher quality than that what divides us.”<sup>5</sup>

Twenty years before the Roman Catholic Church began to be officially involved in the ecumenical activity, the Polish Ecumenical Council had already started to operate. The Council consists of the Churches of Protestant and Old Catholic tradition, and the Orthodox Church. Other initiatives than Catholic were and are still being accomplished based on the structure of this Council. The official constitution of the Polish Ecumenical Council was officiated in Warsaw on 15 November 1946.<sup>6</sup> At the turn of 1950s and 1960s, after Pope John XXIII had announced the idea of convening the general council, an ecumenical opening took place in the Roman Catholic Church. This opening could have also been felt in Poland. After the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church undertook a number of spiritual, doctrinal, and practical ecumenical initiatives. In 1968, the Conference of Polish Episcopate issued a pastoral letter in which Catholics were called to show fraternal respect for the Christian Orthodox, Protestants, and members of other Christian communities. The bishops expressed their desire to overcome mistrust and avert malevolence, which would allow establishing closer ecclesiastical contacts and a fruitful dialogue.<sup>7</sup>

Polish Episcopate Commission for Ecumenism (now Polish Bishops' Council for Ecumenism) faced a very important task — first to make contact, and later start cooperation with the Churches associated in the Polish Ecumenical Council, as the modern ecumenical movement seeks reconciliation and reconstruction of unity with Churches and not only with individual persons or groups of Christians. On 7 December 1977, a Subcommittee for Doctrinal Dialogue was established. It began its work with discussions with the Churches associated in PEC about the issue of respecting Baptism administered in particular Churches, and the mutual recognition of this sacrament. The Roman Catholic Church in Poland and the Churches associated in the Polish Ecumenical Council signed the declaration about mutual recognition of the Sacrament of the Holy Baptism on 23 January 2000.

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<sup>5</sup> K. KARSKI: “Powstanie i rozwój Polskiej Rady ekumenicznej.” *Studia i Dokumenty Ekumeniczne* 12 (1996), no. 2, p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> *List Pasterski Episkopatu „O dążeniu do jedności chrześcijan”* (Warszawa, 23.10.1968). In: *„Ut unum”*. *Dokumenty Kościoła katolickiego na temat ekumenizmu 1982—1998*. Ed. S.C. NAPIÓRKOWSKI. Lublin 1998, pp. 209—214.

It means that a person's baptism in one of these Churches is acknowledged by the remaining ones and it does not need to be repeated. Baptism administered in the Roman Catholic Church and in the following Churches: Evangelical-Reformed, Polish Catholic, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church and Old Catholic Church of the Mariavites, is considered valid. At the end of *The Declaration of Churches in Poland at the Beginning of the Third Millennium* there is an optimistic — ecumenical — tone:

Baptism in Christ is a call to the Churches for overcoming their divisions and for manifesting their unity in a one visible way.<sup>8</sup>

In the practice of Christian Churches, baptism shows how important it is for the unity of Christians. At the same time it is the basis for creating Christian community — ecumenism of communion.

The other issue the Subcommittee for Doctrinal Dialogue dealt with was the question of marriages between the members of different Christian denominations. A pastoral instruction, developed by the Subcommittee and discussed with the representatives of PEC, was approved by the Conference of Polish Episcopate and handed on to the bishops to be put into practice in the dioceses.

One of the important areas in the ecumenical cooperation in Poland has been, since 1994, the engagement of the Churches in the new, joint translation of the Scriptures. On 17 March 2018, Warsaw was the place where the Ecumenical Bible was launched. It is a new translation of the Holy Scripture of the Old Testament and New Testament (ecumenical translation from native languages) prepared by the International Translation Team of the Bible Society in Poland. The Synod of the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession, during the debates on 4 April 2018, adopted a resolution about the use of the Ecumenical Bible during liturgy. That way the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession in Poland has become the first Church associated in the Polish Ecumenical Council to use this Bible in liturgy and the texts from the Bible will be used in meditations during ecumenical services. In the process of making the visual unity of Christians real — according to the documents of Christian Churches and interfaith dialogues — spiritual ecumenism takes a special place. Its essence is the inner transformation which is the result of the Holy Spirit's action and shows the way to live according to the Gospel in the spirit of following Christ. Therefore, in the centre of the pursuit for unity is the prayer, whose source is the desire of Jesus Christ “that they may

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<sup>8</sup> “Sakrament chrztu znakiem jedności. Deklaracja Kościołów w Polsce na progu trzeciego Tysiąclecia.” In: *Encyklopedia ekumenizmu w Polsce (1964—2014)*. Eds. J. BUD-  
NIAK, Z. GLAESER, T. KAŁUŻNY, Z.J. KIJAS. Kraków 2016, pp. 514—515.

all be one [...], that the world may believe” (J 17, 21). “This conversion of the heart and the sanctity of life including public and private prayers for the unity of Christians — as it was underlined in the Council’s Decree on Ecumenism — should be considered as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement” (DE 8). One of the oldest and most developed forms of spiritual ecumenism in Poland is the Week of Prayers for Christian Unity, traditionally celebrated from 18 to 25 January each year.

When thinking about ecumenism in Poland, we arrive at the conclusion that the unification movement in our country is one which runs on two rails. It is a movement full of contrasts, quite similar to Polish reality. This twofold movement consists of:

## 1.1 The beginnings of Polish ecumenical movement

It started in the year 1925 (Bishop Juliusz Bursche, Fr. Prof. Dr Jan Szeruda, Fr. Zygmunt Michelis), was continued during the Second World War and in the first postwar years. People of different denominations were truly united by their shared misery. It is no wonder, though, that after the war they kept to what they had vowed to each other in concentration camps, bunkers or the underground. It was how the Christian Ecumenical Council in Warsaw started. Later on, it was transformed into the Polish Ecumenical Council.

## 1.2 Contemporary Polish ecumenical movement

This movement began when the Roman Catholic Church started to cooperate with the Polish Ecumenical Council after Vatican II (1962—1965). As Karl Rahner said “new seed germs” presented themselves after Vatican II. Soon after the Council was concluded, the Polish translation of the Council’s documents appeared. Looking at the development of ecumenical relations between Churches in Poland, it can be said that the words spoken by the Malachite patriarch Maximos IV in the Council’s aula, are true: “Ecumenism is a door opened for us by the Holy Spirit, a door which nobody can close any more.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. SKOWRONEK: *Teologiczne zbliżenia*. Warszawa 1993, p. 137.

Following the collapse of the communist totalitarian system in Eastern Europe (1989), more Churches joined the ecumenical movement — Seventh-Day Adventists, Christ's Congregations and Pentecostal. However, the cooperation between the Churches joined in the Polish Ecumenical Council and the Roman Catholic Church was not so easy. Not always were the Churches to blame. There was another “partner” that always tried to stand between them; the state authorities. It must be said that the then authorities did their best to prevent the Catholic-Protestant-Orthodox-Old Catholic meetings. They did everything to prevent the Protestant Church from selling their church buildings to the Catholic Church. As a consequence, particularly in the Mazury Region, Catholics illegally occupied the unused Protestant churches, but unfortunately those in use, too. It led to great controversies in the relations between the Churches. Also in the post-war times in Mazury, the communist authorities played a big role in stirring up arguments between Lutherans and Methodists.

The first contacts between the Protestant Churches and the Roman Catholic Church were established by the already mentioned bishop Zygmunt Michelis in 1959. The first ecumenical service in history took place in the Warsaw Roman Catholic St. Marcin church on 10 January 1962. Bishop Zygmunt Michelis was preaching. Similar services took place in Cieszyn Silesia and the moderator of those meetings was — from the Catholic side — Bishop Herbert Bednorz, and from the Protestant — Rev. Jan Gross, the precursor of the ecumenical movement in Silesia. At first, both met on a private ground. In that region, the first ecumenical service took place in a Catholic parish church in Pruchna in January 1969. In the 1970s, ecumenical services and concerts were organized both in Catholic and Protestant churches. Those were the beginnings of ecumenism on a large scale. Later on, two other true ecumenists joined the group — Archbishop Alfons Nossol and Fr. Arkadiusz Miś from Drogomyśl.

As it was already said, our ecumenism moves forward somehow on two rails of one track. One rail is the one which has been used for many years by the Churches associated in the Polish Ecumenical Council, gathering three Christian traditions: Protestant, Orthodox and Old Catholic. The second, younger rail set up in the 1960s and 1970s, is the Roman Catholic rail. Both rails run in parallel, sometimes closer and at other times more distant from each other. But they should not be too far away from each other and they should not drift apart if they want to fulfill together the prayer of our Lord, particularly the words: “Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are” (J 17, 11).

## 2. Selected positive and negative ecumenical experiences

In the ecumenical activities one may encounter positive and negative experiences which arise from historical separations, conflicts, and differences. Among the ecumenical experiences a few selected examples — positive and negative — can be presented.

On 23 January 2000 in Warsaw Lutheran Holy Trinity Cathedral, the Churches of the Polish Ecumenical Council, except the Baptist Church (for dogmatic reasons), and the Roman Catholic Church signed a common declaration about their mutual recognition of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

After the introduction of religion lessons at schools (1990/1991), on the one hand the Churches got closer with each other because they organized many events together, especially in the Christmas time, or they organized biblical competitions. But on the other hand, there occurred misunderstandings among the children of different denominations caused by lack of tolerance, as the children had been brought up in the environment filled with hatred for the other religion. In one of the secondary schools in Cieszyn Silesia in the 1960s, there was a teacher who used to put the letters *p* and *k* (as in *protestant* and *katolik*, Polish for ‘a Protestant’ and ‘a Catholic’, respectively) next to his pupils’ names in the class register forgetting that school is a place free of religious prejudices. Within theological universities and faculties in Poland, separate departments and sections of ecumenical theology were founded. They initiated the foundation of several dynamically operating Ecumenical Institutes. The first of them was established at the Theological Faculty of the Lublin Catholic University that in 2018 celebrated its 100th anniversary. These examples should be seen as another positive ecumenical experience in our country.

In 1994, the University of Opole with a Theological Faculty was established. Since the very beginning of this university, there has been a Chair of Ecumenism and Comparative Theology.

The academic community in Cieszyn is also worth mentioning as at the Branch of Pedagogical-Artistic Faculty of the University of Silesia, in the academic year 1998/1999, a department of religious education was opened which took on a new, that is, ecumenical dimension. In the building of Alma Mater in Cieszyn, an ecumenical chapel was established and consecrated on 12 May 1998. At the premises of the university, members of the Polish Region of International Ecumenical Fellowship organized an International Ecumenical Congress (21—28 August 1995) for the first time in Poland. The Congress attracted more than three hundred repre-

sentatives of various Churches from almost all over the world. The theme of the meeting was: *Renew us through prayer and work*.<sup>10</sup>

Following the example of the World Day of Prayer for Peace that was organized for the first time on John Paul II's initiative in Assisi in 1986, where Christians from different Churches and ecclesial communities prayed for peace in the world, in Poland such initiative was also taken. Among others, there was held an international ecumenical service for peace in St. John the Baptist church in Brenna, in Cieszyn Silesia on 18 March 2002. The service gathered clergy from five Christian Churches in Poland and the Czech Republic.<sup>11</sup> The president of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, appreciating the role and the significance of ecumenical dialogue in Cieszyn Silesia, came to Cieszyn to participate in the ecumenical prayer for peace in the world on 1 September 2011. Also Catholic and Lutheran bishops took part, as well as many faithful of both religions. Referring to the geographical position of Cieszyn, President Komorowski said that: "[...] a voice from here, from the border of nations, languages, cultures, and religions proves that being different does not mean misfortune but beauty and wealth of Poland and all world's nations."<sup>12</sup>

Another positive aspect of Polish ecumenism is the ecumenical translation of New Testament and Psalms published in autumn 2001. The translation was accomplished by theologians of different Christian denominations. The whole Bible, the Old and New Testaments, as it was mentioned before, was published in 2018.

Rev. Jan Gross, the ex-president of the Silesian Branch of Polish Ecumenical Council, wrote in his diaries: "When I was a child, at school I often heard my Catholic friends say that entering a Protestant church is for them such a great sin that immediately they have to confess what they had done. When I started my work as a priest in Szczytno, one day I was showing the teachers around our Protestant church. When I pointed to the statue of Our Lady with Little Jesus in the main altar, the Catholic teachers told me, that it was really strange because they had always been told that a picture of Our Lady was buried under the threshold of every Protestant church, and everyone who went through the threshold trampled on Her. And here in your church is a statue of Our Lady!"

These examples show the lack of ecumenical knowledge. Nowadays you do not hear such statements any more. Undoubtedly, the ecumeni-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. BUDNIAK: *Ekumenizm jutra na przykładzie Śląska Cieszyńskiego*. Katowice 2002, pp. 162—173.

<sup>11</sup> See "Brenna jak Asyż." *Głos Ziemi Cieszyńskiej* Cieszyn 22.03.2002, pp. 1—2.

<sup>12</sup> J. BUDNIAK: "Wkład społeczności lokalnej w proces pojednania chrześcijan." In: *Człowiek dialogu*. Ed. Z. GLAESER. Opole 2012, p. 617.

cal education, ecumenical documents and the dialogues have had a great influence on the improvement of the situation.

John Paul II entered Protestant churches more than once. The best example is his visit in Skoczów on 22 May 1995. After the canonization of St. Jan Sarkander, the Pope participated in an ecumenical prayer in the Holy Trinity Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession. In his speech, John Paul II stressed the importance of the ecumenical dialogue in the Bielsko-Żywiec Diocese. He said: “[...], Cieszyn Silesia is well known in Poland as a place of particular ecumenical testimony. For a long time it has been a region of harmonious coexistence of the faithful from the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession, and an intensive ecumenical dialogue. The dialogue is conducted with a deep conviction that we have so much in common, and what joins us is the common faith in Christ and our common homeland.”<sup>13</sup>

Further example of positive ecumenical experience is the fact that after 55 years, the Roman Catholic Church represented by Archbishop Damian Zimoń from Katowice, returned the Protestant Martin Luther church in Siemianowice Śląskie (German *Laurahütte*), built by the Protestants in 1895 and confiscated, with the help of the communist authorities, by the nuns from the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary who arrived from Vilnius in 1945. This is undoubtedly an important experience in our Polish reality.

There are also some negative experiences. During the parliamentary elections in 1997, the Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families) party hung calumnious posters about Protestant candidates (Prof. Jerzy Buzek and the Senate Deputy Speaker Marcin Tyrna). The posters called on the constituency to boycott those candidates to the Parliament (“The Protestants disappointed us, the communists, too! Look for Catholic candidates on the lists”).

In a village run for 12 years by a local leader who was a Protestant lady, two Catholic priests tried actively to persuade the Catholics that she should not be re-elected. When she finally was elected, there were people who managed to call another vote in a part of the constituency. As an end result, she received almost 400 votes more than the Catholic candidate. And who re-elected her? Mostly Catholics, because there are only about 70 Protestant inhabitants there. This experience has negative overtones as far as the priests are concerned, but very positive as far as the Catholic faithful are concerned. Because of that, that village did not have the traditional ecumenical harvest festival which is organized in many other Silesian villages every year.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 784.

The numerous ecumenical initiatives, which have found their permanent place in the region's calendar of events, also serve the integration of the communities on both banks of the Olza River. The examples of ecumenical experiences can be found in many Polish regions, but Cieszyn Silesia belongs to the most outstanding regions as far as the ecumenical experiences are concerned. The members of the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church meet during the celebrations of public holidays, such as the Third of May (Constitution Day), 11 November (Independence Day), when new educational, cultural, or charity institutions are opened, or many other jubilees. The meetings are accompanied by shared prayers, and there is always the possibility to learn about each other — how they celebrate their ceremonies, church fairs, the day of the parish founding. There are many inspirational forms of help provided by the entire community, not only for those in need but also when a church building is being renovated or a new one is built. All those various forms of help evoke the statement made by Jan Martyniak, the bishop of the Byzantine-Ukrainian rite, during the 28th International Ecumenical Congress in Cieszyn: "The world needs unity, but there will be no unity if we don't meet."<sup>14</sup> Meetings are an inspiration for the inter-confessional dialogue which is an important element of the ecumenical movement, that is, the movement of unity in diversity.

Catholics, Protestants, and Christians of other denominations live next to one another as neighbours, interact at work and learn how to live among people of different religions. We should constantly develop in our minds the things that we share in our faith and we should become conscious of them. We should also seek unity in spite of the differences that are still present between us. Baptism and Eucharist are the two sacraments accepted by all Christians. As to Baptism, there is a basic agreement of all the Churches. Baptism administered in one Church is accepted in others. There is a lack of similar agreement concerning Eucharist. The fact that Baptism is accepted does not mean that we are allowed to share in one Eucharist. Despite the Christians' longing, they still cannot be united around one altar to consume the same eucharistic bread and drink from the one chalice. This situation is against the will of Jesus who prayed during the Last Supper, "that they may all be one." Eucharist is the sacrament of communion, which means the unity of man not only with the Lord, but also unity of the people with one another. This context highlights the drama of separation best. Christians must not be indifferent to it.

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<sup>14</sup> J. BUDNIAK: *XXVIII Międzynarodowy Kongres Ekumeniczny w Cieszynie. Ora et labora*. Cieszyn 1996, pp. 30—31.

## Conclusions

During the ecumenical service in Armenia, John Paul II formulated his appeal for the ecumenical movement: “As we work for full communion, let us do together what we do not have to do separately. Let us work together, with full respect for our distinctive identities and traditions. Never again Christians against Christians, never again Church against Church! Rather, let us walk together, hand in hand, so that the world of the twenty-first century and the new millennium may believe!”<sup>15</sup> Those words show the path of life in peace and selfless love and solidarity not only to the ecumenism of tomorrow, but to all mankind reconciled in diversity. Christians should seek to shape together sister-brotherly references between the divided Churches at least for the reason that “anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can be a help to our own edification” (DE 4).

All Christians are responsible for seeking unity, and the prospect that no ecumenical effort is in vain should encourage us. Each good initiative is worth undertaking and makes sense. Unity is not the goal alone. Ecumenism is, as John Paul II formulated it: “a movement towards unity,”<sup>16</sup> and: “those belong to it who invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour, doing this not merely as individuals but also as corporate bodies. For almost everyone regards the body in which he has heard the Gospel as his Church and indeed, God’s Church. All however, though in different ways, long for the one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and forth into the world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God” (cf. DE 1).

Polish ecumenism is a movement towards unity in diversity. It is an irreversible process both on the spiritual level and in everyday practice. Ecumenism is not merely the “sign of the times,” but it is a duty and responsibility in the face of God and His saving plan. It lies with those who through Baptism became Christ’s body and His people. At the same time, the pursuit for reconciliation should be the inner voice of Christian conscience enlightened by faith and guided by love.

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<sup>15</sup> Przemówienie papieża Jana Pawła II na nabożeństwie ekumenicznym w Eczmiazynie. *Wiadomości KAI* nr 40, 7.10.2001, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> JOHN PAUL II: *Wiara przeniknięta pragnieniem jedności chrześcijan* (26.06.1985). Available online: <https://www.apostol.pl/janpawelii/katechezy/bog-ojciec/wiara-przeniknieta-pragnieniem-jednosci-chrzescijan> (accessed 3.05.2018).

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JÓZEF BUDNIAK

## L'œcuménisme polonais — un mouvement vers l'unité dans la diversité

### Résumé

Les effets des divisions (concernant la doctrine et la tradition) sont, dès le début du christianisme, stables et douloureux. Vingt ans avant l'engagement officiel de l'Église latine dans l'activité œcuménique, avait déjà fonctionné le Conseil œcuménique polonais qui comprend les Églises de la tradition protestante et vieille-catholique, ainsi que

L'Église orthodoxe. L'Église latine est entrée sur la voie œcuménique durant le Concile Vatican II et à partir de ce moment-là, de concert avec toutes les Églises et Communautés ecclésiastiques, réalise le testament de Jésus afin que « tous soient un ». L'œcuménisme polonais est réalisé dans trois domaines: spirituel, scientifique (doctrinal) et pratique. L'œcuménisme est donc devenu non seulement « le signe du temps », mais c'est l'obligation et la responsabilité à l'égard de Dieu et Son intention salutaire qui reposent sur ceux qui, après être baptisés, sont devenus le Corps de Jésus et Son nouveau peuple. La multitude et la diversité des communautés chrétiennes sont à la fois la multitude et la diversité de la substance de la foi. Les œcuménistes polonais, aspirant à l'unité complète, qui n'existe pas encore, participent au processus qui vise l'unité dans la diversité.

**Mots-clés:** Église latine, Conseil œcuménique polonais, dialogue, œcuménisme, unité, diversité

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## L'ecumenismo polacco come movimento verso l'unità nella diversità

### Sommario

Le conseguenze delle divisioni (riguardanti la dottrina e la tradizione) dall'inizio del cristianesimo sono permanenti e dolorose. Vent'anni prima del coinvolgimento ufficiale della Chiesa cattolico-romana nell'attività ecumenica operava già il Consiglio Ecumenico Polacco del quale fanno parte le Chiese della tradizione protestante, vetero-cattolica e la Chiesa Ortodossa. La Chiesa cattolico-romana intraprese il cammino ecumenico durante il Concilio Vaticano II e da quel momento, insieme a tutte le Chiese e le Comunità ecclesiali realizza il testamento di Gesù "perché tutti siano una sola cosa". L'ecumenismo polacco viene realizzato in tre campi: spirituale, accademico (dottrinale) e pratico. L'ecumenismo è quindi divenuto non solo un "segno del tempo", ma costituisce un obbligo e una responsabilità dinanzi a Dio ed al Suo progetto salvifico che gravano su coloro che, per mezzo del battesimo, sono divenuti Corpo di Cristo ed il Suo nuovo popolo. La molteplicità e la diversità delle comunità cristiane sono al tempo stesso molteplicità e varietà dei contenuti di fede professati. Gli ecumenisti polacchi, aspirando a realizzare l'unità completa che ancora non c'è, partecipano al processo finalizzato all'unità nella diversità.

**Parole chiave:** Chiesa cattolico-romana, Consiglio Ecumenico Polacco, dialogo, ecumenismo, unità, diversità