

*He restores my soul.
Moments of Recognition*

**Pray
Without
Ceasing**

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Dear Friends,

This year sees the centenary celebration of what we have come to know as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. One hundred years ago the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement in Garrison, New York held the first ever Octave for Christian Unity and have continued to pray without ceasing for unity among Christians since that time. Gradually over the years they were joined by more and more people, by congregations, parishes, whole denominations. Today this Octave is recognised and supported by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and by the Vatican Pontifical Commission for Promoting Christian Unity.

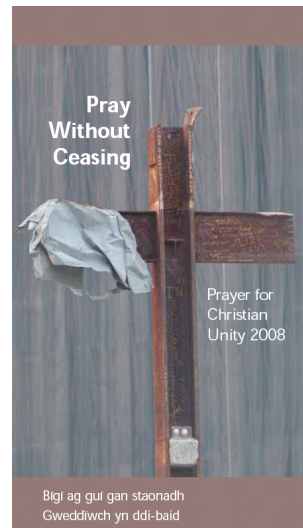
This year's theme is 'Pray Without Ceasing.' Sometimes it's hard to see the results of prayer, especially when situations for which we are praying don't seem to improve or may even deteriorate. While we may not be very encouraged to date at the state of unity among Christians, think where we might be had people not been faithfully praying over the last one hundred years. We in Ireland, perhaps more than anywhere else at the moment, know the results of faithful, unceasing prayer from people around the world. It has been prayer that has created the seismic shift that enabled politicians to do their bit and bring us to this new day of hope and peace. Had there not been that unceasing prayer, violence and destruction would have won the day. We still have a long way to go but at least we're on the road towards the sort of community for which we have yearned, one whose hallmarks are justice, peace, truth and mercy.

I have to confess that I have some difficulty with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In itself, it's a great idea, but it can become for many the great conscience salver, where they do their bit for one week of the year and then it's off the agenda until the following January. I find it hard to understand how anyone can really listen to that awesome prayer that Jesus prayed on the night before he died and not be moved, challenged, inspired and called to respond. In that prayer he prays not only for his disciples but for all those who would believe because of their testimony. And that means us. His words are very specific, namely "that they may be one so that the world will believe." We are not called to uniformity but to unity, to be so united in our diversity that others would believe. In fact, this witness is perhaps our greatest evangelistic tool, so why have we either ignored it, or resisted it or even actively opposed it for so long? How can we become, in our own beings, in our churches and communities, part of the answer to that prayer of Jesus, even at this late date? Perhaps we need to rediscover our passion for praying for what was so obviously the desire of his heart, but also to follow up that prayer with prayer motivated action, to put our bodies where our words and our prayers have been.

Thank God for St. Francis who walked so closely with Jesus and who passionately lived his prayer for renewing of the church, for reconciliation, unity and peace. And thank God for all those who have been inspired by his example, like the Sisters and Brothers who initiated this Octave for Christian Unity. Perhaps the greatest prayer for peace ever written is that attributed to St. Francis, a prayer where we are invited to be instruments of peace in a world

that could today be collectively described as a war zone. The challenge is to cross over from hatred to love, from injury to pardon, from doubt to faith, from despair to hope, from darkness to light and from sadness to joy. We are called to console, to understand, to love. In so doing, we learn something of the upside down nature of the kingdom, that in giving we receive, in pardoning we are pardoned, and in letting go, we discover the secret of being fully alive.

May we all be encouraged to keep on keeping on, to live the prayer with passion and to continue to pray without ceasing during the year that lies waiting. And may God, who created diversity and saw that it was good, bless you with the riches of that diversity and lead you farther along the path to unity in 2008. Happy New Year



Ruth

MONTHLY MEETING

MOMENTS OF RECOGNITION

The Path of Blessing

Monday January 28th, 2008

At

8.00 pm

In

Restoration House

LENTEN DAY OF REFLECTION

Saturday 15th March

2.00 pm - 6.00 pm

In

Restoration House

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Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

(100th Anniversary 18 - 25 January 2008)

Pray Without Ceasing

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the **Benedictine Presence in Rostrevor** in Ireland they have decided to organise a series of Evening Services during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

They invite fellow-Christians to live this series of Evening Services as a kind of six-day Ecumenical Mission. **Evening Service each day at 7.45 pm**

The theme they propose for the mission is:

Rejoicing in each others' gifts ...

Sharing and celebrating the treasures of our particular churches.

For further information contact: Holy Cross Monastery
Tel (028) 4173 9979 - Email: benedictinemonks@btinternet.com

St Patrick's Church Downpatrick

Ruth is speaking on

Sunday 20 January at 7.00 pm

Greenhills Ecumenical Conference

Our Lady's College Greenhills Drogheda

Monday 21 Jan. at 10.00 a.m. Theme: God in Secular Society

Ruth is chairing this annual conference

For further information contact: Rev Tom Kingston 050547595

St Joseph's Carmelite Monastery

Upper Kilmacud Road Dublin

Ruth is speaking after the 4.30 Evening Prayer

Tuesday 22nd Jan.

For the full list of speakers contact the community on 003531 2886089