



"Ut unum sint"

Prayer for Unity as King Charles meets Pope Leo

30th Week of the Year 26 October 2025

Reflection Mgr Daniel McHugh

"God be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13)

I remember vividly the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, to Rome to meet Pope Paul VI in 1966. We were students in the English College where the Archbishop resided during his stay. A key moment was the Service of Prayer in St Paul's Basilica on 24 March when a Declaration inaugurating a new Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion was signed. More personal for us students was the moment when Archbishop Ramsey said "goodbye" in the Cortile of the College, and amid much clapping he threw his Canterbury Cap into the air! Truly it was a spontaneous and warm occasion: the desire for unity between the Churches, the fulfilment of Our Lord's prayer "Ut unum sint" that we may be one (John 17:21) as His followers, was evident.

So, as I write this Reflection and the visit this week of King Charles and Queen Camilla to the Vatican is very much in the news, I am conscious that the growth in unity is still alive, and King Charles III as Supreme Governor of the Church of England will pray alongside Pope Leo in the Sistine Chapel for the first time since King Henry VIII broke with the Pope in 1534. While we are conscious of division in certain areas of Church practice, we celebrate unity in others, not least in our common commitment to care for the environment, and to peace in the

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world, which will feature in a service in St Paul's Basilica, as well as standing humbly before God recognising that the unity for which we pray can only come through the power of the Holy Spirit.

As it happens, we have been reflecting on the teaching of Our Lord about "Prayer" in St Luke's Gospel on recent Sundays. Last week's focus was on "persistence" in prayer with the Parable of the widow who never gave up. This Sunday our focus is on "humility". The Loyola Press commentary in Sunday Connection sums it up like this: "The parable reminds us that when we pray, we must remember our need for God in our lives. If we are too full of ourselves, there is too little room for God's grace to work in us." Work for Church Unity requires humility too, especially in recognising present and past sins against unity, and moving from antagonism to dialogue. It is a time on the occasion of the visit of King Charles to Pope Leo to join with them in prayer for Christians especially that we may be better witnesses to the unity that Jesus wished to see as recorded in St John's Gospel chapter 17:20 "I do not pray for these only (the apostles), but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as the Father in me, and I in them, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that Thou have sent me."

Brendan McGuire in his book "Seeds for the Soul" writes: "Every Sunday we come to this table to be reconciled with God and with one another. At the beginning of Mass each week we pause to acknowledge our sinfulness. We come from different places, different spaces, and different families. We say, Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy. We acknowledge we need God's mercy and love. But we can often sound like the Pharisee and pray that we are not like others who sin more than we do. Or we fly past the moment so quickly that we do not really enter into self-reflection." These words are a wake-up call to us this 30th Sunday of the year: do we trust in ourselves, that we are righteous and treat

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others with contempt? The Parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee is a challenge: when we say at Holy Communion “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof” do we mean it? Maybe we can make a special effort to evaluate our relationship with other Christians this coming week as the Church highlights the importance of Unity among followers of Our Lord. The specially made chair placed in the apse of St Paul’s with the Coat of Arms of King Charles and the Latin words, *Ut unum sint* – that they may be one – will be a reminder to all of this special day and to be one in witness to our Baptism in Christ.

In conclusion, I quote this prayer from those given for the Mass for Christian Unity as we join Pope Leo and King Charles in prayer:

“Make known in us, O Lord,
the abundance of your mercy
and, in the power of your Spirit,
remove the division between Christians,
that your Church may appear more clearly
as a sign raised high among the nations
and that the world, enlightened by your Spirit,
may believe in Christ whom you have sent. “

As I pray, “God be merciful to me a sinner” help me to see whether my attitude to other Christians fosters the division that prevents Christ been revealed to the world by Christians who love one another.

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