

Bishops commit to the goal of unity

CCCB strategic vision rises out of ecumenical forum

BY QUINTON AMUNDSON
The Catholic Register

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) has unveiled a new strategic vision conceptualized to enhance and enliven future ecumenical and interfaith initiatives.

Several weeks after the CCCB hosted the Triennial Forum for Dialogues with various partners at St. Augustine's Seminary in



Archbishop Bolen

Toronto in late June, the bishops unveiled the four ecumenical trajectories assented to by the assembly participants.

The findings of audits of various ecumenical and interfaith dialogues conducted by the CCCB informed this strategy of priorities. The bishops' National Commission for Christian Unity, Religious Relations with the Jews and Interfaith Dialogue, chaired by Regina Archbishop Donald Bolen, then developed a proposal from the audit resolutions that anchored the discussions at the forum.

First, a commitment is to bolster ecumenical structures within the Canadian Catholic community. The CCCB envisions achieving this by launching commissions, hiring ecumenically focused personnel, establishing regional networks and even creating a unifying national syllabus to guide Catholics tapped to helm a diocesan inter-denominational department.

Bolen said that inspiring the lay faithful, particularly congregants who are skeptical or indifferent to such pursuits, should be accomplished by informing them that "ecumenical enterprise is not the Church's idea; it's the Father's idea."

"It comes out of Jesus' prayer for all His disciples to be one," said



A roundtable discussion at the CCCB's Triennial Forum for Dialogues hosted at St. Augustine's Seminary in Scarborough, Ont. The intent of the gathering was to forge a strategic ecumenical and interfaith vision. (Screened)

Bolen. "We are deeply committed to that goal of unity among Jesus' disciples. I think framing it that way: this isn't a matter of compromise; it's not a liberal-driven agenda. This is about being faithful to the Lord's desire that we be one and putting ourselves at the service of that in a way that Jesus did."

The CCCB and its partners also desire an "ecumenism of truth" with Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Jewish, Hindu and other faith communities. Dialogues and relationship-building programs will be at the heart of augmenting this interfaith pathway.

There was also a call to observe Pope Francis' endorsement of the Lund Principle, which affirms that ecumenical partners should act together in all matters except when deep doctrinal or other significant differences compel the need for separate denominational approaches.

Finally, the bishops and their allies from other faiths seek a greater spiritual ecumenism

Presenters at the forum included representatives from the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) and diocesan/eparchial ecumenical officers across Canada. Roundtable discussions centred on "benefits and challenges of the dialogues, financial sustainability and the importance of making the dialogues more visible and engaging at the local levels," stated the CCCB in a release.

Bolen's big takeaway of the Triennial Forum for Dialogues is "while we don't see in the short term a path to full visible unity with our partners, we do see that there's much that we can do together that we don't presently do." He said much could be accomplished "in terms of common witness, common mission, common study and formation, engagement in the public sphere and taking care of the poor."

The CCCB National Commission for Christian Unity, Religious Relations with the Jews and Interfaith Dialogue will seek to present the strategy at the annual CCCB Plenary in Toronto Sept. 24-26.

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