

The Reims Statement: Praying with One Voice

Reims, France, 16 August, 2011

On Common Texts and Lectionary in the life of the Churches

A Colloquium sponsored by the English Language Liturgical Consultation

Prologue:

Common work for our life in Christ is a response to Christ's prayer for unity¹. We believe that what has been achieved in ecumenical common liturgical texts and lectionary is the work of the Holy Spirit. The fruits of this work point to the power of the Spirit working in and among Christians, providing abundantly more than we could have asked or imagined,² to the glory of the One God. Our statement celebrates what has been accomplished thus far and looks toward the future with hope.

1. Liturgy and Ecumenism

The ecumenical and liturgical movements of the twentieth century, bringing together biblical and historical studies, fed a steady stream of ecumenical liturgical renewal. Today we enjoy the fruits of this harvest.³ Notable among these are common liturgical texts and the Revised Common Lectionary. They are experienced in real and immediate ways in the life of the churches and in contexts of ecumenical worship. They enrich ecumenical relationships in a mutual evangelical spirit. We celebrate the sense of being at home in one another's churches that comes with praying the same texts and hearing the same scriptures in the Sunday liturgy.

We believe

- that these achievements give us a great hope, which is a gift of God for the life of the church
- that this work is essential and deserves the full support and nurture of the churches
- in the power of the Spirit, who strengthens and guides the future work on common texts and the lectionary

2. Common Texts⁴

For the first time in history, Christians in the English speaking world are using common liturgical texts. In the process of coming to agreed common texts, scholars from different Christian traditions agreed on principles for the translation from the earliest sources. This in itself has been a gift. Despite only having been in existence for a relatively short time, these texts have been adopted freely by an ever increasing number of churches.⁵ We celebrate this. They are being experienced as a gift, a sign and a way to Christian unity in our diversity. As the churches continue to discover the riches of these shared texts, we believe further revision is inappropriate at the present time. We invite all who have not yet explored these texts, and those who have departed from their use, to join us in prayerful reflection on the value

¹ See John 17

² Ephesians 3:20-21

³ See Walter Cardinal Kasper *Harvesting the Fruits – Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London and New York: Continuum 2009)

⁴ See *Praying Together. Agreed Liturgical Texts prepared by ELLC 1988* (see www.englishtexts.org and www.commontexts.org)aa

The ELLC Common Texts are: The Lord's Prayer; Kyrie Eleison; Gloria in Excelsis; The Nicene Creed; The Apostles' Creed; Sursum Corda; Sanctus and Benedictus; Agnus Dei; Gloria Patri; Te Deum Laudamus; Benedictus; Magnificat; and Nunc Dimittis.

⁵ See list on ELLC website : www.englishtexts.org/survey.html

of common texts and careful consideration of the texts themselves. Prayed together, shared common texts become a part of the fabric of our being. They unite the hearts of Christians in giving glory to God as we undertake the mission of the Gospel.

We encourage

- ongoing creation of resources for ecumenical and liturgical formation through praying common texts
- furthering of scholarship which is faithful to tradition whilst seeking a language which is inclusive and just
- continuing ecumenical reflection on core symbolic actions and gestures, the ordo and shape of liturgy

3. The Revised Common Lectionary⁶

The Revised Common Lectionary has been widely adopted by churches in and beyond the English speaking world.⁷ Its regular use has broadened and deepened our engagement with scripture in worship, Bible study, catechesis and personal devotion. We celebrate the possibilities offered by sharing the same scripture readings across the churches and the production of related materials in all forms to support the liturgical experience. The strengthening of ecumenical relations among clergy and lay people and the renewed appreciation for the rhythm of the church’s year are among its blessings.

We commend

- continuing promotion and awareness of the worldwide use of the Revised Common Lectionary
- all initiatives to complement the Revised Common Lectionary for worship and church life
- continuing attention to the concerns about lectionary developments raised by scholars and local users
- continuing attention to implications for the lectionary coming from scholarship
- continuing efforts toward the realization of a truly common lectionary.⁸

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For further information: English Language Liturgical Consultation - www.englishtexts.org

⁶ [The Revised Common Lectionary](#) was published simultaneously in 1992 in Canada, England, and the United States. The Revised Common Lectionary was developed from the Roman Catholic *Ordo Lectionum Missae* (1969). See www.englishtexts.org and www.commontexts.org

⁷ Churches in Scandinavia, Hispanic speaking areas, Korea, Japan, Netherlands, Venezuela, Polynesia, South Africa (including Afrikaans speaking churches), are among those who have adopted the RCL and many more are expressing interest.

⁸ See *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*: Synod of Roman Catholic Bishops, 2008. Final Proposition no. 16 : “The Lectionary – The revision of the Lectionary could be made in dialogue with those ecumenical partners who use the common Lectionary.”