

We have the privilege of publishing the ecumenical journal *One in Christ* and have done so now, both monks and nuns, for many years and, more recently, in close collaboration with the monks of Holy Cross Abbey in Rostrevor, Northern Ireland. Editorial meetings now take place on Zoom – an advance, or not, time will tell, forced on us by the tragedy of the still unfolding pandemic. This same pandemic has also found us worshipping in the Parish Church of All Saints in the village of Turvey by the kind invitation of the Anglican community there, something I never imagined happening in my time here. We've suspended these eucharistic services for the present, partly out of sensitivity to the Anglican community's own decision to suspend their services. Monseigneur Mark Langham, a great ecumenist and formerly chaplain at Cambridge, sadly passed away a few days ago but left a warm and wise legacy, including an article in *Centro* – the journal of the Anglican Centre in Rome- in which he notes the difference in approach between Anglicans and Catholics in the first lockdown way back in March: no public worship was allowed but live-streaming of services could continue: Anglicans chose to 'live-stream' from home, Catholics from Church. Mark forbore to pursue the theological import of this but did note that it was a difference that needs to be acknowledged because the ecumenical endeavour can easily become a tuning out 'of deeper more grounded, confessional stances' and as '*one speaker at the General Synod of the Church of England* observed, *both sides* (in the theological debate) *can find agreement with one another by moving away from their own constituencies.*' He concludes by saying that we need to recognise such real differences, not only *between* the two communions but *within* them, and Catholics can learn a great deal from Anglicans in how to disagree better among themselves '*rather than hurling anathemas or blog posts at each other.*' As for ecumenical dialogue, we need to extend this greater ability to handle disagreements to this debate too: that is, we need the courage to '*listen to each other fears about the other,*' as well as to what we might admire. It is in this charitable listening to one another, both within and between our denominations that we can overcome both the false conflicts and the fake irenicisms which bedevil much of our own thinking. Or, in the words of Pope Francis,

*... we have two temptations: on the one hand, to wrap ourselves in the banner of one side or the other, exacerbating the conflict; on the other, to avoid engaging in conflict altogether, denying the tension involved and washing our hands of it.*

*(p.80 'Let Us Dream')*

There's a lot more to be said on this - especially the Pope's use of Romano Guardini's distinction between contradictions and contrapositions - but if we can listen well and be prepared to receive as well as give, that is, to resist foreclosing a debate by holding onto our unvoiced fears about one another, we might be surprised to find the Holy Spirit has a way of transcending our differences, both real and supposed, in a manner, as yet, unimaginable: such as through zoom, for example, or meeting as Catholics in an Anglican setting in which we find ourselves entirely at home.

Where it goes to next, of course, I have no idea, which is not a bad place to begin.

And whether suspending our services, partly out of sensitivity to the Anglican position, is merely a false irenicism or evidence of a real willingness to receive, time will, also, tell.

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