

To Be an Ecumenical Catholic...

...means to affirm the proclamation (kerygma) of historic Christianity: the Kerygma is to be discovered in the collected writings of the New Testament documents; the kerygma is to be discovered in the tradition of the Church, her liturgy and prayers, her teaching, and her ministerial practice from the earliest times to the present as well as in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. The kerygma of the Church is the living witness given by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. Inerrancy and infallibility can only be attributed to the Holy Spirit. There is no surety or certitude apart from the Holy Spirit. We can know nothing of God and of our salvation apart from the Holy Spirit. No written text, no matter how exalted, how inspired, whether or not such a text is canonical or not, can be infallible. Human thought and human language cannot, by definition bear the weight of inerrancy. Moreover, no human institution, no matter how exalted, how inspired, whether or not such an institution has the backing of long years of tradition and the support of ecclesiastical law, can ever claim to possess infallibility. Such words as inerrancy and infallibility have no meaning apart from the Holy Spirit who is the only agent in the world with such attributes. The Church does not possess infallibility anymore than the church possesses the other so-called divine attributes such as omniscience or omnipotence. Any extravagant claims to the contrary is at best foolish and at worst an act of human arrogance against the One who is the source of all things and the Lord of all. It is not that we possess the Holy Spirit as much as it is that we must be possessed by the Holy Spirit in order to be a truly kerygmatic and interpretive community of Christ in the world.

...means to affirm the radical inclusiveness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: the gradual realization of the universal and inclusive nature of the Gospel has been demonstrated in the life and growth of the Church as the circle of inclusion has continuously grown wider throughout her history and will continue to do so until all is fulfilled in Christ so that God may be all in all. "For all of you who were baptized in Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female," and we could add any other labels that would divide and objectify human persons, such as homosexual or heterosexual, married or divorced, Protestant or Catholic, liberal or conservative, "for you are all one in Christ Jesus. For we all belong to Christ!" Christ, in His suffering and death, breaks down the dividing wall of separation and enmity between all peoples. He is the universal savior of all people, he is the savior of the whole world!

...means to affirm the reign of God in the total life of the Church: the kingdom of God (the reign or rule of God) is realized through the authority of Jesus Christ and made manifest in the life of the Church through the dynamic of discernment through dialogue and prayer in Council, from local ecclesial councils to the universal or what is called the Ecumenical Council or

Synod. Jesus said that "all authority has been given to me on heaven and earth." This authority has been delegated to the Church and, as taught in the earliest experience of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles, is to be discovered and realized in the setting of an Ecumenical Council the first of which was convened in Jerusalem in the late forties of the first century. Therefore, as Ecumenical Catholics, we call for an Ecumenical Council of the Church to be convened once every fifty years in order to discern the mind of the Holy Spirit on the inevitable questions that emerge in the life of the Church in each generation. In order for a Church council to be truly ecumenical it must include representation from every Christian community whether they be Roman Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, etc... Moreover, as Ecumenical Catholics we reject both the Ultra-montanism proposed by many Vatican authorities, the Biblicism advocated by many Protestant fundamentalists, as well as the rigid traditionalism and nationalism of the Eastern Orthodox Christians. Instead, we embrace, what has been historically called conciliarism where all the voices of the faithful are heard and the will of the Holy Spirit is truly discerned.

...means to affirm the unity of God and the People of God: God is One. The People of God are One. There is only "one body and one Spirit; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of us all, who is over all and through all and in all." Sectarianism and denominationalism have no place in the One Body of Christ into which we have all been baptized and in which we are all equal members one of another. The divisions within the Church are the result of human willfulness and have nothing to do with the Holy Spirit who is always working to create the unity of authentic koinonia (communion; fellowship) among the saints who are called to strive, always in love characterized by humility and gentleness, with patience, "to preserve this unity of the Holy Spirit through the bond of peace." This is why Ecumenical Catholic Christians practice "open communion" at the Eucharistic table of Christ. All those who have taken on the name of Christ in baptism are invited to receive the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharistic Table of Jesus should never be used as a sign of division and condemnation, but always as the table of unity, holy communion, koinonia! Therefore, the practice of excommunication should be extremely rare and never a common practice. The authority to excommunicate cannot be entrusted to any one church leader apart from the authority of the Ecumenical Council.

...means to affirm the continuous work of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the One who has been promised to us by the Father (Abba) and given to us through the Son (the Word of God) in order to give birth to the People of God, the Church. Without the Holy Spirit the Church could not even exist. Without the Holy Spirit creation itself would not exist. Without the Holy Spirit humankind would never have come into existence. Without the Holy Spirit there would have been no incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Without the Holy Spirit

there could not be the resurrection of the dead. Without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing at all. Therefore, as Ecumenical Catholics we realize that we can do nothing apart from the Holy Spirit. Indeed, we ought not to attempt to do anything apart from the Holy Spirit. The only human response that can be acceptable is our willingness to surrender the totality of our lives, everything we are and everything we have, and everything we hope for, and everything we desire, to the will and direction of the Holy Spirit. "Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord." Just as we live in the Holy Spirit so shall we walk in the Holy Spirit. Our every action, our every word, must be informed by the Holy Spirit. We must earnestly desire the gift of the Holy Spirit. We must all seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is not an option for us, it is a divine imperative, "be filled with the Holy Spirit!" All things done through the Holy Spirit will produce fruit that will last forever. Those things, including what we would regard as noble, good and just, apart from the Holy Spirit are merely works of the flesh (the human ego) and will perish.

We are Ecumenical Catholics joined together through the bond of the love of God manifest in the person of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. We join our prayers with those of our Lord Jesus Christ, who on the night that he was betrayed prayed to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane that we would be one even as He and the Father are One so that we may be made partakers of the Divine Life of God in the holy Communion of the Blessed Trinity.