

More Mercy

Dear Friends in Christ,

Though I was raised in a Catholic family, as long as I can remember I have always had deep friendships with Christians from different denominational backgrounds. After finishing high school down in Florida, I moved to the Chicagoland area to attend Northwestern University. During my five years as a student-athlete at Northwestern, I encountered Jesus in profound ways through the friendship of a Catholic missionary that worked for FOCUS, Fellowship of Catholic University Students. Jesus changed the trajectory of my life as I began to understand more deeply that we can really encounter Him through Scripture and the Sacraments of the Catholic Church. This love of Christ overflowed into habits of prayer and fellowship with other Christians, including many Christians from non-Catholic Christian communities.

After leaving Northwestern, I got married and served for seven years as a Catholic missionary with FOCUS at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Similar to my experiences in high school and college, the love for Christ Jesus and His Church fostered beautiful relationships with other Catholics as well as other Christians outside of the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church. In 2019 I began praying with Jesus' own prayer from the night before He died. He prayed for His twelve apostles and then afterwards said "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world might believe that you have sent me...and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:20-23). The words of this prayer have pierced my heart and created an ache for Christian unity which remains to this day.

Jesus prayed for all Christians that they would be unified in a way that was beautiful and compelling...and yet the lived reality is that Christians of different faith traditions do not often interact with one another in a positive way that bears witness to the union they have in Christ. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, there were roughly 30 different campus ministries with virtually no interaction with one another on a practical level. I began initiating relationships with many of the other Christian ministries and sought to pursue deeper unity on campus through meaningful dialogues with one another in the context of friendship where we could learn about one another's faith traditions. In addition to these intentional conversations, we would pray with one another, serve the poor together, and play sports together with students of different faith communities. It was a beautiful thing to see on our campus.

Christian ministry leaders of different faith traditions began to introduce me to other pastors and Christian leaders beyond the college campus. While these desires to heal divisions

among Christians continued to expand, I simultaneously sought to expand and deepen own my formation in this area of Catholic teaching. I completed a Master's Degree in Theology from the Augustine Institute and did an independent study specifically on the Catholic Church's teachings on ecumenism. During that time of prayer and study, I did a research project that helped to form this work. My project outlined the key Catholic principles of ecumenism, assessed the current state of the ecumenical movement, and proposed how the Church's ecumenical teachings could be implemented incarnationally in the local context of each diocese around the world.

The Catholic Church has many official documents which provide practical recommendations for what each diocese should do in order to deepen the real though imperfect communion among all Christians. Many of these Church documents outline steps to take within individual parish boundaries at a local level. This nonprofit, More Mercy, seeks to implement practically the "Dialogue of Truth" and "Dialogue of Love" taught by the Catholic Church. More Mercy was proposed to the Bishop of the Diocese of Lincoln and was approved as a group allowed to represent the Catholic Church when we approach other Christian communities. Our heart aches to see deeper unity among Christians, not just among high-level leadership, but through practical dialogues, prayer, and collaboration among Christian communities at the local level in each neighborhood. We trust that More Mercy's efforts will be a beacon of Christ's light to a world that has been scattered and divided by sin as we move toward deepening our communion with one another in Christ.

Pray with Jesus, pray with us

“I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.” (John 17:20-23 RSV).

Jesus, I trust in You!

Max Chapman

Founder, More Mercy