

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

How Can I Defend my Catholic Faith and still be Ecumenical?

The Documents of Vatican II as well as the writings of Pope John Paul II ask us Catholics to value people of other religions as fellow children of the one and only Creator. This is true to an even higher degree among baptized Christians of the various denominations. Our Heavenly Father loves all His people and so must we.

There is much truth, goodness and beauty to be found in other religions, and there are understandings and practices we can learn from them. This does not, however, mean that one religion is as good as another, nor that there is some more revelation from God out there that we do not have. God's revelation to humans started with the prophets of old and is complete in Jesus. It cannot be added to. We must always remember that the fullness of God's revelation is found only in the one original worldwide Church founded by Jesus through the apostles. Being nice can never compromise truth. We are called to share our gift of truth.

In our town we have some good ecumenical activities where the various denominations work together. The Food Bank and the Thanksgiving service are examples. So is the Ministerial Association our pastor belongs to. On a personal level, just being good friends and perhaps sharing prayers with our Protestant neighbors is pleasing to God. We are brothers and sisters in Christ even with anti-Catholic Christians.

However, we need to learn the difference between being ecumenical and non-denominational. In an ecumenical activity we come together as Catholics and Lutherans and Baptists in the name of Jesus. In a non-denominational group we meet without ever sharing or even showing the uniqueness and giftedness of our own religion.

For a Catholic, non-denominationalism can be a dangerous denial of the fullness of our faith. Often Home Bible studies sponsored by Evangelicals can be anything but ecumenical. Well meaning or not, they frequently are designed to draw poorly catechized Catholics away from their faith.

Catholic learning and much prayer must always accompany our ecumenical outreaches. Then we need never be afraid to share with love and to defend the fullness of our holy and ancient Catholic faith..