ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE XXI PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
UNION OF SUPERIORS GENERAL (UISG)
Paul VI Audience Hall
Friday, 10 May 2019

[...]
Third question:
First of all a big thank you, Holy Father. In these days we have dealt with various
themes, one of which is interreligious dialogue: thank you for everything you do in
this area. I am also thinking of ecumenical dialogue, and I carry in my heart the
suffering that I have touched with my hands, which I have seen in so many parts for
the division that exists among Christians. I know you have done so much in this area
already. I ask: is it possible to take a few more steps to reach this communion among
Christians? Thank you.
Pope francisco:
Because of you. I believe that ecumenism is on its way, always. It is true that
theologians must study, discuss ... But there is that anecdote - which is true, they
told me it is true - that when Saint Paul VI met Athenagoras - I would like to say
Saint Athenagoras - Athenagoras said to Paul VI: "Let's do one thing: let's go
together, and the theologians will send them to an island that will reflect and do
theology, and we'll go on together". A joke, they say it's true. But if it is not true it
is well found. [Ecumenism] is always on the move. Are there any poor people? Let's
go together to work with the poor. Are there migrants? Together. Always together.
This is the ecumenism of the poor, as I call what is done on the road with works of
charity. But there is another ecumenism: that of blood. When they kill Christians
because they are Christians, they do not ask: "Are you Anglican? Are you Lutheran?
Are you a Catholic? Are you orthodox? " They kill. And the blood mixes. I remember
once that a parish priest in Hamburg, the parish priest of Sankt Josef at Wannsee,
near Hamburg, was in charge of carrying out the cause of a guillotined priest by the
Nazis for teaching catechesis to children. But after him a Lutheran pastor was
guillotined for the same reason. And he went to the bishop saying, "I can't go on with
the cause of this without the cause of the Lutheran, because their blood is mixed." It
is the ecumenism of blood. We have many, many common martyrs. Paul VI, when
he canonized the martyrs of Uganda, were half-Catholic and half-Anglican catechists,
more or less, and in the speech of canonization he mentioned the martyrdom of the
Anglicans. Paul VI had already said this. There is the ecumenism of blood. We must
do as much as possible together. For example, I come from blessing the exhibition on trafficking ["Talitha kum", opened before this audience in the hall of the Paul VI Hall]: we work together, all, Catholics, evangelicals, all, because it is a social problem that we must help solve. And I believe this is important: ecumenism is on its way, not only with theological reflection. This will help, because we have made good progress, for example with the Lutherans, on justification ... good progress. But we cannot remain still until all theological points are resolved. Theologians have a great function in the Church: that they study and that they help us; but we, meanwhile, have to walk. And then the ecumenism of prayer. They are three. The ecumenism of prayer, the ecumenism of the blood, the ecumenism of the poor. Pray for one another, even one with the other. This, as far as ecumenism is concerned. In interreligious dialogue, there too look for common values, look for the common values that exist, and this is good. For example, among common values, respect for the lives of newborns or unborn children who have Muslims is wonderful.