

**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

[Link](#)

[...]

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 francesco:

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.