



1st International Conference of the Lazarite Academy of Saint Louis IX, King of France ECUMENISM: MEANING AND PROSPECTS

Pontifical Theological Faculty of Sicily - January 23, 202626



Greetings from the Conference on January 23, 2026

I greet everyone present, the representatives of the various Churches, and the religious, civil, and military authorities gathered here. I thank the Grand Bailiwick of Sicily of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem, which strongly supported this moment of reflection. I thank our Theological Faculty, represented by its Dean, Father Vito Impellizzeri, with whom the Order has long enjoyed a fruitful collaboration to support ecumenical thinking. Finally, I extend special thanks to the speakers who have offered us food for thought on the fundamental theme of Christian unity.

I would like to suggest a perspective from which we can approach these discussions with one heart. This perspective is inspired by the theme indicated by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity for the current Week of Prayer, which concludes this Sunday: "There is one body, one Spirit, just as God has called you to one hope" (Eph 4:4).

This Pauline expression captures the theological depth of Christian unity and also summarizes Paul's teachings on this foundational theme of the Church. More than a simple ideal, unity is a divine mandate, central to our Christian identity. It represents the essence of the Church's calling, a call to reflect the harmonious unity of our life in Christ, despite our diversity.

And it is to our diversity that I would like to refer. Paul writes: "11And he gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph 4:11-13).

God inspires all different charisms, all useful for building up the body of Christ, whose mission it is for the baptized to serve. For the one Body of Christ to fulfill its vocation, Christ

the Head bestows not so much ministries that someone must assume, like a corporate organizational chart to be filled, but rather people who live by giving shape to that task (apostles, prophets, heralds).

It is the identity of these individuals, with their own uniqueness, that builds the entire community. These gift-persons strengthen the community with their testimony (apostles), exercise discernment on the community's current situation (prophets), live the mission of proclamation (evangelizers), and offer their words as a nourishing element and guidance according to diverse needs (pastors, teachers).

We are gift-persons, different and at the same time a gift for others. I believe this perspective can help us live unity, promote peace, and show humanity the beautiful face of the One Body of Christ, dead and risen, and ever present.

Thank you, and happy listening to everyone.

