

InterACT Newsletter, 10/15/05

Room at the Inn

By Gloria Doino

“The surest way to the heart of a people is through their faith.” (Houston Smith, World Religions). In these times of multi-travel, the world has become our neighbor... calling us to mutual understanding. What better place to begin, than within ACT!

In this special family, our holy longings are housed under our many faith traditions – Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Methodist, Non-Denominational, Pentecostal, to name but a few. We find ourselves set apart, yet walking side by side toward our God. The goal of Christian understanding creates a wholesome challenge. It is to “shift the weight to the other foot and to consider our neighbor to be as fully one as we are one” (Houston Smith, World Religions). It is to remove the “We–Them” from our vocabulary and replace it with the “I-Thou.”

That is not to say that we will be without differences, but it is to know that we are listening in love as we strive forward. It is to respect rather than react; to create peace rather than concern. Those who opt to “hear and follow” the call of an ecumenical heart will discover manifold rewards. The oil of healing will bless foreheads and the balm of Gilead will soothe souls. Such was the sense at the ACT International Conference in Baltimore this last October. Brothers and Sisters in Christ shared in a spirit of openness and trust. Forgiveness was asked for, forgiveness was given. The Holy Spirit poured Charity into the heart of the ACT body throughout the Conference, but especially at the last Eucharist, a beautiful experience in liturgy.

“Dialogue as Equals” (Vatican Council II Ecumenical Dialogue) was the unspoken work of the future. We left with the knowledge that there is “Room at the Inn” for understanding; “Room at the Inn” for joint ventures. “To give *common witness* to the mission which Jesus Christ confided to his church...so the world may come to believe” (Vatican Council II Ecumenical Dialogue) remains the Christian dream.

“The *desire* to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift from Christ and a *call* from the Holy Spirit” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #820). We need to take each other seriously for “understanding brings respect and respect prepares us for the higher capacity which is love” (Houston Smith, World Religions).

There is a Rabbinic tradition that states that “wherever human beings go, they are preceded by a host of angels crying” “Make way! Make way for the Image of God!” We are meant to be God’s heart to one another. Thomas Merton adds, “God talks to us in Scripture, in our deepest thoughts, and in the voice of a stranger.” We are versed in hearing God speak in Scripture; we are receptive to hearing God speak in prayer. Let us now hear God in the voice of a “stranger” of another faith. Let us be the image of God to one another. In time, let us be strangers no more, remembering as we go forward that we are not alone. For angels go before us, intoning gently with each stroke of their chimes, the exhortation, “Dialogue in Love!”