

# Editorial

**C**laritas published three articles last fall in a special issue at the beginning of the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. The articles commented on the joint Catholic-Lutheran commemoration of the Reformation. *Claritas* is publishing this fall, at the conclusion of the anniversary of the Reformation, six articles from the Catholic-Evangelical dialogue. These articles were presented as papers for discussion at the Catholic-Evangelical Conversation at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois during their meetings in 2013, 2014, and 2015. Because of its location, the dialogue is referred to as the Mundelein Encounter. While not commemorating the Reformation as such, they do present our readers with a glimpse into another dialogical Catholic-Protestant experience with global reach today.

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I am pleased to announce that this issue has two guest editors, namely the leaders of the Mundelein Encounter from whom we have received the articles found in the “In Focus” section of this issue of *Claritas*: **Fr. Thomas Baima** and **John Armstrong**. I want to thank them for agreeing to take on this task and for providing us with excellent articles.

The authors of the six articles address the topics of Christology (2013), the person of Pope Francis and his effect on the relation of the Catholic Church to the Evangelical churches (2014), and the understanding of the Christian church as such (2015). Also, we have chosen to publish three kinds of dialogical writings. First are fully developed papers on the centrality of Christ. Second are personal reflections on Pope Francis. And third are a fully developed paper on ecclesiology and a response.

All authors are respected members of their churches with years of experience in the Catholic-Evangelical dialogue. They include:

- **Hans Boersma**, J. I. Packer Professor of Theology at Regent College, Vancouver. Boersma received his PhD in 1993 from the University of Utrecht, where he became interested in Catholic theology and ecumenical dialogue. He has been involved in the Catholic-Evangelical dialogue at Mundelein since its beginning and is also a member of Evangelicals and Catholics Together.
- **Edward T. Oakes**, S. J., professor of systematic theology at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake received his doctorate in theology from Union Theological Seminary. He is a founding member of the Academy of Catholic Theology, and his interest in Catholic-Evangelical dialogue goes back to when he became a member of Evangelicals and Catholics Together. He is

author of *Infinity Dwindled to Infancy: A Catholic and Evangelical Christology* (2011).

- **Thomas Baima** is professor of systematic theology at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake, where he is Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School. His doctorate is in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome. He is also Vicar of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago and is a consultant for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He has authored, coauthored, and edited six books, most recently *A Legacy of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue: The Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Jerusalem Lectures* (2012).
- **Craig R. Higgins** is the founding and senior pastor of Trinity Church in Rye, New York. He is a graduate of Mercer University, Westminster Theological Seminary, and Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, receiving his doctorate in 2005. His work in ecumenism reaches out to Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, and Charismatic Christians “seeking the healing of the church’s ‘unhappy divisions’” (BCP). He currently serves as a member of the Leadership Development Team of the Metropolitan New York Presbytery and the World Reformed Fellowship. Dr. Higgins serves on the steering committee of the Catholic-Evangelical Encounter at Mundelein.
- **Robert Barron** is the Auxiliary Bishop of the Los Angeles Archdiocese. He went for postgraduate studies at the Institut Catholique de Paris. After receiving his doctorate for a dissertation on Paul Tillich, he began teaching systematic theology at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake. His work on Tillich inspired his interest in ecumenism. In 2000, he founded “Word on Fire”: Catholic Ministries, with the aim of

producing a major television series for proclaiming Christ and Catholicism.

- **J. Norberto Saracco** was ordained as a Pentecostal pastor forty-four years ago. He studied at the Latin American Biblical Seminary, Costa Rica, and received his doctorate at the University of Birmingham, England. He founded the Instituto Teológico FIET (International Faculty of Theological Studies) in Argentina, which today is the largest seminary in the Spanish-speaking world. He is the current President of FIET. He also founded the Good News Church (Iglesia Buenas Nuevas) in Buenos Aires, where he is the Senior Pastor. His involvement with the Catholic Church began in Costa Rica, where he worked with the Catholic Charismatic Movement. Along with Catholics, he and other Evangelicals founded Renewed Communion of Evangelicals and Catholics in the Holy Spirit (CRECES).

Along with these articles under the heading “In Focus,” there are two book reviews and one article under the heading “To the Source”: “Dazzling Darkness: Buddhism and Chiara Lubich,” written by myself. 2017 is my final year as editor of *Claritas*. While I have enjoyed being the founding editor, after six years it is time for a change. The editorial office of the journal will be relocated to Rome and will be connected to Sophia University Institute. The first issue edited from that new location will be Spring 2018. I will be the managing editor working with Purdue University Press to publish *Claritas* on its Berkeley Press website in the United States. More information on the new editorial arrangement will be made in the Spring 2018 issue. That said, I decided to publish a paper I presented this year at Dharma Drum Mountain School of Liberal Arts in Taiwan as a parting contribution to *Claritas*.

### To the Source:

- **Donald W. Mitchell (Purdue University/Sophia University Institute): “Dazzling Darkness: Buddhism and Chiara Lubich’s Mystical Writings”**

The author begins by presenting two experiences of what he terms “dazzling darkness,” one in a Christian context and the other in a Buddhist context. He then looks at the Buddhist traditions in India and China to propose an explanation for the experience in the Buddhist context. In so doing, he connects darkness to suffering and light to Nirvana. Then he turns to the mystical writings of Chiara Lubich to propose an explanation for the Christian experience and its relation to suffering and the luminosity of God in suffering through Jesus Forsaken. In the section on the writings of Chiara Lubich, the author explores the similarities between (1) her experiences of the relational arising and mutual indwelling of beings, and the indwelling of the light and love of God in the darkness of suffering existence; and (2) the experiences of Buddha-nature, dependent arising, mutual indwelling, and the identity of Nirvana and *samsāra* in Buddhism. He proposes that while there are certainly differences, considering dazzling darkness on the experiential level provides a platform for a deeper dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity.

### In Focus:

- **John Armstrong (Wheaton College) and Thomas Baima (University of Saint Mary of the Lake): “The Mundelein Encounter: A Catholic-Evangelical Model of Ecumenism”**  
The two leaders of the Catholic-Evangelical Mundelein Encounter, from which the papers being published in “In Focus”

are taken, introduce the history, nature, format, goals, and outcomes of this dialogue for missional ecumenism in the world today.

- **Edward T. Oakes, S.J. (University of Our Lady of the Lake): “Christ our Center: Joseph Ratzinger’s Witness”**

The author first traces the rise of today’s postmodernism from nineteenth-century relativism, both of which reject claims to the possession of an absolute and universal truth. They see such a claim as an imposition of one’s own limited perspective on others. This phenomenon rules out Christ as the center of history. He then notes that for him ecumenism is not just for unity in the church but for a united claim to the centrality and lordship of Christ over the universe. He pursues this line of thought through the Christology of Cardinal Ratzinger prior to his becoming Pope Benedict XVI. He explores Ratzinger’s critique of Marxist-tinged theology as it pertains to pluralistic theology. Namely, both relativize the subjects they address. The issue is how Christians of different churches can proclaim Christ as the single and universal savior of the human race. This is the task for ecumenical discussion. The goal is to reaffirm together the creedal statement that the Logos that encompasses and sustains history also became a uniquely single point in history as one man, savior of the world.

- **Hans Boersma (Regent College): “The Real Presence of Hope and Love: The Christological Legacy of Pope Benedict XVI”**  
The author notes that only the surface of Christianity is captured in the media, which focuses on progressive or conservative issues. Cardinal Ratzinger delves below the social and

moral issues to Christology, to the place of Christ at the center of Christianity. By looking at *Deus Caritas Est* (his 2005 encyclical on love) and *Spe Salvi* (his 2007 encyclical on hope), the author notes that by focusing on Christ, we find what Ratzinger calls “an encounter, a love story, it is an event.” It is this reality of Christianity that Catholics and evangelicals should discuss: the visibility of God in Christ and what this means for the life of a Christian. What we find in Christ is God and God’s will for humankind. It is not the laws of matter that rule us but a Person, the Spirit revealed in Jesus as Love. Ratzinger speaks of being “touched” by Christ in ways that prove his presence in this life and the promise of eternal life. This real presence of faith, love and hope anchor the Christian to Christ and to each other. Here is the heart of Christianity that we share. The author presents stories Ratzinger told about those who have been touched by this presence and made true Christians. They are the historical testament of the central power of Christology in the lives of Christians.

- **Robert Barron (Archdiocese of Los Angeles): “Pope Francis and the Evangelicals”**

The author begins with comments on the fascination people in the Catholic and evangelical traditions found in Pope Francis’s strong outreach to the evangelical churches. He then presents Pope Francis’s comments in *Evangelii Gaudium* that invite all Christians to renew a personal encounter with the person of Jesus Christ—comments that are familiar to evangelical Christians. This is also a challenge to those Catholics who focus on institutionalism backed by theological and moral teachings. It points to the joy of the gospel and its proclamation to the world.

Christians filled with the joy of the Resurrection become what the author calls “a band of missionary disciples.” He concludes with a call to build on this new Catholic-Evangelical relationship a deeper dialogue about those matters that still divide us.

- **J. Norberto Saracco (International Faculty of Theological Studies): “Pope Francis and the Unity of the Church in Mission”**

The author begins with a personal testimony of his thirteen-year relationship with Cardinal Bergoglio in Argentina before he became Pope Francis. He presents the cardinal’s growing relationship with the evangelical community as well as the joint projects they carried out in their city. The author then speaks about his discernment of the signs of the times that evangelicals can see in Pope Francis: the power of love, a Christian witness of life, the value of Christian poverty, and a leadership of service. He concludes with what he feels called to by the example of Pope Francis: preaching with passion, living the word of God, loving more radically, and returning to the simplicity of the Gospel life.

- **Thomas A. Baima (University of Saint Mary of the Lake): “The Prolongation of the Incarnation: Toward a Biblical Understanding of the Church”**

The author argues that the church is a prolongation of the Incarnation. He begins by explaining the issues involved in this position. Then he turns to Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, wherein we read: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Col. 1:24).

He then turns to Caesarius of Arles, who speaks of the church as persons grafted into one body that enables them to be Christ to others. Christ acts through the members, using the material to bring about the spiritual. Next, the author examines John of Damascus's view that our unity with Christ allows us to speak of experiences of the church as being experiences of Christ and actions of the church as being actions of Christ. Finally, the author finds in the Letter to the Hebrews passages that indicate that it is "through Christ" in unity with the members of the church that we may participate in Christ's unique priestly sacrificial activity. Therefore, the church—mystical body of Christ—is a type of Christ's earthly ministry and of his heavenly ministry, building the Kingdom that is yet to come.

- **Craig R. Higgins (World Reformed Fellowship): "An Evangelical Response to Thomas Baima's 'The Prolongation of the Incarnation'"**

The author agrees with Thomas Baima that Scripture is clear in teaching a correlation between Jesus the Incarnate Word and the church as the body of Christ. He expands on the areas of agreement and proposes Acts 9:4–5 as strongly making this same point. Then he presents why evangelicals might "express discomfort" with the phrase used by Pope Francis and introduced into the dialogue at Mundelein by Robert Barron: "the prolongation of the Incarnation." To overcome this discomfort, certain qualifications need to be made, primarily that between the Incarnation and the Ascension as unique and unrepeatable divine events in salvation history. We need language that distinguishes the Incarnate Body of Christ, the Risen Body of

Christ, and the Mystical Body of Christ in a way that shows their uniqueness and their relationality.

#### Book Reviews:

- **Paul Flaman, *Sex, Love and Marriage in the Light of Following Jesus*. Ottawa, ON: Justin Press, 2015: reviewed by John McNerney (Catholic University of America)**
- **John McNerney, *The Wealth of Persons: Economics with a Human Face*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, Wipf and Stock, 2016: reviewed by Paul Flaman (St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta)**

The editors of *Claritas* hope that our readers will appreciate the excellent articles in this second issue of 2017. Please note that our journal is open access, with no subscription fees for our readers and no publication fees for our authors. We depend on the generosity of our readership. At our website, you will find a tab labeled "Support *Claritas*." We hope that all who read *Claritas* will be inspired to contribute to our effort to build a more united and peaceful global community.