

DR JOAN PATRICIA BACK

TEACHER OF ECUMENICAL STUDIES AT CENTRE DU RENCONTRE ET DE FORMATION MONTET-BROYE,
SWITZERLAND;
ECUMENICAL OFFICER FOCOLARE MOVEMENT IN IRELAND

KEYWORDS: LIVING DIALOGUE, SPIRITUALITY OF UNITY, TRANSFORMING ECUMENISM

TRANSFORMING ECUMENISM THROUGH AN ECUMENISM OF THE PEOPLE

After a century of the ecumenical movement there is a growing fear that the enthusiasm that spearheaded it producing ecumenical milestones, is waning; there is a search to find effective ways of engaging the younger generations.

Movements has sprung up in different Churches, which have attracted Christians of other Churches thus living out a prophetic “already, but not yet” unity.

What can be learnt from this? The Spirit is focusing the Churches on the need for renewal through living the Gospel, in promoting Christian fellowship where our common patrimony is lived out together, facilitating our witness of being “One in Christ” (Gal 3:28).

ANOTHER CHANNEL FOR RECEPTIVE ECUMENISM

From the Focolare Movement’s Gospel based experience a spirituality centred on the Testament of Jesus, “That all may be one” emerged. Subsequently called a spirituality of unity it gave rise to a “living dialogue”.

This “dialogue of the people” is not in conflict with institutional ecumenism or an alternative to theological dialogues; on the contrary, giving life to a new form of dialogue – an “ecumenism of the people” - which undergirds the other types of ecumenism, providing the humus on which to build and sustain them, while offering another vehicle for receptive ecumenism.

Empirical evidence from 60 years worldwide engagement proves that this “dialogue of life” has the potential of transforming conflict situations, facilitating the exchange of gifts.