

Paper Abstract for the Fifth International Conference on Receptive Ecumenism

Vera La Mela
Doctoral student
Global Christianity and Interreligious relations
University of Lund, Sweden

Calls for Spiritual Ecumenism in Pre-Conciliar Italy

Receptive ecumenism as an ecumenical method germinated from the tree of spiritual ecumenism in the early 2000's. This tree has its roots deep in the rich ground of Christian spirituality and is nourished by the heritage of spiritual thinkers from diverse traditions. In the Catholic Church, the very term of *spiritual ecumenism* became officially part of the ecumenical discourse in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). However, elements of spiritual ecumenism can be traced much earlier in the history of the churches as an "ancient practice" of ecumenism. In the early 20th century, the endeavour to restore the unity among Christians concretized in initiatives and organisations such as the Student Christian Movement, the Missionary Conferences, the World Council of Christian Education, and finally the World Council of Churches. Even though the Catholic Church was not represented in the frontlines of these organisations and in Italy a broader ecumenical awakening had to wait until the Second Vatican Council, the pre-conciliar decades saw a flourishing of individual ecumenical figures such as Leopoldo Mandić, Maria Gabriella Sagheddu, Giovanni Calabria, and Chiara Lubich who devoted their lives to promoting the unity among Christians.

This paper presents the thinking of dedicated promoters of spiritual ecumenism in pre-conciliar Italy who paved the way to the ecumenical opening in the Second Vatican Council. The paper studies their thinking especially in the light of receptive ecumenism.

Keywords: Spiritual Ecumenism, Ecumenical Spirituality, Receptive Ecumenism, Catholic ecumenical thinkers