



Toward a Healing of the Ruptures of the Past: A Service of Remembrance and Hope

Worship Resources for Mennonite Heritage Sunday, October 30, 2005

Introduction: Last year's Heritage Sunday celebration focused on the historic movement toward reconciliation between Mennonite and Reformed communities in Europe. Continuing with the theme of reconciliation, this year's Heritage Sunday offers us the opportunity to embrace an equally historic dialogue – that between Mennonites and the Catholic Church. This dialogue is historically appropriate, since the Dutch Anabaptist movement emerged more directly from Rome than did Anabaptist movements in Germany. Menno Simons was a Catholic priest.

I suggest inviting Catholic friends to this special service. Generally speaking, their mass schedules give them sufficient flexibility to attend with you on Sunday morning. I also suggest that you reciprocate by attending a mass with your Catholic friends. If you do not have any Catholic friends, this fact itself may be an occasion for confession in the service that follows.

Background reading: A recent five-year dialogue between the Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Church Unity resulted in the publication of a joint statement by Catholics and Mennonites, entitled *Called Together to be Peacemakers*. The document can be found on-line at:

www.bridgefolk.net/dialogue2003/calledtogether.htm.

Especially note Section I of the document, entitled "Considering History Together." This Section articulates a shared re-reading of Christian history by Catholics and Mennonites. I suggest pastor's read this section of the document in preparation for preaching.

Suggested Order of Worship

Call to Worship (from John 17)

Leader: Jesus prayed....

People: "Father, I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. I pray for them. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name – the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one.

Leader: My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. But my prayer is not for them alone.

People: I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Leader: May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

All: Amen.

Hymn #367, "For the healing of the nations" (Hymnal, A Worship Book)

Confession: (Kneel for confession)

Selection #690, *Hymnal, A Worship Book*

Hymn #322, "For we are strangers no more"

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4:1-13

Sermon

Focus on the question: *In what ways do Catholics and Mennonites need each other? In other words, what gifts can we as Mennonites offer to the Catholic Church? And what gifts can the Catholic Church offer to us Mennonites?* Reflect on the prayer of Jesus in John 17, with which the service opened, and on the Ephesians passage, to reinforce why these questions are important in the first place. Doesn't the oneness of God call for the oneness of his church?

Response to the Sermon: Hymn #365, "Christ, from whom all blessings"

Prayers and Sharing

Invite prayers for unity and healing, and sharing of stories that embody healing in our actual experience. Or, to be more daring, invite the sharing of stories – by

Mennonites and visiting Catholics – that illustrate the painful estrangement between us, and the need for reconciliation.

Communion

I suggest serving communion at this service and inviting Catholics to participate. It is unfortunate that their parishes cannot reciprocate this gesture, but aren't we Mennonites all about nonretaliation? Further, I suggest using the communion liturgy from our blue *Minister's Manual* on pages 82-87 (using Psalm 33 as the reading), since this classic 17th-century Anabaptist liturgy is both beautiful and somewhat "catholic."

Blessing and Benediction: Use prayer (a.) on page 98 of our blue Minister's Manual, then dismiss with the following blessing:

Leader: May the blessing of almighty God descend upon you, brothers and sisters, and remain upon you forever.

People: And upon you, also, my brother / sister.

Leader: Go in peace to serve the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

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