



Ecumenism, understood as the movement seeking unity among different Christian denominations, is an initiative promoted by the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). However, although it has a noble goal and is rooted in Jesus' desire that "they may all be one" (John 17:21), it can also pose challenges and problems within the Catholic Church. Below are some of these issues, analyzed from a theological and pastoral perspective.

1. Risk of Doctrinal Relativism

One of the main problems ecumenism can generate is the risk of falling into doctrinal relativism, that is, the idea that all beliefs are equally valid and that there is no objective truth. The Catholic Church maintains that it possesses the fullness of the means of salvation (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 8), so any ecumenical approach must preserve the integrity of Catholic doctrine.

- **Example:** When engaging in dialogue with other Christian denominations, some faithful might question central dogmas such as the Eucharist, the authority of the Pope, or the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, believing these doctrines are negotiable.
 - **Biblical quote:** "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!" (Galatians 1:8).
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2. Confusion Among the Faithful

Ecumenism can cause confusion among the faithful, especially among those who lack solid theological formation. Seeing the Catholic Church engage in dialogue with other denominations, some might think that all religions are equal or that it doesn't matter which Church one belongs to.

- **Example:** A Catholic might wonder why it is important to attend Mass if other Christian denominations have similar services but without the Eucharist.
 - **Biblical quote:** "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6).
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3. Loss of Catholic Identity

Ecumenism, if not handled carefully, can lead to a loss of Catholic identity. The Catholic Church has a unique liturgical, spiritual, and doctrinal richness, and any ecumenical effort must respect and preserve this identity.

- **Example:** In some cases, liturgical or devotional practices from other denominations have been introduced into Catholic celebrations, which can dilute the uniqueness of Catholic liturgy.
 - **Biblical quote:** "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought." (1 Corinthians 1:10).
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4. Tensions with Other Christian Denominations

Although ecumenism seeks unity, in practice it can create tensions with other Christian denominations, especially when there are irreconcilable doctrinal differences. Some Protestant denominations, for example, reject the authority of the Pope and Catholic sacraments, making deep dialogue difficult.

- **Example:** Dialogue with evangelical or Pentecostal churches can be complicated due to differences in biblical interpretation and sacramental theology.
 - **Biblical quote:** "For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear." (2 Timothy 4:3).
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5. Pastoral Challenges

Ecumenism can also pose pastoral challenges, especially in communities where Catholics and non-Catholics live closely together. Priests and Catholic leaders must balance respect for other denominations with the need to teach and defend the Catholic faith.

- **Example:** In a mixed marriage (between a Catholic and a non-Catholic), there may be tensions over how to raise children in the faith.



- **Biblical quote:** "Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed." (2 Thessalonians 3:14).
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6. Internal Criticism Within the Church

Ecumenism can also create internal divisions within the Catholic Church. Some traditionalist or conservative groups view ecumenism as an excessive concession to other denominations, while others consider it insufficient.

- **Example:** Some Catholics might criticize the Pope or bishops for being too "open" in ecumenical dialogue, while others might call for greater outreach.
 - **Biblical quote:** "No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval." (1 Corinthians 11:19).
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7. Challenges in Evangelization

Ecumenism can pose challenges to the Church's evangelizing mission. If Catholics perceive that all Christian denominations are equally valid, they might lose the missionary impulse to share the Catholic faith with others.

- **Example:** A Catholic might think it is unnecessary to evangelize a Protestant, since they are "already Christian."
 - **Biblical quote:** "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19).
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Conclusion

Ecumenism is a noble and necessary calling, but it is not without challenges. To be effective, it must be based on truth, charity, and respect for Catholic identity. The Catholic Church must continue to proclaim with clarity and love the fullness of the faith, while building bridges of dialogue and reconciliation with other Christian denominations. As Pope St. John Paul II said:



“The unity we seek is not uniformity, but unity in reconciled diversity, in which all the gifts and charisms that the Holy Spirit has given to the different Christian communities are placed at the service of all.” (Ut Unum Sint, 57).

Ultimately, ecumenism must be a path toward truth, not a compromise of truth. The unity we seek is unity in Christ, who is “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).