

Reflection for Saturday 23 January

January 18-25 is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Normally “Churches Together” in Malvern arrange various activities in this week together with a service for unity in one of the Malvern churches. This year because of the lockdown and restrictions unity week has been confined to our private prayers. May I suggest that we prayerfully read St John chapter 17 and St Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians chapter 4 verses 1-16. These readings tell us that unity in Christ has to be at the heart of our Christian life and witness.

Although all the Churches in this country get on well together, we don’t seem to be able to make moves together in coming together as one. Various schemes among a few of the non Catholic Churches for organic unity haven’t come to fruition. We have to thank God for the unity that we have reached. In 2019 I had the privilege of going on a Catholic/Anglican pilgrimage to Rome. It was a wonderful occasion and we learnt a lot from each other. We were also blessed in having Archbishop Bernard and the Bishop of Worcester with us. We all attended each other’s Eucharists but sadly were not able to receive Holy Communion together.

We now need to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches about unity. If we are to become one, unity doesn’t mean uniformity, perhaps we need to take risks and come out of our comfort zones. Christianity is in a parlous state in this country and in Western Europe. People are ignorant of the core beliefs of Christians. We only have hear the ridiculous answers contestants give to questions about Christianity and the Bible on TV game shows. We need to be proactive in our faith and to show a unity that we are one in Jesus Christ. Unity is strength and we are all serious about our commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let’s show our witness together as one. That’s what we should be asking God in our prayers this week.

Roger Watson