

Communion and Collaboration Among Christians

What Is Our Father's Will For Us?

Jesus, our Lord and Savior, has made it very clear to us that our Father wants us to be one in Jesus. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can maintain the peace He brings about in us through mutual love. Loving other Christians is not an option, but an obligation.

What About Our Denominational Differences?

These differences are both historical and present. Authority and Communion are two issues that illustrate this well. As Roman Catholic Christians, we believe that Jesus fulfills His promise to be with us all days by the ministry of the Sacraments. In Baptism He introduces us into the divine life of the Blessed Trinity by their indwelling in us, and in Confirmation He strengthens us in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the Holy Eucharist, He is truly, personally present: offering Himself to the Father and then to us in Holy Communion. He Himself forgives, comforts, heals and forms us in Penance and Reconciliation. He strengthens and heals us in the Anointing of the Sick. He binds us together as husband and wife in Holy Matrimony with the same love with which He loves us, his Mystical Body the Church. He exercises His loving service and teaching authority among us in Holy Orders.

These are the primary reasons why, as issues arise, we look to the hierarchy for guidance in discerning what is God's will for us, and in matters concerning the whole Church, we resist the temptation to take matters into our own hands. For example, concerning the sharing of Holy Communion with other churches, our Church teaches that we are not to receive Communion when we worship with churches of the Reform, but we may receive Communion from Orthodox or Eastern Rite churches – providing their pastors allow us. Similarly, we are not to offer Holy Communion to Christians of the Reform (Protestants: Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United, Evangelical, Pentecostal, etc.). We are responsible for letting them know the position of our Church; so that they may govern themselves accordingly. The responsibility is then theirs to humbly obey the Lord.

However, churches have differing views. Anglicans generally invite or even strongly encourage all Christians present to come to Communion. Their different views of authority bring them to disregard our Church's teachings and often to discount the authority of the Holy Father. They want to share Holy Communion now in order to hasten the return to Christian unity; whereas we believe the Lord wants us to work harder to live, pray and work together with mutual love, and to have consensus about truth and authority. If we cannot give way to the authority of pastors Jesus sends us, how can we give way to the will of God, that's not always easy to know? In time, He will bring about the restored unity among all the Christian churches in a way that will leave no doubt that Jesus Himself did it.

Our Father's Holy and Perfect Will

So what does our Father ask of us? As Jesus commanded, He asks us to love one another by gladly accepting to be and to do together with other Christians. When we do worship with them, we content ourselves with a "spiritual communion" by contemplating the Blessed Trinity dwelling within us, but refrain from receiving Holy Communion. However, in order not to miss receiving Jesus in Holy Communion; it's best to attend Mass as well. For example, we can go to Sunday Mass of anticipation on Saturday afternoon before attending a Worship Service in another Christian Church on Sunday.