

# The ecumenical formation

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*Our commitment to the ecumenical formation is based on the belief that the search for unity among Christians is required by the nature of the Church, by the need to make credible the Christian message and in response to a world that desperately needs peace. The nature and activities of our Institute are based primarily on cooperation and respect towards all: we are convinced that to ensure true knowledge is vital. If every Christian denomination is allowed to introduce itself, then an appropriate comparison can be made on actual basis and not on prejudice or incorrect interpretations. Since the Institute of Ecumenical Studies S. Bernardino is a Roman Catholic Institute, we care to follow the catholic principles of Ecumenism as well as the proper dialogue with the other Churches. We highly appreciate the activity done by the World Council of Churches and its committees, especially by the Faith and Order Commission. Without hiding difficulties and differences that still exist between the various Churches, we strive to underline the common heritage and the effort of each Church to adequately express its faith in God.*

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For the Christians, the research of unity is a task that can never be overlooked: it is not a hobby or “just some sort of «appendix» which is added to the traditional activity of the Church. On the contrary, it is an organic part of its life and actions and should, therefore, pervade all this ensemble, and be like the fruit of a tree, healthy and vigorous, growing to its full development.”<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, there are two fundamental reasons determining the importance of the ecumenical movement: the first is that the world’s fate also depends on the regained unity of the Church, the second reason, more internal, is that the restoration of unity among Christians is required by the nature of the Church itself, that only as it is can be an instrument of unity for all humanity. It would be simplistic to consider the ecumenical formation as one of the many initiatives that can be promoted. In fact, after centuries of silence and indifference, we can no longer postpone the question of ecumenical training at all levels. We live in a big village where people discover themselves more and more interdependently, where there are new challenges for the increasingly frequent encounters between Christians and believers of other religions, and where, therefore, the suspicions, fears, resistance and

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<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Paolo II, lett. enciclica *Ut unum sint*, 20, Roma 25 may 1995. (=UUS)