

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**EVANGELICALS AND CATHOLICS MEETING AT MUNDELEIN  
University of Saint Mary of the Lake hosts  
Fourth Annual Evangelical-Catholic Conversation**

**For Information contact:  
Fr. Thomas A. Baima  
847-970-4866**

**MUNDELEIN, ILLINOIS (September 11, 2017)** The University of Saint Mary of the Lake once again hosted an international gathering of Catholics and Evangelicals with the aim of promoting Christian unity. The four-day gathering focuses on building relationships between the two groups as a means to animate a *missional ecumenism*. This specific activity seeks to compliment the official relationship between churches and ecclesial communities through efforts to give common witness to Christ before the world.

The centerpiece of the dialogue was discussion of the work of Prof. Dr. Theresa Rossi on the ecumenism of Pope Francis. Dr. Rossi is a professor at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome. After demonstrating the continuity between Pope Francis and his immediate predecessors, Dr. Rossi show how Francis breaks out of the classical mode of ecumenical dialogue in favor of what she calls an “operative style” where relationships and actions are central.

“This ecumenism of fraternity and action is evident in all of Pope Francis’ engagements with other communities,” said Fr. Thomas A. Baima, Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago. “He follows the principle that Christians must ‘act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately.’”

Dr. John Armstrong, the Evangelical co-chair and president of ACT3 Network, noted that Dr. Rossi identified several themes in Pope Francis. “She describes his ecumenism as ‘walking together, as reconciled diversity, and encounter. All of these speak of relationship as primary.’”

Rossi also names one unique theme in Pope Francis’ ecumenism, which distinguishes it from other approaches. Pope Francis speaks of an ecumenism of blood – martyrdom. “I am acutely aware of the statistics that one in ten Christians are born and live in countries of Christian martyrdom. In one country alone there have been 1052 homicides.” This theme of ecumenism of blood was actually first mentioned by the

Pope in a letter to the Mundelein Encounter during their Third meeting in 2015. Then he wrote:

Today the blood of many Christians slaughtered in diverse parts of the world cries out to heaven. The one who persecutes . . . does not ask if they are Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox . . . they are Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, and that is enough. This blood challenges us: Do we have the right to make our divisions a priority while the blood of our brothers is shed for the testimony of Jesus Christ?

A copy of the original letter, which was written in Spanish, and an English translation, can be seen on the Archdiocese of Chicago's website at <http://www.archchicago.org/departments/ecumenical/>

*The Mundelein Encounter: A Catholic & Evangelical Conversation* is an informal and unofficial dialogue between Christian leaders and scholars who had previous positive experiences and relationships from their participation in such diverse international groups as: the Lausanne Movement, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the various levels of the official Ecumenical Movement. Their purpose is to advance *missional ecumenism* which seeks to promote Christian unity through fraternity and action, while the official dialogues work for full communion in faith and order.

The Evangelical-Catholic Conversation is sponsored by the Archdiocesan Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, the University of Saint Mary of the Lake, and ACT-3 Ministries (a network of relational partnerships between churches, missions and leaders). Participants from Argentina, Belize, Canada, England, Guatemala, Italy, Mexico, South Korea, and the United States of America have taken part in the multi-year project. In 2017, Catholic participants included: Nate Bacon, Thomas A. Baima, Linda Couri, Corin Mi Sook Han, Robert Hauert, Tom Masters, Robert J. Miller, Peter Newburn, Mark Kwaku Nimo, Daniel Olsen, Donald J. Rooney, Thomas Ryan, CSP, Brett Salkeld, Jan Skrehot, and Keith Strohm. Evangelical participants included: John H. Armstrong, Scott Brill, Stephen R. Crosby, Kathryn Bradford Heidelberger, Craig R. Higgins, George Byron Koch, Chris Lash, Alexei N. Laushkin, Carlos L. Malavé, Kenneth C. Oliver, Rick Richardson, Ian Simkins, Kelly Steinhaus, and Elizabeth Y. Sung

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