

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**LUTHERANS AND CATHOLICS TOGETHER FOR PRAYER  
University of Saint Mary of the Lake hosts  
Joint Evening Prayer Service with the Lutheran Society of the Holy Trinity**

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**MUNDELEIN, ILLINOIS (September 27, 2017)** The University of Saint Mary of the Lake welcomed the Society of the Holy Trinity, a Lutheran ministerial order to a joint Vespers Service with the Seminary community to pray for Christian unity. Two hundred pastors from several Lutheran churches and synods joined the two hundred seminarians of Mundelein Seminary in the historic Chapel of the Immaculate Conception.

Fr. Bradley Zamora and Linda Cerabona, worked with the Rev. Patrick Rooney, the senior of the Society of the Holy Trinity, to create a joint worship service which was faithful to each tradition and which shared their rich gifts. Elements of Gregorian chant and Lutheran hymnody worked together in a moving musical experience. The service was led by Pastor Rooney and the Very Rev. Thomas A. Baima, Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago. They were assisted by a Roman Catholic deacon, a Lutheran vicar, with readers and cantors from each community.

Following the example of Pope Francis in his visit to the Lutheran World Federation, the event commemorated the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation with a stress on healing the divisions which fractured Christendom in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In his remarks, Pastor Rooney noted that “those of us in this Society of the Holy Trinity . . . long for the reunion of Christians in which the Gospel might have free course and for that unity for which Jesus prayed. . . We are dedicated to the Lutheran vocation of reform of the Church and the Lutheran ecumenical destiny of reconciliation with the bishop and the church of Rome. With such reunion still not accomplished, we cannot celebrate this or any anniversary but rather continue to grieve our division.” Father Baima spoke of re-learning the use of memory of past events, and being truthful about division today. “. . . [it’s a] simple fact that no one alive today had any hand in the separation. We have inherited the consequences, although we did not commit the original offense. Many Christians today, though separated, bear no culpability for their division.” We are therefore able to approach one another as separated brothers and sisters. . . who today are also able to confess together that, regarding justification, the condemnations issued in the 16<sup>th</sup> century do not apply to the churches as they exist today.

Many of the participants in the service spoke of coming from religiously mixed families, and how worshiping in the presence of each other connected them with something very personal in their own history. Others spoke of the power of new relationships made during the visit, and of their resolve to reach out to other Christians.

Father Baima presented the Society of the Holy Trinity with a print of a painting by the renowned Chicago Catholic artist, Franklin McMahon, of the Rev. Dr. Martin Marty, a Lutheran pastor, preaching in Holy Name Cathedral during a joint vespers in 1983. The Society presented the University with a Medal "From Conflict to Communion" showing Martin Luther and Pope Francis and commemorating the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

The University of Saint Mary of the Lake is the major seminary of the Archdiocese of Chicago and serves 35 dioceses in America, Asia, Europe, and Africa. preparing candidates for the diocesan priesthood and provides initial, post-graduate or ongoing formation for priests and those who collaborate with them in ministry. It has the largest enrollment of any diocesan seminary in the United States of America.

The Society of the Holy Trinity is a Lutheran Order and Ministerium located in the United States and Canada. Founded on September 23, the Society is pan-Lutheran, comprised of members from 12 different Lutheran bodies. Through a common life together, the Society provides a place where pastors who are member of the Society can find mutual support, spiritual sustenance and the conversation and the consolation of the brethren.

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