



CNI

News Focus - Pope Francis apologises for treatment of non- Catholic Christians

Pope Francis has apologised for behaviour towards Christians from non-Roman Catholic churches that “has not reflected Gospel values.” The Pope made his comments during a Vespers service in the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls in Rome attended by the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Representative to the Holy See, Archbishop Sir David Moxon.

The service was held on Monday January 25, to mark the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and was also attended by Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. At the end of the service the Pope invited Metropolitan Gennadios and Archbishop David to join him in blessing the congregation.

On its Facebook page, the Anglican Centre in Rome described the homily and the joint blessing as “very powerful words and a very powerful gesture.”

“In this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, we must always keep in mind that there cannot be an authentic search for Christian unity without trusting fully in the Father’s mercy,” Pope Francis said. “We ask first of all for forgiveness for the sins of our divisions, which are an open wound in the Body of Christ.

“As Bishop of Rome and pastor of the Catholic Church, I want to ask for mercy and forgiveness for the behaviour of Catholics towards Christians of other Churches which has not reflected Gospel values.

“At the same time, I invite all Catholic brothers and sisters to forgive if they, today or in the past, have been offended by other Christians. We cannot cancel out what has happened, but we do not want to let the weight of past faults continue to contaminate our relationships. God’s mercy will renew our relationships.”

Yesterday, [Archbishop Sir David Moxon said](#) that the Pope’s words and gesture “immediately challenges Christians who aren't Roman Catholic to respond in the same way, asking for

forgiveness for the wrongs we have done and the wounds we have inflicted on the body of Christ.”

He continued: “This mutual confession automatically brings forth a sense of forgiveness, grace, and hope and we can be closer than we were before because of this. Such a movement of grace is indeed a blessing we can all share.”

In his homily, Pope Francis spoke of the need for evangelism, saying: “The mission of the whole people of God is to announce the marvellous works of the Lord, first and foremost the Paschal mystery of Christ, through which we have passed from the darkness of sin and death to the splendour of His new and eternal life.

“In light of the Word of God which we have been listening to, and which has guided us during this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we can truly affirm that all of us, believers in Christ, have been called to proclaim the mighty works of God.

“Beyond the differences which still separate us, we recognise with joy that at the origin of our Christian life there is always a call from God Himself. We can make progress on the path to full visible communion between us Christians not only when we come closer to each other, but

above all as we convert ourselves to the Lord, who through His grace, chooses and calls us to be His disciples.

“And converting ourselves means letting the Lord live and work in us. For this reason, when Christians of different Churches listen to the Word of God together and seek to put it into practice, they make important steps towards unity.

“It is not only the call which unites us, but we also share the same mission to proclaim to all the marvellous works of God. Like St Paul, and like the people to whom St Peter is writing, we too cannot fail to announce God’s merciful love which has conquered and transformed us.

“While we are moving towards full communion among Christians, we can already develop many forms of cooperation to aid the spread of the Gospel. By walking and working together, we realise that we are already united in the name of the Lord.”

- The full text of Pope Francis’ homily can be read on the website of [Vatican Radio](#).