From the President:

I hope that you had a productive week during the study break. As we begin this week, we are reminded that we are now in the final stages of the semester, with only four teaching weeks remaining. It will be important to plan these weeks well so that you complete all your tasks on time.

This week between Ascension and Pentecost is marked as a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This is the traditional date in the southern hemisphere, but in the northern hemisphere it is celebrated in January. Each year there is a theme for the week, and prayer resources are prepared by a local church. This fact highlights an important aspect of Christian unity, namely that the unity of the church is a unity of local churches. One important ecumenical development in recent years goes by the name of “receptive ecumenism” and focuses on what churches can learn from each other. That the resources for the Week of Prayer are prepared by a local church means that the church throughout the world will hear something of the life of the church in the particular place where the materials were prepared. The whole church can learn from the experience of these local churches.

The theme of the Week of Prayer this year is “Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord” (cf. 1Pet 2:9). The resources were prepared by the Christian churches in Latvia. The following excerpts from these resources give something of the flavour of the church in Latvia. “The oldest baptismal font in Latvia dates from the time of the great evangeliser of Latvia, St Meinhard. It was originally located in his Cathedral in Ikšķile. Today it stands at the very centre of the Lutheran Cathedral in the country’s capital, Rīga. The placement of the font so near to the Cathedral’s ornate pulpit speaks eloquently of the relationship between baptism and proclamation, and the calling shared by all the baptised to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord. This calling forms the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity for 2016.” Latvia has experienced conflict between Christians at various times in its history, but especially during the 16th and 18th centuries. In more recent times Christians have been united in bearing witness to the faith during persecution. “The Second World War and the decades that followed with their totalitarian anti-Christian ideologies – atheistic Nazism and Communism – brought devastation to the land and people of Latvia, right up to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. During those years, Christians were united in common witness to the Gospel – even to the point of martyrdom. The Bishop Sloskans’ Museum in Latvia records this common witness, listing martyred Christians from the Orthodox, Lutheran, Baptist and Catholic Churches. Christians discovered their participation in the royal priesthood mentioned by St Peter through enduring torture, exile and death because of their faith in Jesus Christ. This bond of suffering created deep communion among Christians in Latvia. Through it, they discovered their baptismal priesthood, through which they were able to offer their sufferings in union with the sufferings of Jesus, for the good of others.” (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/weeks-prayer-doc/ae_pc_chrstuni_doc_20150526_week-prayer-2016_en.html).

Let’s remember to pray for the unity of all Christians during this week.

Fr Gerard Kelly

From the Registrar:

As you will no doubt be aware, we are now in the last third of the semester and registrations for Semester 2, 2016 are almost upon us. As usual, these will take place in Week 13 of semester (Monday 6 – Thursday 9 May, 2016). Posters will soon be placed in the registry with more detailed information regarding registration procedure. This information will also be on the CIS website. Please be sure to read it. Likewise, in planning your course units for next semester, please be sure to work off the current version of the 2016 timetables. These are on the Registry Noticeboard and the CIS website.

If you are unable to come to campus during registration week, you will need to make an appointment to see me personally to register for Semester 2, 2016. Late Registrations are possible only by appointment with the registrar from: 14 -16 June 2016 (NB: Monday 13/06/16 is the Queen’s Birthday public holiday). They may be subject to a $100 fee.

Please note:

- As previously mentioned, a memo regarding registration procedures has been placed on the noticeboard.
- The examination timetable will be shortly be published and posted on the notice board.

Janelle Craig
"Each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice [interreligious] dialogue." (Pope Saint John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, 1990, #57) Accordingly, interreligious dialogue is how the members of the Christian churches (33% of the world’s population) engage with believers from other religions (more than 50% of the world’s population). So interreligious dialogue concerns over 80% of the world’s population, but most know little or nothing about it!

In our globalised world, if believers from other religions are not living in your neighbourhood, they have entered into your living room - through your TV and computer screens and through your mobile devices. Today, the fact of religious plurality is inescapable. As Christians, we must learn to deal creatively with it. We cannot live in isolation. Ignorance, suspicions and stereotypes about others abound. The best way to overcome them is to meet believers from other religions, to get to know them, to learn how much we have in common, and to understand more precisely just where our differences lay. In this way, we contribute to growing social harmony in our multi-religious, multi-cultural society.

In learning how God is working in the lives of people from other religions, our own Christian understanding of God is enriched and expanded. A delight often expressed by those involved in interreligious dialogue is that, far from weakening their faith, interfaith experiences have strengthened their faith. Developed over the last 50 years, the Catholic Church’s teaching on interreligious dialogue often remains a buried treasure. We will open and explore this treasure chest, along with the teaching of the World Council of Churches. We will look at the four types of dialogue: dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, the dialogue of theological exchange, and the dialogue of religious experience. We will explore Jewish-Christian and Christian-Muslim relations. We will look at how interreligious dialogue is an integral part of the evangelising mission of the church and enables her to contribute to the pressing issues of our day through interreligious collaboration in service of the coming Kingdom of God.

Rev. Dr Patrick McInerney

Fr Patrick is a Columban Priest. He was assigned to Pakistan for 20 years. He has degrees in both Islamic and Christian theology. He is the Director of the Columban Mission Institute and Coordinator of its Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations. He is very involved in interfaith talks, lectures, conferences, publications and events in and beyond Sydney.