

Minutes

Winnipeg Regional Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, No. 24

Minutes held on 12 March 2008
at Bethel Mennonite Church

Present: Adolf Ens, Doug Enns, Dora Dueck, Irma Fast Dueck, Helmut Harder, Janet Kozak, Joseph Langan, Richard Lebrun, Henry Loewen, John Long, Luis Melo, and Lynda Trenholm

1. **Introductions.** After welcoming us to Bethel Mennonite, in view of the new people in attendance, **Luis** invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Luis said that his present work includes part-time teaching at St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba, and work in ecumenical activities for the Archdiocese of St. Boniface.

Helmut reviewed the background of the present dialogue group, which goes back to 2000, and which has been meeting about three times a year since that time, with some persons leaving and others being added. The present group represents a "new order," as it were, following the last meeting (in November 2007), in which participants were asked if they wanted to continue or retire. As a consequence we now have, in effect, four new members joining the group at this time. **Helmut** also described his five years as co-chair of the International Catholic-Mennonite Dialogue. He explained that he had retired from Canadian Mennonite Bible College, and had then worked for a number of years in an executive position with Mennonite Church Canada.

Joseph described himself as a lawyer working for the federal government, who had returned to Winnipeg about a year and half ago, and is the father of four young children. He is a parishioner at St. Jean Brebeuf parish. **Luis** added that when he was director of chaplaincy at St. Paul's College he had worked with **Joseph** to organize a Catholic law students group at the university – as part of his efforts to relate gospel values to the modern world.

John explained that he has been part of the dialogue since its beginnings in 2000. He is a faculty member in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba (where, among other things, he has taught a course on educational law). He plans to retire this June. He is a parishioner at Mary Mother of the Church and a Secular Franciscan.

Lynda described herself as married, with two grown children, and as doing pastoral work at St. Bernadette's parish (after some years of similar work at Christ the King parish, where she is still a parishioner and involved in music ministry). At St. Bernadette's she is involved in preparation for infant baptisms, marriage preparation, and grief counselling.

Irma has been involved in this dialogue for some years (but not from the beginning). Married, with two sons, she teaches practical and other sorts of theology at Canadian Mennonite University (this year enjoying a sabbatical, during which she is turning her doctoral dissertation into a book, which she hopes to have completed by the end of June). She also admitted to being a collector of “Mary stuff” – statues, etc. She is a member of the congregation at Bethel Mennonite Church.

Adolf said that he was a retired from a teaching career at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, where he had taught history and theology, and that he is still busy as a scholar.

Henry has been part of this dialogue since day one. He had worked for ten years as the Executive Director of Mennonite Church Canada in Manitoba. Retired, he and his wife live under the same roof with their youngest daughter, son-in-law, and four teenagers – which he finds very interesting.

Dora described herself as a writer and editor, with an M.A. in history, three grown children, and three grandchildren. She said that she was a member of Mennonite congregation with dual membership – in both Mennonite Church Canada and the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba.

Janet introduced herself as a member of the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate (an Eastern or Byzantine Rite congregation), who came to Winnipeg recently to take over formation of novices in her congregation’s house here. She also works in the promotion of vocations and with youth and young adults. She comes to Winnipeg from Ancaster, ON, where her congregation operates a retreat centre.

Richard, a member of this group since its inception, described himself as retired history professor (since 1998), married over fifty years, with six children, many grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren (his oldest grandson dubs him a “patriarch”), and a parishioner at St. Ignatius parish.

Doug pointed out that his name is spelled with two “n’s” in contrast to **Adolf**, identified himself as pastor of a Mennonite Brethren congregation since 1986, who had taken his ministerial training at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, CA. He is now working as a paraprofessional with international students at Transcona Collegiate. Last year he participated in one of the “neighbourhood” Catholic-Mennonite dialogue groups organized by our group.

2. **Irma** introduced **Rudy Baergen**, one of the persons on the pastoral team at Bethel Mennonite, who welcomed us, and described the congregation, which is now celebrating its 70th anniversary, and its current efforts at renewal.

3. **Luis** recited an **opening prayer** attributed to St. Richard of Chichester, a thirteenth century bishop (familiar from Godspell).
4. **Sharing recent ecumenical experiences.**

Richard recounted his attendance (on invitation to accompany Brenda Suderman of the *Winnipeg Free Press* on one of her “Faith in the City” visits) at a Candlemas service at the Anglo-Catholic parish of St. Michael and All Angels in the Fort Rouge neighbourhood of Winnipeg. It was an experience that took him back to pre-Vatican II days, with the celebrant facing the altar, lots of candles, bells, and incense, organ and choir, a procession to the statue of Mary, etc. The pastor, a Fr Klassen, told him about his Mennonite grandparents, and explained that they did not use the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, but a translation of the Tridentine mass. **Richard** had sat through the service thinking that these people must be a remnant of high-Anglican immigrants from England, but when he and Brenda went to the fellowship hall for coffee after the service, the first person who sat down and introduced himself was a Mr. Thiessen, who explained that he had grown up in a conservative Mennonite community in southern Manitoba, and who, on a question from **Richard**, acknowledged that there were many former Mennonites in this Anglo-Catholic congregation. **Irma** told us that she had “lost” a student to that congregation, a student sent there to gain some ecumenical experience.

Irma told us about her recent attendance at a Reformed Church (Calvinist) liturgy conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and about her continuing involvement with the Mennonite-Catholic dialogue (along with **Richard**) between faculty members at CMU and St. Paul’s College.

Doug reported that as part of a ministry at River East Mennonite Brethren Church he and his family have been volunteering once a month at Siloam Mission, which he finds is turning out to be a very interesting ecumenical experience. At times he will be discussing theology with mission patrons of various different backgrounds (e.g. a Catholic from El Salvador). From the Faith Briefs column in the **Winnipeg Free Press** he noted that there is a Muslim congregation in Winnipeg that is also providing volunteer service at Siloam Mission. In another connection **Doug** attended a workshop (related to Open Circle) for prisoners and ex-convicts, where one of participants (with a long history of convictions) told him that as he child he had never learned how to find or give love, which would have kept him from spending about half his life in jail. **Doug** also recounted a Staff Room conversation about Lenten observance, explaining that in his family they were observing one dark evening (without electric lights) a week, and being asked, are you Catholic? Why are you doing this? **Doug** thinks that ecumenical experiences are important for breaking stereotypes.

Adolf recounted attending a recent Catholic funeral service for a woman who had been raised Mennonite. She had gone to Ottawa, tried a Mennonite service there, found it too “Pentecostal,” and ended up marrying a Catholic, and eventually becoming Catholic. **Adolf**

also told of a recent visit to a Pentecostal service, which turned out to be a sad experience for him – altogether too much high tech stuff. He also spoke about his granddaughter, who is a Grade 12 student at the College de Saint Boniface.

Helmut described the funeral of Mary Klassen, a woman who had married a Catholic and who after some years of marriage had become a Catholic herself. The funeral was at Canadian Martyrs parish in Windsor Park, with many Mennonites in attendance, who were asked to sing a hymn in German (which much moved the priest who celebrated the service) and there were also tributes by Mennonites who had known Mary. In talking to the priest after the service Helmut had the impression that he was rather disappointed that none of the Mennonites in attendance had come forward to receive the Eucharist.

Helmut also reported that his translation of a book by Fernando Enns (*The Peace Church and the Ecumenical Movement*) has been published by Pandora Press. Seventy-five copies made available at a recent Mennonite World Conference were sold out; the book should soon be available at the CMU bookstore. **Helmut** spoke as well about a Bridgefolk notice concerning new psalm settings by Mike Joncas (a priest composer), settings inspired by the composer's attendance at Bridgefolk meetings in Minnesota and Indiana where he experienced the beauty and intensity of Mennonite *a cappella* four-part singing. Joncas has now made these compositions available for download, reproduction without copyright charges, and evaluation. **Helmut** has downloaded the material, but not yet had an opportunity to work it.

Helmut noted as well the death of the Swiss German Reformed theologian Lukas Vischer, a long time member of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches, and an observer at Vatican II. **Helmut** had worked with him on the "cloud of witnesses" (martyrs) project at the ecumenical monastery in Bose, Italy.

Janet said that most of her interactions were with the Ukrainian Catholic community, but also with the Orthodox community. However she also said she was proud of the retreat house operated by her community in Ancaster, ON, where groups of all kinds and denominations are welcomed. She noted that many who come are attracted by features of the Eastern tradition – icons, for example.

Henry and his wife had spent most of the month of February participating in a Mennonite Disaster Service project in Cameron, Louisiana (just on the border with Texas). This community has a long history of hurricane disasters, including Katrina and Rita. Its population has dropped from 3,800 to about 800, and they are now trying to re-establish their community. The MDS group also spent a weekend in New Orleans, when they held a meditation in the Catholic "minor basilica" of St. Luis.

Lynda, who had just returned from two weeks in a small city in Mexico, reported attending a Lenten "festival" there with lots of dancing and fireworks, which she found vibrant. She is still involved in ecumenical ministerial group that meets once a month. She spoke as well

about her work in RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) at St. Bernadette's, which in fact includes two different categories of adults: catechumens (those who have never been baptised) and candidates (those who have been baptised in other Christian denominations and who are now seeking full communion with the Catholic Church). In this connection she referred to and read briefly from a book by Paul Turner, *When other Christians Become Catholic*.

Dora reported that she is currently working as co-editor of a book (for Wiley) featuring contemporary Canadian Christian writers, some forty authors from the whole spectrum of Christian denominations in Canada, a project that she finds fascinating.

Luis distributed a long list of his current ecumenical activities (acknowledging his "professional" involvement in such activities), and he spoke specifically to the following items:

1. Teaching "Catholic Principles of Ecumenism" to clergy from the archdiocese, specifically accompanying Francophone Urban "Zone" of Clergy in Saint Boniface Archdiocese: in monthly sessions [in French: Winnipeg and St. Jean-Baptiste, November 15 & 22, Manoir Cathédrale (Feb. 5, 12); in English: Western Canadian Chaplains' Conference (Correctional Institutions and Community Service for Restorative Justice (St. Benedict's Retreat Centre), Franciscan Missionaries (Mar. 1)].

2. Anglican-Catholic Relations:

A) Consultancy with a western Canadian diocese: Anglican candidates for full communion in the Catholic Church (RCIA) – this involves responding to inquiries where whole Anglican parishes are seeking communion. Catholic Church authorities would much prefer dealing with individuals. So **Luis** is working with them to develop a list of topics that need to be discussed – that take into account issues of ethos and culture as well as doctrine.

B) Anglican-Catholic National Dialogue of the CCCB (Montreal, Jan. 31–Feb. 3).

C) Welcome of the "Anglican Communion Working Group" of the Anglican Church of Canada in Saint Boniface Archdiocese (February 7, 2008): Drafting of the Response to the Anglican Communion "Covenant" to be discussed at Lambeth Conference this summer.

3. Jewish-Catholic Dialogue, which has involved **Luis** with appearances on the Groundswell program.

4. A lecture on Vatican II in Karl Koop's class at CMU on 19 March.

5. Upcoming: attendance at the "Believer's Church" International Conference at CMU, June 11–14 (keynote speaker – Reginald Bibby), travel to Europe (Rome and London) in June and July, and attendance at the Bridgefolk Conference in Collegeville, MN, July 24–27.

John reported conversations with various individuals:

- A Baptist who wants a longer conversation.
- An Anglican friend in his faculty who is in anguish over what is happening in the Anglican community (especially with respect to questions of sexual ethics)
- from classroom work with future teachers who were asked to consider how they might respond to a *Time* magazine article dealing with hypothesis of Intelligent Design.
- with fellow parishioners at Mary Mother of the Church, where the church is hosting Nepalese refugees (Pentecostals).
- at Elk Lake (Vancouver Island), where he became involved in a long discussion with a Unitarian minister.

John also reported attending an event at the Church of the Rock, where various groups performed, but where an aboriginal dance group was refused because somehow native spirituality would violate the values of the church. He also described attending a United Church funeral, where he was very impressed by the quality of the liturgy.

5. **Break for supper** (provided by Irma’s husband, Ken, their son, and their son’s friend).
6. **Reflection and discussion of Benedict XVI’s *Spe Salvi* (On Christian Hope):**

Paragraphs 1–3. **Luis** distributed a handout and spoke to the first few pages as follows:

INTRODUCTION:

1. Title:

Spe Salvi is often translated as “Saved by Hope” or “Saving Hope” in English.

2. Publication:

It was published on November 30, 2007, the eve of Advent (the liturgical season of hope in the Roman Rite). It is also the Feast in honour of St. Andrew—patron saint of Orthodoxy. Much “hope” for rapprochement is placed in dialogue with Sister Churches.

3. Audience:

This 19,000 word essay is addressed specially to the Catholic community: “bishops, priests and deacons, men and women religious, and all the lay faithful.”

4. Genre:

Spe Salvi is Benedict XVI’s second encyclical (after *Deus Caritas Est*). Encyclicals are the most authoritative of papal pronouncements save only *ex-cathedra* infallible ones.

5. Style:

This is not a pronouncement or proclamation of his predecessors but a calm and deep reflection/meditation on the much neglected virtue of hope in the spiritual life of the Christians. There is no impression that he wishes to impose his views on others. Its tone is conversational. The Pope uses phrases like: “I think that...”, “I would like to add here another brief comment...” and “I am convinced that...” His goal is to persuade, not to instruct. This is the welcome tone of a spiritual counselor, rather than an authoritarian. Even more than Benedict XVI’s first, but similar in style to it in many ways, this encyclical extends the definition of what an encyclical can be. This also helps to define what an encyclical is not. No doors are closed by it; more remains to be said.

6. Sources:

As an elegant and often moving document, *Spe Salvi* is rooted in careful biblical exegesis and patristic sources, illustrated with warm narratives of the triumph of hope in the lives of saints from around the world. The scope of his references are actually quite breathtaking, from the life of the one-time slave St. Josephine Bahkita to St. Augustine (See Appendix II for influence), from Francis Bacon to Theodor W. Adorno, from Plato to Karl Marx, from ancient Christian sarcophagi to Protestant exegesis. His quotations are generally brief and to the point. His language is usually clear, at times beautiful. At times, however, the reader finds the text makes less than complete sense (#23). Although Ratzinger is notoriously difficult to translate into English, this translation, on the whole is quite adequate.

7. Purpose and Context:

Spe Salvi, according to Benedict XVI is about what distinguishes Christians from all other people. Put simply, Christians have a future (#2). They have hope and that hope is the living God. The encyclical’s subtitle could be “The nature of redemption”, a theological term that, like “hope”, has lost its power to move even Christians.

One is given the overall impression that the Pope wants to draw his readers into his criticism of both contemporary Christianity and modernity, and by doing so to open their eyes to the dangers in contemporary culture that in some ways resembles the fatalism of the ancient world in which Christianity emerged and in other ways is marked by a secularization of Christian hope—the dream of creating a perfect society here on earth. Even more does he want to move his readers to be open to the transforming encounter with the living God that changes us and our world from within, and gives us the one true hope that can carry us through the vicissitudes of life to the beyond.

His criticisms are mostly implicit. He presents fact: the post-Enlightenment attempted to build a just world without God. Consequently, Benedict is able to write, “let us put it very simply...man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope.” Society has replaced faith in God with faith in “progress.” This is not an attack on modernity. Rather, it is an attempt to gain an insight into what went radically wrong. It is written in a form of invitation to the defenders of modernity to engage in a radical self-criticism, while at the same time, inviting his readers to engage in a self-criticism of contemporary Christianity—that may be becoming too secular (“horizontal” and missing the “virtual” dimension)?

This benevolence seems to run throughout *Spe Salvi*. For example, while Marx and Engels are credited with having described “alarmingly” and “with great precision...the situation of [their] time,” atheism more generally is acknowledged to be “a type of moralism” (cf. 20 and 42). His critical comments come across not as condemnatory moralism but as a reflection on the tragic irony of sincere revolutionaries led astray by illusory hope and consequently bringing about conditions more oppressive than those they had overthrown.

8. *Limits:*

The Pope is understood to be working on a social encyclical, which may be sufficient explanation of why he does not in this one say more about the concept of hope in the domain of politics. He confines himself to warnings, in common with the long tradition of Catholic social teaching, that there are no ideologies or blueprints for a perfect world—although he attributes good motives to those like the Marxist, who have tried to build one.

This raises the query, when he prays “Thy kingdom come, on earth as in heaven” in the *Pater Noster*, that if human endeavour is invariably undermined by human nature, then in what sense can the Kingdom of God still be foreshadowed in the world, before it arrives in the next?

Benedict’s refusal to be optimistic about purely human political constructs, in contrast to the confident mood, say of the Second Vatican Council’s *Gaudium et Spes*, needs further exploration. It is worth noting, as well, that no document of that Council is quoted in the Encyclical.

9. *Reception and Ecumenical Impact:*

While *Spe Salvi* was welcomed by Catholic commentators, secular publications in Italy were largely unimpressed by what they saw as a snub to Vatican II: “Benedict XVI has turned his back on Vatican Council II” charged the left-leaning Italian *La Repubblica* in an editorial. The paper accused the Pope of being “anti-modern”. In contrast, Cardinal Lehmann, then President of the German Bishops’ Conference, described it a “great and impressive document on the Catholic and Christian understanding of hope.” The Orthodox Church’s Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I, said the Pope’s new letter would “help us have an optimistic approach to the future, particularly on our path towards Christian unity.” (Cited in the *Tablet* 8 Dec. 2007), 31.

There seems to a paradox in his audience: he critiques modernity, but is not addressed to “people of good will”. It is as if they are to be reached by the faithful (i.e. laity) of the Catholic Church, especially in their primary mission of witnessing to Gospel hope *ad extra*, that is, in the world.

It is instructive to recall how Professor Ratzinger as he then was, was appalled by the student protests that spread across the campuses of the western world in 1968, which it seems was the moment the progressive theologian of Vatican II turned into the conservative guardian of the faith for John Paul II. Now he seems to have turned again, away from his former Vatican role to a more genial voice of a spiritual advisor with some helpful thoughts to offer. At the start of Advent, that is a very hopeful sign.

IV. OVERVIEW OF PARAGRAPHS 1, 2: HIGHLIGHTS

Paragraph #1: Introduction

The opening sentence gives the title of the encyclical which is rooted in St. Paul's epistle to the Romans (8:24): "*SPE SALVI facti sumus.*" Paul's words "in hope we were saved," the human person is identified as not only receiving redemption/ salvation but as having received "trustworthy hope". The verb form (first person plural aorist passive and indirect) indicates that salvation is communitarian and not private and that it is given once-and-for all in the past. Although what is given is a "fact" and quite "real", at the core of its nature is also the "fact" and "reality" of a sign, that is, it points to a reality beyond itself, the giver of the gift, the life of God for all time. There is a "promise" value to faith that redeems the individual in a dynamism that assumes participation (acceptance) in the gift of God. The anthropology that becomes evident recognizes the paradox of the grace breaking through weak human nature and strengthening it for a journey that is "arduous" and has a clear ("certain") goal. Hope of the present age but is rooted in the past and leads to a future. In a sense, it has a sacramental value.

Paragraph #2: Faith is Hope

This paragraph lays the biblical foundations for hope. In the New Testament, it is often interchangeable with and equivalent to faith (e.g. Heb. 10:22, 23; I Tim. 3:15; c.f. Eph 2:15—life before faith was without hope; and, I Thess. 4:13).

Given this juxtaposition and parallelism, it can be said that the triad of faith, hope and charity, as classical theological virtues, is effectively given in Benedict's first two encyclicals. He effectively focuses on the essential core of Christianity: God at work in the person of Christ through the Holy Spirit, doing what the human person could not do for him or herself.

A powerful image is given in the last few sentences:

"The Christian message was not only 'informative' but 'performative.' This means: the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known—it is one that makes things happen and is life-changing. The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who has been granted the gift of a new life."

It is in this sense that God's word is an "effective" word—it not only says it will do something, but it also does what it says. It is a powerful agent of communication and creates communion (and community) that reflects the Source. In other words, it is a living and acting word!

The Christian experience then is at the same time intellectual (having the content of truth) but also affective (having the power/dynamism to stir one to action). Hence, a unity between *lex orandi*–*lex credendi*–*lex vivendi* is manifest in Benedict XVI thought.

Commentary. Doug began with an anecdote, an exchange of email in which it was suggested that perhaps *Spe* perhaps stood for "supervised pastoral education." Joseph wondered what could have been the reasons for the fact that this encyclical received such

a hostile reception from the Italian secular press. **Luis** explained the historical background, going back to the last stage of the nineteenth-century unification of Italy when Rome was annexed by the Italian state and the popes proclaimed themselves “prisoners of the Vatican – which accounts for the traditional anti-clericalism of the Italian press and its suspicion of any perceived attack on modernity. **Doug** observed that the encyclical does not appear to take Vatican II (and in particular *Gaudium et Spes*) into account. **Luis** agreed, and observed that there is none of that document’s acknowledgment of the “joys and hopes” of the modern world, and not even any references to any of the documents of Vatican II. He also referred us to a chart in his handout contrasting the ecclesiologies of *koinonia* in the thought of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

APPENDIX II: CONTRASTING ECCLESIOLOGIES OF KOINONIA

<i>P. JOHN PAUL II</i>	<i>P. BENEDICT XVI</i>
Aristotle	Plato
Thomism: Existential Personalism	Augustinianism: Idealism (not moralistic)
Dialogue	Proclamation of Christ
World as Light (“pierres d’attentes”)	World as Desert of Darkness
Natural to Supernatural (incarnational)	Clash of Language, Truth, Light/Darkness (teologia crucis)
Commitment to Process	Commitment to Commitment
Church as Reader of Sign of Times	Church as Environment/Islands for Faith, Hope, Love to Grow (Monasticism)
Personalism/Subjectivism (“The Acting Person)	Ecclesiocentrism
Exitus	Reditus
GS	DV

Paragraphs 4–9. Adolf offered the following commentary:

Paragraph 4. In contrast to a revolutionary approach, which might change external structures, the hope of New Testament faith comes from an encounter with God and transforms “life and the world from within.” As an illustration of this the short letter of Paul to Philemon is cited. The “slave” Onesimus is returned to his “owner,” Philemon, not in his “civil status” as slave, but as a Christian brother. The “revolution” occurs in the persons (Philemon and Onesimus), in their relationship to each other, and in the Christian community of which they are a part – a community which lives *as if it is already* in the “age to come.”

Paragraph 5. The setting of the church at Corinth in the context of a Roman state religion where “myth had lost its credibility” and had become a “fossilized” ceremony. The common “philosophical rationalism” saw “the Divine” in cosmic forces, not in a God to whom one could pray. Life was determined by the “elemental spirits of the universe” (Colossians 2:8). Saint Gregory saw the end of this astrology when the Magi adored Christ. [Was astrology then a sort of “schoolmaster” leading its adherents to faith in God as revealed in the persons (incarnation) Christ?] The concluding portion of this paragraph suggests that “we are not slaves” of the laws of the universe, but are free. Perhaps we needed to be saved from a fatalistic sense of the “inexorable power of material elements,” but there are “Christian” voices today that seem to be content to leave the fate of our planet entirely in God’s hands – absolving themselves of environmental responsibility.

Paragraph 6. We have in the church long used the symbol of the shepherd as one who leads us to understand and follow “the Way” to leads to, or is, the true life (life as intended by the Creator for the kind of creature we are.) The images of Psalm 23 and John 10 are too powerful for the church to have missed. But there is more critique of than affirmation for the philosopher, especially in St. Paul’s writing. The concept of Christ as the true philosopher, or the teacher of true life is in that sense a daring one. It would have been even more so in the third century when this image was apparently introduced. The high regard in which philosophers were held in the Greek tradition, the concern about syncretism and the danger of compromising Hebraic faith with “pagan” Hellenistic elements might have been a concern more than it would be nowadays when philosophers are not particularly esteemed.

Paragraph 7. Luther translated the first verse of Hebrews 11 (and other similar passages) on the subjective side. “Now faith is a firm confidence (*gewisse Zuversicht*) of that which one hopes, a not doubting (*Nichtzweifeln*) of that which one does not see.” A more literal translation would be: “Now faith is [the] reality [or substance] (*hypostasis*) of things being hoped, the proof (*elegchos*) of things not being seen.” The RSV is similar, translating the key words as “assurance” and “conviction.” It would not be easy to get from there to Aquinas’ reading that “faith is ... a stable disposition of the spirit” and “reason is led to consent to that which it does not see.” I am not sure I understand the full significance of

the objective, as over against Luther's subjective, reading, although "substance" and "proof" sound more, well "substantial." But could not the faith of Luther's translation equally "draw the future into the present?"

Paragraph 8. It would require a better scholar of Greek than I am to make the distinction between the two terms used for "possessions" (substance) which the author sees in Hebrews 10:34. Is not the abandonment of the security of property more clearly called for by Jesus in the Gospels? Jesus' response to the rich young man in Luke 18 promises a similar better ("manifold") reward "in this time and in the age to come." (Luke 18: 29–30)

Paragraph 9. Summary of life based on the certainty of hope. Faith is portrayed as something received, something precedes the congregation. There is here, nothing like "voting" on the truth.

Discussion. **Irma** opened the discussion of these paragraphs by saying she found the logic attractive – a correct perception of reality for the sake of discipline versus Luther's subjectivity. **Adolf** commented that Luther's inner certainty of salvation was not something that could be observed by others. **Helmut** observed that there was too much in these paragraphs for lengthy discussion, and recalled a time when he had been advised by his professor that he had produced a fine answer to the wrong question.

Paragraphs 10–12. **John** began by noting the questions asked in paragraph 12 – Is Christian faith something "life-changing" for us today? He observed that the pope went back to the meaning of baptism and said that the parents expect Faith for the one to be baptized, with faith being defined as "the substance of hope" – which leads to pope to some interesting meditations on the possible meanings of "eternal life." He suggested that hope eternal means a sustained desire to be with Jesus.

Discussion. **Luis** suggested that there is a sense in which "eternal life" is something we live now. **Lynda** thought it might make sense to think in terms of a "work in progress." **Dora** commented that the pope's comment in paragraph 10 that many people reject faith today because they do not find the prospect of eternal life attractive was, in effect, critique of our culture. **Richard** reported a recent article that linked declining church membership in many countries with the existence of an effective "social safety net." **Joseph** reported his four-year-old's understanding of what happened in church as "Worry, Worry, Worry in the highest!" **Helmut** suggested "eternal life" does not really mean "living forever," because we should understand the "resurrected life," and questioned the common reading of Genesis 1 as implying that without sin Adam and Eve would not have experienced death. **Luis**, reflecting on the Genesis account and the doctrine of original sin, observed that in the Middle Ages there had been a big debate about the relationship of the original sin to the coming of Christ, with the Franciscans arguing that Jesus would have come in any case. **Doug** noted the extent to which Pope Benedict loves to quote Augustine, and

said that the pope's comment about eternal life being "something more like the supreme moment of satisfaction" reminded him of the line from Augustine to the effect "that our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."

Paragraphs 13–15. **Doug** in commenting on the question taken up in this section of the encyclical – "Is Christian hope individualistic?" – observed how the pope drew on the writings of Henri de Lubac to stress the idea that salvation has to be considered a "social reality." This reminded **Doug** of his own understanding of the classic line from St. Augustine that "there is no salvation outside the church" – which also brought to remind for him the image of a spider-web, which cannot be touched without the whole web being shaken. He also noted Benedict's view of monasticism not as simple withdrawal from the world, but as taking on a task for the world. This is not "escapist theology." He then read a citation from a book by Brian D. McLaren which made the same point about the tension between focus on "me" and focus on global responsibilities, a vision that challenges young people. **Doug** particularly liked the image evoked by the last line in paragraph 15, that of a world and souls overgrown with weeds, which have to be pulled up if true growth is to occur.

Helmut declared that he much liked these paragraphs, while **Luis** thought they placed too much emphasis on the next world.

Paragraphs 16–18 – on the "transformation of Christian faith-hope in the modern age." **Lynda** found these paragraphs disturbing and said that her own experience of the meaning of faith and hope seemed to go against what is said here. She told us about her experience of trying to bring pastoral care to a mentally challenged woman dying of cancer. The woman wants to receive the Eucharist every day, but her "hope" seems centred on the impossible goal of a physical cure, without any acceptance of the inevitability of her approaching death. With respect to the pope's reflections on the kind of "faith in progress" that appears to date from Francis Bacon, she said she find it hard to understand or appreciate this kind of faith in the "kingdom of man." All kinds of issues about progress in medical care come to mind.

Luis said that these paragraphs resonated for him because at the moment he is visiting a hospitalized brother from this congregation who is recovering from a quadruple by-pass operation, and finding it hard to continue living, who, in effect, is suffering a crisis of hope. **Lynda** commented further about the woman she had described, who cannot seem to "let go."

Paragraphs 19–23. **Richard** offered the following comments on these paragraphs:

1. Only a German pope could have written these paragraphs. There is an obvious "privileging" of German thinkers: Kant, (and without being mentioned by name, Herder and Hegel), and then Engels, Marx, and Adorno. Benedict's analysis may well be true, but

it is interesting to note his heavy reliance on German thinkers to illustrate his argument.

2. **(Paragraph 19)** We might note Benedict's essentially negative and critical reading of the French Revolution. It may have been, as he states, "an attempt to establish the rule of reason and freedom as a political reality," but I would suggest that it was both less and more than that. It was less in that it was the political failures of the old regime (and not an Enlightenment-inspired movement to bring about its overthrow) that led to its collapse. With the collapse, and in the crisis brought about by foreign and then civil war, it was, at least in part, Enlightenment-inspired people who seized control during the Reign of Terror and who attempted to establish what Robespierre called a "Republic of Virtue." On the other hand, though in part Enlightenment-inspired, the republican ideals embodied in documents like the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen and the slogan "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" can also be read as Christian-inspired. There were certainly many Catholic priests in the schismatic Constitutional Church, most famously or notoriously the Abbé Henri Gregoire (the best known and most effective bishop in the Constitutional Church), and others later, in particular Felicité de Lamennais, who saw the Revolution and a republic as necessary developments of Christian ideals. Moreover, the teaching of Vatican II (especially in *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) and Benedict's own previous encyclical, *Deus est caritas*, fully acknowledge the legitimacy of republican and democratic forms of government. Without the French Revolution, it's hard to see how these forms would have become the accepted norms in modern Europe.

3. **Paragraph 20.** Despite the impression that one might get from Benedict's analysis, one might observe that Friedrich Engels was not the only one to describe the woes of the "industrial proletariat" produced by modern industrialization and Karl Marx not the only European thinker to call for some kind of "revolution" or to envisage some kind of "Utopian society" to follow. Modern socialism had many progenitors besides Karl Marx.

4. **Paragraph 21.** I would agree generally with Benedict's suggestion that Marx committed a fundamental error in failing to predict or provide guidance with respect to what might follow his wished-for revolution, though there are those who would argue that in personality Marx was not that different than Lenin, and that in power he would have been just as dictatorial.

5. **Paragraph 22.** I like Benedict's suggestion that there "has to be a self-critique of modern Christianity, which must constantly renew its self-understanding setting out from its roots." However, I look more to theologians and thinking Christians everywhere for this critique, than to the bureaucrats in the Vatican. I would agree with Benedict's comments about the ambiguity of modern "progress".

6. **Paragraph 23.** In this paragraph Benedict offers some quite relevant reflections on the relations between "reason," "freedom," and "faith." I agree with his conclusion that

“Reason ... needs faith if it is to be completely itself; reason and faith need one another in order to fulfill their true nature and their mission.” In practice, of course, a balanced relationship between reason and faith is more easily prescribed than achieved.

Discussion. Doug was reminded of a Bruce Colburn song about trying to build the New Jerusalem. **Adolf** was surprised that Benedict had not done more with his analysis of Francis Bacon and the implications of a developing world view that no longer had any use for the hypothesis of God, or that thought that the divine is to be found in a mechanical universe.

Paragraphs 24–27. Henry told us that he had read the encyclical and discussed it with co-workers while participating in a Mennonite Disaster Service project in Louisiana, and he showed us a book about MDS entitled *The Hammer Rings Hope*, all of which relates to the part of the encyclical about “the true shape of Christian hope.” He reflected on distinctions that can be made between “lesser hopes” and the great hope that Benedict says can only be God. He recounted what happened when his wife Cora was diagnosed with an aneurysm in her brain, the options they were offered, the operation she accepted (which involved running a probe from her groin up to the brain), the worries about the outcome, and final report that the aneurysm had completely disappeared. He reflected about distinguishing between hope in what medical science could offer, and the great hope. **Henry** also reflected on what the pope has to say about how hope relates to human freedom and human structures (which of themselves are never enough). Science can be a “lesser hope,” but it can also destroy the world. **Henry** recalled the passage from St. Paul where he says “that nothing can separate us from the love of God,” and related it to the pope’s closing comments in paragraph 27 linking together God, love, and life.

Discussion. Helmut picked up on the second sentence of paragraph 24 where the pope speaks of seeing “continuous progress towards an ever greater mastery of nature,” and wondered if in fact this was really so – taking account, for example, threatened ecological disaster. **Richard** suggested that in some ways “progress towards mastery” was certainly evident – for example, in better understandings of materials, which makes possible things like modern computers, cell phones, and all kinds of similar devices. **Henry** thought that a distinction should be made between “understanding” and “mastery.” **Doug** thought that these paragraphs showed a good understanding of “modernity,” but no recognition of “post-modernism” (which, in fact, tends to question “progress”). **Doug** also picked up on the pope’s distinction between the accumulation of scientific knowledge and the field of ethical awareness and moral decision making, where man’s freedom is always new, and where we still debate issues that have been discussed for 2000 years. **Luis**, on this theme, suggested that the modern world seems ruthless and ethically adrift, without the “anchor” of hope – noting that the anchor has long been a symbol of hope.

Paragraphs 28–31. Janet pointed out the highlights of these paragraphs. She observed that with these paragraphs the tone becomes more personal, with the pope linking the love

of God, our relationship with Jesus, and communion with Jesus with living for others. She also noted the way in which Benedict uses the life of St. Augustine to illustrate his points – a theme which he develops in both paragraphs 28 and 29, showing how Augustine dedicated himself to the ordinary people. He preached and acted in a simple way for simple people. In paragraph 30, the pope comes back to the kingdom of man (which seems to have displaced the Biblical hope in the Kingdom of God, but which ultimately not satisfying for man). The pope suggests that even living for tomorrow's better world cannot be the sufficient content of our hope, and asks when is the world really "better"? In paragraph 31, he answers the question by saying that the great hope must be God. She suggested that there will always be tension between lesser hopes and this great hope. God's love is the only guarantee of a life that is "truly life."

Discussion. **Lynda** agreed that there is certainly a change of tone in these paragraphs. **Adolf** thought that there was a contrast between references to Augustine in paragraph 15 and the references in these paragraphs. **Luis** pointed out how Augustine had had to deal with his interaction with Manicheism, and how it was a great sacrifice for him to abandon his first post-conversion impulse to retreat to the "desert." **Richard** noted that even as a bishop, Augustine and the priests who worked with him in the administration of the diocese lived as a "monastic community," and that Augustine had even produced a "rule" that in time was used by many monastic communities. **Luis** acknowledged the point, but noted that Augustine's rule was for a "community of friends," and that it had a somewhat different tone than other rules, such as the "rule of St. Benedict."

Paragraphs 32–34. **Dora** offered these reflections on these paragraphs:

When I received the reading last week, I felt immediately that even paragraph assignments must be providential, because I resonated with mine immediately – prayer as a school of hope – and this on account of several things currently happening in my life. I appreciate these words on prayer, and though the practice of prayer in our traditions may differ, I think what is said here rings true for all of us.

I thought it might be appropriate – or at least excused for my first time – if I talked about these personal juxtapositions with the paragraphs I was given.

Paragraph 32: The first is that a dear friend from our church died last week; the funeral was Monday. She's been struggling with cancer for six years – sometimes in "a situation of seemingly utter hopelessness" as is written here about Cardinal Van Thuan, for she was given from her initial diagnosis only one year to live. As she – and we with her – engaged in the practice of prayer that this disease pushed her into more intensely than ever before, she became "a witness to hope."

She was always a remarkable and caring person, but something quite beautiful happened. It may sound clichéd, but it wasn't.

The paradox for me, as I think about it, is the interplay of what para. 31 referred to as “the greater and lesser hopes” and “the great hope.” Her prayers always rested on God, the great hope, but the focus of her prayers was the hope of healing and the hopes she had for her daughters, just 13 and 14 when she was first diagnosed. She desperately wanted to live, and she experienced all the fears and doubts and anger and guilt that are bound up in the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going. She found the books of the late Catherine Marshall a teacher as she went through her cancer journey and deepened in her prayer life.

Eventually, though, as the hope of living was emptied of every miracle she had already experienced, living half a decade longer than expected, “the great hope” seemed to subsume those human “greater and lesser hopes” and she was able, with difficulty but courage, to relinquish her daughters and husband and desires, and the foundational hope, which had been like a rock under her, now seemed to lift, as it were, out of the water and it was like a beacon shining above her.

It’s a paradox because we’re disappointed with the outcome – it wasn’t as we hoped – and yet it was as we hope. – She chose as her funeral text the testimony, “I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, henceforth...etc.”

Paragraph 33. The second resonance: some time ago I wrote a manuscript of short reflections on praying for our children – what I’ve learned in my own 30-some years as a mother – and in the past weeks I’ve been working on it again, fine-tuning it – and so have been very much immersed in the notion of prayer. Raising children drives us to prayer. – So I was struck by the words “we also become open to others” and “We must learn that we cannot pray against others” in para. 33. Also, we’ve mentioned several times the aspect of hope as it connects to the next generation. Because they’re the next generation, children are huge in our vocabulary of hope. We pray because we love and hope, and as we pray, we grow in love and hope.

Paragraph 33 talks about this enlargement in prayer. Scripture teaches that the transaction of prayer is very real – I think it’s important to remind ourselves it’s not just our shaping at stake, something outside ourselves changes for the kingdom – but we’re talking here about practice...

Both love and prayer are agents of transformation. I find it significant that Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, “Love your enemies, pray for those that persecute you.” Both love and prayer. Here it is stated, “We must learn that we cannot pray against others.”

In another teaching on prayer, Jesus said – this in Mark 11 – “Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it” which makes room for our desires (Augustine’s definition of prayer as an exercise of desire) – for possibilities, and it sounds wonderful – But immediately, the next sentence, “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything

against anyone, forgive that one..." Anything against anyone. Then we are forgiven, and also that other one. – Forgiveness releases hope into our lives and into the lives of others.

Paragraph 34. What often keeps me distracted, or procrastinating, in my practice of prayer, is fear. A failure of hope. I've known Presence, I've known Absence. Hope swings between those poles. So the reminder of "intermingling of public and personal prayer" is a wise caution. We are helped when we pray Scripture and the liturgy, keep the rituals of the church, where we are strengthened by the hope of those around us. The great hope remains but we live between our articulations and our silences. We need each other in this place.

Discussion. Luis picked up on Benedict's comment in paragraph 33 to the effect that "to pray is not to step outside history," and contrasted this stance with that of Buddhism. The Christian idea of prayer is active; prayer is an act of Christian work. Adolf wondered if we have too few prayers of the church. Richard recalled being impressed when, at the last CMU/St. Paul's College Mennonite Catholic dialogue, Titus Guenther used a non-Catholic book of prayer that struck him as being very similar in form to the Liturgy of the Hours (breviary) used by Catholics for public prayer. Doug mentioned the Mennonite belief that we pray when we sing. Adolf commented that often it appears that the people who write hymns are better versed in music than theology. Luis, commenting from the perspective of a priest kept very busy during Lent with the sacrament of reconciliation, suggested that Catholics have a tendency to rely on "formula" prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, etc.. On the other hand he thought it good for Catholics to have collections of prayers, for if you find it difficult to pray spontaneously, such collections can be helpful.

Paragraphs 35–40. Irma liked the generally positive approach of these paragraphs, the exhortations not to grow weary in working for the Kingdom of God. She also liked the insistence that faith (and hope) are a gift – that it is not a mere question of the power of positive thinking. All this reminded her of her experience in Kenya with Masai people who are Mennonites. Despite all the problems of their country (corrupt politicians, etc.) they still displayed a hope that defied logic. However, she said that personally she had some trouble with what the pope had to say about accepting suffering. Still, she told of "walking" with a person in that person's suffering, and she acknowledged that it is important to walk with those who are suffering and not avoid them.

Irma then read to us this passage from Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*:

Does that mean I am never sad, that I never rebel, always acquiesce, and love life no matter what the circumstances? No, far from it. I believe that I know and share the many sorrows and sad circumstances that a human being can experience, but I do not cling to them, I do not prolong such moments of agony. They pass through me, like life itself, as a broad, eternal stream, they become part of that stream, and life continues. And as a result all my strength is preserved, does not become tagged on to futile sorrow or rebelliousness.

And finally: ought we not, from time to time, open ourselves up to cosmic sadness? One day I shall surely be able to say to Ilse Blumenthal, 'Yes, life is beautiful, and I value it anew at the end of every day, even though I know that the sons of mothers, and you are one such mother, are being murdered in concentration camps. And you must be able to bear your sorrow; even if it seems to crush you, you will be able to stand up again, for human beings are so strong, and your sorrow must become an integral part of yourself, part of your body and your soul, you mustn't run away from it, but bear it like an adult. Do not relieve your feelings through hatred, do not seek to be avenged on all German mothers, for they, too, sorrow at this very moment for their slain and murdered sons. Give your sorrow all the space and shelter in yourself that is its due, for if everyone bears his grief honestly and courageously, the sorrow that now fills the world will abate. But if you do not clear a decent shelter for your sorrow, and instead reserve most of the space inside you for hatred and thoughts of revenge – from which new sorrows will be born for others – then sorrow will never cease in this world and will multiply. And if you have given sorrow the space its gentle origins demand, then you may truly say: life is beautiful and so rich. So beautiful and so rich that it makes you want to believe in God.'

Irma concluded by saying that what she sensed Benedict is doing is urging us to live our lives in a way that allows suffering to be.

Paragraphs 41–45. **Joseph** began by suggesting that, generally, the purpose of Section III, "Judgement as a setting for learning and practising hope" appears to be that the final Judgement in Christianity should be seen as a positive concept since it involves the Resurrection and heaven. Were the sum of human history, with all its atrocities, to be the final "end," this would not be positive and there would be no "hope." The Judgement gives us hope for the Resurrection, and so the Judgement is a source of hope.

He then focussed on the first line of paragraph 42 and its comment to the effect that "Christian faith has been individualized and primarily oriented towards the salvation of the believer's own soul," and tried to start a discussion on what the role of Christian churches should be on this: individuals clearly need a direct, personal relationship with God, but the gospels also command Christians (and supposedly communities of Christians, churches) to love and serve one another. What is the role of Christian churches in doing this? How is the right balance set between the need for the individual to be in individual "contact" or "connection" with God vs. the commandment to love and serve others (a more communal exercise)? He suggested that this question is especially important for Catholics, given the fact that we believe we need our church for full "contact" or "connection" with God (via the sacraments).

Adolf observed that faith should indeed be "personal," but not "individual." **Luis** agreed that faith is always personal, but never "private." **Irma** said that she could identify with the tension arising from these questions, and recalled, from her childhood, Mennonite Brethren moms fearing that they might not be saved, but going forward because of fear of

the last judgment. **Janet** suggested that the pendulum keeps swinging on the issue. **Luis** thought that the tension was particularly in evidence among Christians involved in issues of social justice. They can be challenged by others, for example those who would focus on Bible study. He suggested that an arbiter may be needed, a spiritual director or a parish priest. A committed life always has to be lived in fellowship, remembering that Jesus said he was “the saviour of the world” – in contradistinction to those who trumpet Jesus as “their personal savior.”

Paragraphs 46–48. **Helmut** began by offering the following summary of these three paragraphs:

Paragraph 46. In the course of human life we make choices for good and/or for ill. What happens when we appear before the Judge? For each individual the impact is different depending on the circumstance. St. Paul uses images to express what awaits us in the world beyond. To begin, Christian life is built upon a common foundation; in encounter with Christ man’s work is burned, but the person is saved “as through fire” (1 Cor 3:12–15).

Paragraph 47. Are we to understand that in our encounter with Christ falsehood melts away, while truth and love remain? Both justice and grace are integral to this process. It is an inevitably painful process; yet “the pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy,” our hope.

Paragraph 48. Early Jewish and Christian thought includes the idea that prayer helps the deceased in their intermediate state. Death does not limit communication, gestures of affection, of comfort, and even of pardon. Can we intervene with “purgatory”? Community continues – no one is an island. Our lives, along with our prayers, spill over into those of others. We contribute to the salvation of others, even the deceased.

Helmut then offered these reflections on these three paragraphs:

- These paragraphs offer profound thoughts on matters of the final judgment. The balanced relation between grace and justice is appealing.
- Mennonites have and prefer a vague notion of how grace and judgment will meet persons in the end. The focus is more on existential living with integrity in the here and now.
- Reflection on communication with the dead requires rigorous theologizing, especially in the face of folk-belief.

He then offered these reflections on the encyclical as a whole:

1. The Encyclical gives little if any attention to recent theological movements, especially to “theology of hope” movements of the past 40 years (Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart

Pannenberg, *et al.*).

2. In our day, Christian hope is put to the test in the face of social unrest, violence, war, economic exploitation, sinfulness in the church, environmental destruction, etc.

Unfortunately *Spe Salvi* does not build a strong connection between this current background and theological reflection.

3. Christian hope is hope in the peaceable kingdom ruled by the Prince of Peace. This vision of hope does not gain significance in the Encyclical.

Discussion. **John** picked up on the pope's comments about purgatory in paragraph 45, pointed out that Benedict appeared to be offering an argument by analogy, and he said that he did not find this a persuasive argument for purgatory. **Luis** observed that the reflection about purgatory was not an infallible statement, and not central to the general argument. He also said he would check on the status of the teaching. [Luis has since reports as follows: "Ludwig Ott writes in his *Fundamentals of Catholic Doctrine* that it is a 'de fide' dogma – my impression is that it is in a grey area between primary objects of infallibility (dissent from which would have one ex-communicated) and secondary objects of infallibility (doctrine). The difficulty is the basis on which this dogma/doctrine is founded: 2 Macc. 12: 42–46. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (#1030–1032) calls it a "doctrine of faith" (a hint of it not being a dogma).

Dora told an anecdote that suggested that the notion of prayer involvement re. the dead was not entirely absent from the Mennonite tradition; she told a story about an elderly Mennonite woman who often prayed for the "resurrection" of her departed husband. **Janet** suggested that this issue was at least in part cultural. **John** recalled older women very concerned about unbaptized babies being "lost."

Paragraphs 49–50. **Luis** commented on these paragraphs as follows:

Paragraph #49 Mary, Star of Hope. This title comes from an eight/ninth century hymn, *Ave Maris Stella*. Mary "serves" the Church (ecclesiology) as a figure of the hope of discipleship: (anthropological) she is one redeemed in hope by Christ (Christology); and was able to say "yes" to the grace in the Holy Spirit (pneumatology). Her function cannot be understood without reference to the *eschaton*, that is, the object of our hope, which is eternal life in Christ:

"Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by—people who shine with this light and so guide us along our men. Who more than Mary could be a star of hope for us?"

Paragraph #50. This closing paragraph is essentially a prayer addressed to Mary. Invocation is rooted in the references to her witness of hope (mostly Luke and to a certain degree John): commemoration and imitation precede intercession. In effect, after a "litany" of her experience, one invokes her continued presence to the Church today,

especially as Mother of Hope who can teach the disciples of Jesus to hope and love, not only as she did (commemoration and imitation) but with her (invocation).

Luis then went on to offer an analysis of the imagery in the hymn *Hail, Queen of Heav'n, the Ocean Star*, emphasizing the theme of eschatology. He said he had sat through very many funeral homilies where priests had had a lot to say about what the deceased would encounter after death, often without much basis in solid theology. In fact, about all we can say is that the departed are in the care of God

Discussion. **Adolf** reflected on the relationship between judgment and grace, and wondered what was happening with respect to the part of the residential school settlement that called for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. **Joseph** reported that the methodology has not yet been determined.

7. **Next meeting.** It was agreed that the next meeting of our dialogue group be scheduled for Thursday, 5 June, 4–9 pm, at St. Bernadette parish. **Helmut** and **Luis** will chose a theme and prepare an agenda, the understanding being that most likely it would be Mennonite document.
8. **Closing prayer.** **Henry** prefaced the closing prayer with reflections about his recent Mennonite Disaster Service experience. He observed that they had worked with seven different branches of Mennonites and nine different groups of Methodists, had worshiped with Methodists, with the support of a local faith sharing group, and turned over the keys of a newly built house to family that worships at Our Lady of the Sea Catholic church. The dedication service was led by a local Baptist minister. He told us about a local resident who, after a second hurricane had practically destroyed the community, said she had screamed at God, and had lost her faith in Him – but then found that God had sent MDS to renew her faith that God loved her. The new house was a house that love had built. After reading Psalm 130, **Henry** invited us to read with him a prayer attributed to Mother Teresa [in fact by Kent Keith, who reports that Mother Teresa liked it so well she had it mounted on the wall in her facility in Calcutta].