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The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

The ministry of a Catholic bishop must reflect the Catholic Church's commitment to Christian unity and must give ecumenical engagement the same kind of attention as work for justice and peace, said a new Vatican document. "The bishop cannot consider the promotion of the ecumenical cause as one more task in his varied ministry, one that could and should be deferred in view of other, apparently more important priorities," said the document. Prepared by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the

"The bishop's ecumenical engagement is not an optional dimension of his ministry but a duty and obligation."

document was released Dec. 4 after its publication was approved by Pope Francis. The text reminds each Catholic bishop of his personal responsibility as a minister of unity, not only among the Catholics of his diocese but also with other Christians. As a vademecum, or handbook, it provides lists of practical steps the bishop can and should take to fulfill that responsibility in every aspect of his ministry, from inviting other Christian leaders to important diocesan celebrations to highlighting ecumenical activities on the diocesan website. And, as the chief teacher in his diocese, he must ensure that the content of conferences, religious education programs and homilies at the diocesan and parish level promote Christian unity and accurately reflect the teachings of the church's partners in dialogue. The vademecum follows, copyright © 2020 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Preface

the ministry entrusted to the bishop is a service of unity both within his diocese and of unity between the local church and the universal church. That ministry therefore has special significance in the search for the unity of all Christ's followers.

The bishop's responsibility for promoting Christian unity is clearly affirmed in the Code of Canon Law of the Latin church among the tasks of his pastoral office: "He is to act with humanity and charity toward the brothers and sisters who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church and

continued on page 534



contents

- 533 The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum
by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
- 548 Datebook
- 548 On File

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