

Building Unity between the Churches of East and West

If I can unite in myself, in my own spiritual life, the thought of the East and the West, of the Greek and Latin Fathers, I will create in myself a reunion of the divided Church and from that unity in myself can come the exterior and visible unity of the Church. For if we want to bring about the unity of East and West, we cannot do it by imposing one upon the other. We must contain both in ourselves and transcend them both in Christ.

- *Father Thomas Merton (1915-1968)*

The whole teaching of the Latin Fathers may be found in the East, just as the whole teaching of the Greek Fathers may be found in the West. Rome has given St. Jerome to Palestine. The East has given St. John Cassian to the West and holds in special veneration that most Roman of the Romans, Pope St. Gregory the Great. St. Basil the Great would have acknowledged St. Benedict of Nursia as his brother and heir. St. Macrina would have found her sister in St. Scholastica. St. Alexis, the “Man of God,” the “poor man under the stairs,” has been succeeded by the wandering beggar St. Benedict Labre. St. Nicholas would have felt as very near to him the burning charity of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Vincent de Paul. St. Seraphim of Sarov would have seen the desert blossoming under Father Charles de Foucauld’s feet and would have called St. Therese of Lisieux “my joy.”

- *Father Lev Gillet (1893-1980)*

(who wrote under the pseudonym “A Monk of the Eastern Church”)

It is legitimate to affirm that the gap between the Catholic and Orthodox Church is not very wide. We have almost everything in common. It seems to me, in fact, that the question we must ask ourselves is not so much whether we can re-establish full communion, but rather whether we still have the right to remain separated. The sin of our separation is very serious. May the Lord open our hearts, convert our minds and inspire in us concrete, courageous steps, capable if necessary of breaking through clichés, easy resignation or stalemate. The deepest nature of the Church demands it.

- *Pope John Paul II (1920-2005)*