

The Charismatic Leaders Fellowship (CLF) is a fraternal organization that exists to promote Christian unity in the spirit of Jesus' prayer in John 17. This was the fifth year that I attended their annual conference in Augusta, Georgia. Neil and Cathy Coward also attended. I am always blessed by the testimonies of how the Holy Spirit is bringing Christians all over the world closer into unity.

It is impossible to summarize three days of information and testimonies in a short letter, but I will touch on the main points that I took away from the conference and invite you to contact me or the Cowards if you have questions or want more information.

The overall theme of the conference was Receptive Ecumenism. To understand what that means, I share the progression of ecumenism in my very basic terms:

- The journey to Christian Unity presumes that we understand that the Body of Christ is not whole without all Christians being one and that we need one another if we are to be who God called us to be...His one bride.
- It usually starts with just trying to not offend one another. The evil one seeks to divide us, so the first step is to not cause new hurts/divisions. "What can I not say or not do that will avoid a new relationship issue?"
- The next step to unity is to build relationships of communication and trust where we do not correct one another but respect our differences and share who we are and what we have.
- Receptive Ecumenism goes further as we recognize that we are gifts to each other, and we hunger to learn from one another.

Maybe the best way to communicate what Receptive Ecumenism is would be to quote from an article by Paul Vukim from the Australian Catholic University: *"Receptive Ecumenism calls on each tradition to critically focus on itself to determine what it can faithfully receive from other Christian traditions to grow together into a deepened relationship. This call shifts the ecumenical focus from offering one's gifts to another to receiving the gifts one needs from another in humility and with integrity."*

This was the focus of the week, learning and witnessing how a humble attitude of being eager to receive from others opens the door for the Holy Spirit to make unity happen. It is His work.

The Charismatic Renewal has always been an ecumenical outpouring and one of the reasons the Holy Father asked the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (itself born out of receptive ecumenism) to work for Christian Unity!

One of the key points made is that while the Church officially works "top down" on ecumenism, faster progress is made "bottom up" by you and me by ecumenically loving one another, building trusting relationships, serving those in need together, and being on mission together. In fact, this was brought up as a possible future direction for those working in the receptive ecumenical arena...should we not prioritize future efforts on mission and being disciples in mission together? In fact, Bishop Peter Smith shared an example where a Catholic and Protestant were on mission together when they were greeted with the line "leave me alone, you Christians are so

divided". This person did a 180 and gave his life to the Lord when it was explained that one missionary was a Catholic and one was a Protestant.

The last observation that I offer is how exciting it is when the Holy Spirit is manifested as at Asbury and brings about revival and unity sovereignly. We heard many blessed testimonies, and it was clear that it is an exciting time to be alive when God is moving so powerfully, especially in our young people.

Please continue prayers for the unity of all Christians and find a specific way to respond in your daily life as we work together as a Community with the Holy Spirit to restore unity to His church! For more information about the Charismatic Leaders Fellowship see their website: <https://www.charismaticleadersfellowship.org/> If you are willing to support the Community's effort to build Christian unity, please contact me or the Cowards.

God bless,

David