
Abstract

Receiving the Gift of Holy Cross Monastery – A Critical Examination of Renewing Local Anglican and Roman Catholic Ecumenical Engagement through Receptive Ecumenism.

by

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In the Gospel of Saint John, Christ offers the following prayer, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21).

In light of Christ’s prayer for Christian unity, this dissertation seeks to explore how the relationship between the Roman Catholic Benedictine Community of Holy Cross Monastery, Rostrevor, Co Down, and the Church of Ireland can offer a vision, as well as practical insights, that may help to renew local ecumenical engagement between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

The research acknowledges the successes of the formal ecumenical dialogue, particularly the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), as achieving substantial theological convergence between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. It then responds to the perception that these successes and achievements have not been received effectively by the local church and greater ecumenical reception and engagement needs to be nurtured. A case study was carried out to gain insight into how successful ecumenical reception and engagement has been in the Church of Ireland. Receptive ecumenism was in turn offered as one possible methodology to help rejuvenate and revitalise local ecumenical reception and engagement between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

Lastly, modelling receptive ecumenism, it examined the relationship between Holy Cross Monastery and the Church of Ireland, with the hope of receiving and learning from the monastic community’s ecumenical vision and witness. To gain a deeper appreciation of this relationship, a survey of people from an Anglican context who have a link with the monastery was undertaken and the results are presented. Moreover, the aspects of Benedictine monasticism and spirituality which have enabled the community to have a profoundly fruitful ecumenical witness are critically evaluated as to how they can offer insight to encourage local ecumenical engagement between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.