

The Taize Movement –A New Ecumenism

In recent decades, prayers, songs, and practices from the French Taize movement have been incorporated into parish life. Even Pope Benedict XVI has given a remark that “these days the songs of Taize are filling the basilicas of Rome”.

Since the founding of the community in France, Taize has been held as a model of the modern movement with its focus on understanding of the unity among Christians and avoiding further division among the Christian churches and communities.

The Taize Movement was founded by Brother Roger Schutz (1915- 2005) has been praised by many anteceding popes and Christian leaders. As a result, songs and ideas of the Taize community have been introduced into parishes for nourishing spirituality and promoting ecumenism.

What is the Taize movement? The movement is an ecumenical monastic community founded after World War II by Brother Roger Schutz who was a Protestant with strong commitment towards the full reconciliation of all Christians. He established his small spiritual community for his followers in the village of Taize, France. From there, the community members began an ecumenical movement gear to Christians of all traditions, aimed at working towards a full unity of all Christians and a spiritual commitment to Christ. The ecumenism provoked by Brother Roger and his community has been focusing on the core areas of Christians and undermining the



issues which might bring division. Cardinal Walter Kaspar, a close friend of Brother Roger, commented the Taize prayer movement:

“ The search for unity for (Brother Roger) a kind of guideline in even the most concrete decision of each day: to welcome joyfully any action that could bring Christians of different traditions closer, to avoid every word or act that could slow down their reconciliation.”

The Taize Movement has been endorsed by many popes. St. John XXIII described it as “ little springtime” whereas St. John Paul II named it as a “spring of water” and a kind of experimental model for the new ecumenism. The latter pontiff, a friend of Brother Roger, personally visited Taize during his pontificate. He stated that the Taize community manifested its commitment to dialogue and its spirit of openness. Benedict XVI has also praised Taize for exemplifying a “ spiritually lived ecumenism”:

“ Let ourselves be guided by his witness towards an ecumenism which is truly interiorized and spiritualized...may all of you be bearers of this message of unity.”

The Catholic Church supports Taize for it introduces a broader “new ecumenism” that replaces the traditional model of “shared faith experiences”. For those Taize participants, the style of the prayer is not the most crucial element. Only the aim – reconciliation in God and unity among Christians, is the most significant aspect of the entire movement.

