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Bishop speaks at microphone. Another cleric listens.

Archbishop Paul Gallagher (right) speaks at "Ecumenism, International Relations, and Peacebuilding" at the Pontifical Gregorian University on Nov. 27, as Rev. Dr. Jamie Hawkey looks on. (M. Correa/Pontifical Gregorian University)



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If Christians want to be successful peacemakers in the world, it will require overcoming divisions among Christian denominations, said the Vatican's foreign minister.

"The pursuit of peace in the world cannot be without the pursuit of peace among Christians, and therefore it cannot be without the pursuit of unity among Christians," Archbishop Paul Gallagher said on Nov. 27.

Gallagher, who serves as the Vatican's secretary for relations with states, delivered his remarks in response to the lecture "Ecumenism, International Relations, and Peacebuilding: The Search for Christian Unity in an Unstable World" at the Pontifical Gregorian University, where he responded to Westminster Abbey's canon theologian, Rev. James Hawkey.

The lecture was sponsored by the Gregorian's theology department, which recently launched a two-year academic program that brings together ecumenical faculty members and students.

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> —Archbishop Paul Gallagher
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Since the Second Vatican Council, ecumenism and rediscovering the "the apostolic sense of the early church for unity in diversity," has had a "significant place in the church's mission and pastoral practice" — and is not a "secondary matter," said Gallagher, long one of the Catholic Church's top diplomats.

The British-born Gallagher — who has previously served the Vatican in posts in Burundi, Guatemala and Australia, and has actively traveled around the globe promoting Pope Francis' "proactive diplomacy" — told an audience of ambassadors and theologians that "it is clear, as experience shows, that in some circumstances, the united voice of Christians has more impact than any one isolated voice."

In his keynote lecture, Hawkey said that geopolitics and ecumenism are intertwined and hence, the "practices of separation" within Christian communities "undermine the Gospel itself."

Hawkey drew on the often-quoted lament of the late South African anti-apartheid crusader and Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu, who frequently observed that "apartheid is too strong for the divided churches."

What is now needed in the field of ecumenism, Hawkey said, is a more "conscious integration of the 'theological' and the 'practical,' and to see these streams of ecumenical life as mutually constituting the church’s unity."

The shared ministry in Christ among Christian churches, he said, through conscious work together, reveals the gift of communion.

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He then identified three cases that he said illustrated this reality: the Great Lakes Peace initiative in East Africa that brought an end to a conflict that claimed an estimated 6 million lives between 1998 and 2009; the long-standing ecumenical efforts in South Sudan, dating to before the country's independence in 2011; and the work of Christian churches during the conflict between Indigenous peoples during "the tensions" in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands from 1998 to 2003.

Hawkey said the work of the churches in "sharing in the ministry of Christ" through peacemaking initiatives was a conscious act of joint mission, "not just another movement promoting reconciliation."

Quoting a statement between Anglicans and Catholics during the Great Lakes conflict, he said the bishops of both churches said their primary intention was "'to witness to faith in Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace.'"

The task that lies ahead, Hawkey said, is to better understand how the local experience of Anglicans and Catholics, as well as other Christians living together, shapes the life of the whole church.

A man stands at a lectern, with two men sitting nearby and a screen projecting the title of the

Rev. Dr. Jamie Hawkey (right) delivers a lecture on "Ecumenism, International Relations, and Peacebuilding" at the Pontifical Gregorian University on Nov. 27, as Archbishop Paul Gallagher (far left) listens. (M. Correa/Pontifical Gregorian University)

He also cited the testimonials of the Catholic and Anglican archbishops of Juba, South Sudan, speaking at an ecumenical forum in London in 2002.

"'We rarely travel out of Juba at the same time,'" said Hawkey, quoting the two archbishops. "'Juba needs an archbishop, and if only one of us is present, he is the archbishop for all the people of Juba.'"

This sort of joint witness, he argued, should prompt many questions and further reconsideration of how church structures and law might better serve the "gift of communion."

"Might a greater consciousness of what is going on and a richer theological appreciation of some practical shared action move us closer to the eucharistic

sharing and formal reconciliation of ministries and structures for which we long so deeply?" Hawkey asked.