

Other Resources

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- Study Guide
 - Dialogue Resource Guide
 - Background history on this project (this document)
 - St. Anastasia Roman Catholic Church (www.stanastasia.org)
 - Kensington Community Church (www.kensingtonchurch.org)
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Common Ground

What Protestants and Catholics Can Learn From Each Other

DVD CHAPTERS

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2. **Passions** – The passionate chasm that has separated Christians
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BACKGROUND

Far from an isolated event, the interview on the enclosed DVD is part of an on-going dialogue between two large Michigan churches. What follows is a slightly edited December 16, 2006 post from Crossing Nineveh, the blog of Nineveh's Crossing's owner, Stan Williams, (<http://CrossingNineveh.blogspot.com>). It will explain the background of how this DVD was originally produced, and what has happened between the two churches through the end of 2006. From the post...titled "COMMON GROUND:"

"An amazing ecumenical thing is happening just North of Detroit. The story begins with a large Evangelical Church in Troy, MI called Kensington Community Church. It is a non-denominational, Evangelical-Protestant church modeled successfully after Bill Hybels' Willow Creek Church near Chicago. Kensington has been growing by leaps and bounds under the leadership of a number of humble and astute men and women and its founding pastor Steve Andrews. Before Pam and I converted to Catholicism, we occasionally attended Kensington (even though it was an hour away) principally for the good music, mini-dramas, practical teachings, and presentation excellence.

"A couple of years ago some members and leaders at Kensington became disturbed by the bad rap that a number of the ex-Catholics attending Kensington were giving Catholicism. While the leadership was not going to become Catholic by any means, they definitely considered Catholicism a significant part of Christianity and thought there was a lot of miscommunication and misunderstanding taking place.

"Kensington's Spiritual Formation Director (Dan Kopp) started a mid-week small group in his home to talk about the common ground shared by Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants – and he refused to allow any Catholic bashing. Dan also created a "Pastors & Priests" seminar that he teaches at Kensington, which looks at what Catholics and Protestants believe and why – including the Pope, the Virgin Mary, confession, and purgatory. This seminar has been going on for a few years now and has seen hundreds attend.

"In the Spring of 2006, at nearby St. Anastasia Catholic Church (pastored by Fr. John Riccardo), a "dialogue" was held before an SRO crowd where spokespersons for Catholicism and Protestantism presented talks on the differences between the two faith traditions. It was not a debate, but a respectful pairing of presentations about how Evangelical-Protestants' and Roman Catholics' understanding differs on the subjects of "Divine Revelation," "The Eucharist," and "Salvation." The goals of that evening were summarized by the speakers:

1. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, to see each other as brothers and sisters who love the Lord Jesus.
2. To shatter some misconceptions and have a more profound appreciation for who the others are and their love for our Lord.
3. To begin serious dialogue. Arguing in love is a way to get at the truth about God.
4. To lead the two groups to hold other events together, perhaps a prayer meeting.
5. To increase understanding and remove fear.

A quote shared that first night by Dan Kopp helped set the tone for the series of dialogues: It was from the motion picture Finding Forrester, where William Forester says to his prodigy Jamal:

Do you know what people are the most afraid of? What they don't understand. And when we don't understand we turn to our assumptions.

"On another evening, shortly after the first, Fr. Riccardo spoke from the Kensington stage along with Kensington staff on "The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction."

"The leaders at Kensington had wanted Fr. Riccardo to come and be interviewed during their Sunday morning services. But because Fr. Riccardo was busy with Sunday Masses, they decided to videotape an interview and use that in their services.

"The interview was conducted by Kensington's lead pastor, Steve Andrews, in the sanctuary at St. Anastasia, just in front of the Blessed Sacrament tabernacle. Pastor Andrews asked about, and Fr. Riccardo cleared up, many of the misunderstandings that Evangelicals and Protestants have toward Catholicism. Fr. John also suggested some important things that Catholics can learn from Protestants.

"Large portions of the interview were played before the Kensington Congregation on two Sunday mornings, and over the next few weeks over 2,000 copies of the interview on DVD were sold through the Kensington Church's bookstore. It was on that second Sunday that I began negotiations with Kensington to release the DVD, and we, at Nineveh's Crossing, will release the DVD internationally sometime in January 2007 under an exclusive distribution agreement with Kensington. For my conservative Catholic readers who may wonder if this is an exercise in marginalizing Catholicism for the sake of ecumenical pats on the back, Fr. Riccardo's explanations of Catholicism (on this DVD) have been reviewed and approved as being faithful to the magisterial teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

"Then, last night (Dec 15, 2006), at St. Anastasia, the two churches gathered for an evening of prayer. The two pastors lit several candles placed on a small table before the altar before the service began, but Steve Andrews was having a very difficult time lighting his candle. Finally he gave up and commented over his open microphone, "I guess I wasn't suppose to be Catholic." (We laughed with him.) Fr. John helped Steve get the candle lit, but in the process knocked it to the floor, which Steve retrieved, and the process started all over. It was both funny and poignant illustration of these two ministers of the Gospel, neither perfect but both trying their best to honor God and lead their congregations to ask God that we might be one.

"About 500 attended. There was music from both churches, both pastors gave short talks on prayer, Scripture was read (Luke 11:5-13), members of both congregations led us in a series of prayers for a variety of common concerns, and a basket filled with written petitions from the congregation was brought forward and placed before the altar. Then, the two men knelt before the altar and the Blessed Sacrament beyond, we all knelt with them for an extended time of silent prayer asking God to hear us, heal us, and unite us, so that the world would know that Jesus was sent by the God the Father. Both pastors made it very clear that as Jesus prayed in John 17, the lack of unity of Christians in the world, made Christians oftentimes the laughing stock of the world and hindered Christians' ability to proclaim the Gospel effectively.

"Just before we recited the Lord's Prayer together, a layman who organizes the small groups that are now meeting from both churches presented both pastors with purple stoles, the kind that priest's use when they hear confessions. Our pastors put the stoles on proudly, and you see a picture with this posting.

"It was a time of healing and exhilaration. There are still differences that divide us. But a great deal of the misunderstanding and miscommunication between these two large congregations is slowly dissolving away; and hopefully the community around us will know we are Christians by our love."