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I discovered ecumenism in a place where I would not have expected it at all: in the centre of Catholicism, in Rome. During my time as a student there, I came into contact with students from the study programme for German-speaking Protestant theology students at the Centro Melantone. In addition to their experience of Catholic theology in the various Pontifical Universities, they were looking for personal contacts and encounters in order to know more about forms of life that were rather foreign to them, such as monasticism and ways of praying like the Liturgy of the Hours. In talking about me and my way of life, I was able to grasp the beauty of my vocation even more deeply, but I also got to know the Lutheran and Reformed traditions better, overcoming many prejudices on my part, and above all finding new friends.

It was especially impressive to experience the World Week of Prayer for Christian Unity together with friends from other confessional traditions. In Rome, different communities and congregations invite to ecumenical prayers and liturgies of their own tradition. The Vespers in San Paolo fuori le mura presided by Pope Francis were always outstanding. The liturgy of the Hours proved to be specially suitable for bringing Christians together for prayer and encounter. This became for me a personal contribution to ecumenical engagement, since the Liturgy of the Hours belongs in a special way to my service to the Church as a Benedictine.

Back in Switzerland, I discovered more deeply the opportunities and possibilities of the Liturgy of the Hours for the ecumenical movement in a seminar on the Liturgy of the Hours in Ecumenical Perspective. This seminar was held jointly by the University of Fribourg and the Free Church College STH in Basel. Across the boundaries between very different confessional styles, it became apparent to me that there is a great longing for forms of prayer that express the common tradition of Christian faith. Ecumenical encounters, especially in prayer, cannot be fruitful if one has to give up one's identity in one's own tradition. However, the Liturgy of the Hours often proved to be flexible enough to integrate elements of different styles of prayer, including also the free church tradition.

Here in Switzerland numerous communities from the most diverse denominational backgrounds, and often also ecumenical groups share prayer and life and structure it according to the Liturgy of the Hours. During this year's World Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, on Sunday, 22 January 2023, I had the privilege of co-organising an ecumenical vespers in Einsiedeln Monastery, which we monks were able to celebrate together with representatives of communities of Eastern and Western Church traditions. I was deeply touched and filled with gratitude to join side by side with so many inspiring witnesses of Christian faith in our Church, corresponding to the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ for the unity of all believers.

Of course, the ecumenical encounter for prayer also reveals the challenges and obstacles on the further path towards Christian unity. For me as a student of theology, it is a very beneficial and fruitful experience to be in theological debate about controversial issues with my co-students. I am very grateful that this is possible here in Switzerland thanks to the denominational plurality of our faculty of Theology in Fribourg and thanks to study cooperations, for example with the Orthodox Theological Institute in Chambésy and with the Reformed Theological Faculty of the University of Bern, but also in the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey.

Personally, I am enormously grateful for the great depth of our faith that has opened up to me in such encounters of what I would like to call "theological hospitality".