

# Ecumenism: Principles and Practice

## FROM THE *PROGRAMMA DEGLI STUDI*

A short history of the ecumenical movement will be followed by an examination of the Catholic principles of ecumenism. We will then go on to look at major strands of Christianity and some of the dialogue processes that have taken place, both bilaterally and multilaterally, and what these have achieved. We will then look at practical dimensions and of ecumenism at national, regional and above all local level. Representatives of other traditions will join us to help us in these reflections from time to time.

## OUTLINE OF COURSE

Date	Content	Guest speaker
22/2	General introduction and a brief history of the ecumenical movement	
1/3	Principles of Ecumenism I – UR & UUS	
8/3	Principles of Ecumenism II DAPNE & <i>Communicatio in Sacris</i>	
15/3	The PCPCU and its work	Mgr. Mark Langham, PCPCU Anglican & Methodist desk.
22/3	Denominations and Dialogues: Baptist	Rev. David Hogdon, Pastor, Rome Baptist Church.
29/3	Denominations and Dialogues: Methodists	Rev. Trevor Hoggard, Methodist Rep. to the Holy See
5/4	Denominations and Dialogues: Orthodox	
12/4	International structures of ecumenism, multilateral dialogues -WCC and BEM	Fr. Gosbert Byamungu, PCPCU rep to the WCC
3/5	Denominations and Dialogues : Anglicans	Rev. Dr. David Richardson, Archbishop of Canterbury's Rep. to the Holy See
10/5	Practical Ecumenism I: local & regional structures, Spiritual Ecumenism, Receptive Ecumenism	
17/5	Practical Ecumenism II Good practice in Local Ecumenism	Miss Anne Doyle DSG, member of the CCU of the CBCEW
24/5	Conclusion: <i>Harvesting the Fruits</i> and future directions	

# Ecumenical Resources

## CHURCH DOCUMENTS

- Second Vatican Council *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964)  
 PCPCU *Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* (1993)  
 Pope John Paul II *Ut Unum Sint.* (1995)  
 Cardinal Walter Kasper *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (2007)  
*Harvesting the Fruits* (2009)

- Documents from the Bishops Conference of England and Wales  
*Guidelines for Ecumenical Declarations of Welcome*  
*The Search for Christian Unity* (A popular version of the Directory)  
*Guidelines for Catholics in Local Ecumenical Partnerships*  
 All available on the resources website give below

## COLLECTIONS OF DIALOGUE DOCUMENTS

- Meyer, H. & Vischer, L. (eds.) *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level* Paulist Press, 1984
- Gros, J. et. al. (eds.) *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level 1982-1998* Eerdmans, 2000
- Growth in Agreement III: International dialogue, Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005* WCC, 2007
- Rusch, W. G. & Gross, J. *Deepening Communion: International Ecumenical Documents with Roman Catholic Participation* Paulist Press, 1998
- Burgess, A. et. al. (eds) *Building Unity: Ecumenical Dialogues with Roman Catholic Participation in the United States*, New York: Paulist Press, 1989
- Growing Consensus: Church Dialogues in the United States, 1962-1991*, New York: Paulist Press, 1995.

## STUDIES ON ECUMENISM

- Avis, P. (ed.) *Paths to Unity: Explorations in Ecumenical Method* London: Church House Publishing, 2004  
*A collection of essays from the Church of England*
- Bea, A. *The Unity of Christians*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1963  
 A seminal work by the first president of the PCPCU.
- Bliss, F. *Catholic and Ecumenical* Franklin: Sheed & Ward, 1999  
*Fr. Bliss teaches Ecumenical Theology at the Angelicum*
- Bouteneff, P., & D. Heller, (eds.) *Interpreting Together: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Geneva: WCC, 2001
- Braaten, C.E. & R.W. Jenson (eds) *Church Unity and the Papal Office*, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001  
*Essays in response to Ut Unum Sint's invitation to consider the exercise of the papacy.*

- Burgess, J.A. (ed.) *In Search of Christian Unity: Basic Consensus/Basic Differences* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991  
*A set of essays and responses by internationally known scholars including Walter Kasper.*
- Cassidy, E.I. *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate*, New York: Paulist Press, 2005  
*Part of a series entitled Rediscovering Vatican II*
- Congar, Y. *Diversity and Communion*, London: SCM, 1982  
*Another seminal work.*
- Fey, H.E., (ed.) *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2: 1948-1968* London: SPCK, 1970  
*The companion volume to Rouse and Neill, below.*
- Fitzgerald, T.E. *The Ecumenical Movement: An Introductory History*, Westport: Praeger, 2004  
*An interesting and reasonably comprehensive study from an (American) Orthodox perspective*
- Goosen, G. *Bringing Churches Together*, Newtown: E. J. Dwyer, 1993  
*A textbook from a Catholic perspective.*
- Gross, J. et.al *Introduction to Ecumenism* New York: Paulist Press, 1998
- Kasper, W. *That They May All Be One* Burns & Oates, 2004
- Kinnamon, M. & B.E. Cope *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997  
*A large collection of mostly fairly brief texts. Includes the texts of many key ecumenical addresses and documents from regional ecumenical gatherings.*
- Leeming, B. *The Vatican Council and Christian Unity*, London: DLT, 1966  
*a commentary on Unitatis Redintegratio.*
- Lossky N. et. al. (eds.) *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, London: CCBI, 1991
- Murphy, F.A. & C. Asprey (eds.) *Ecumenism Today: The Universal Church in the 21st Century* Aldershot: Ashgate 2008  
*“The aim of this book is to analyze the real obstacles that stand in the path to unity and to propose solutions, where these are possible. Distinguished authors from the main Christian denominations offer a unique insight into the problem of Christian divisions and the relationships between Christian communities”*
- Murray, P. (ed.) *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* Oxford: OUP, 2008  
*Papers from a key conference in 2006, including Cardinal Kasper*
- Roberson, R.G. *The Eastern Christian Churches: A Brief Survey* Pontificio Istituto Orientale 2007  
*A brief but comprehensive and comprehensible description of all the Eastern churches, including Catholic Eastern churches, which is very highly regarded. There is an online version at*  
*<http://www.cnewacanada.ca/ecc-bodypg-ca.aspx?eccpageID=3&IndexView=toc>*
- Steele W. *Ecumenism for Catholics*, High Peak: Blackfriars, 2003  
*A brief but very useful introductory booklet.*

- Purdy, W. *The Search for Unity: Relations between the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church from the 1950s to the 1970s*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996
- Rouse, R. & S.C. Neill, (ed.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*, London: SPCK 21967  
*Obviously a rather old study, but interesting both for the breadth of information within and as a witness to the earlier days of ecumenism. A companion volume to the one above edited by H.E. Fey*
- Vorgrimler, H. (ed.) *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol. II* New York: Herder & Herder, 1968  
*The first half of this volume is about Unitatis Redintegratio*

## WEBSITES

Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity  
[www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/index.htm)  
*Includes a profile of the dicastery and documentation*

Centro Pro Unione  
[www.prounione.urbe.it](http://www.prounione.urbe.it)  
*Includes a fairly comprehensive library of dialogue documents.*

For other useful websites see the links on the ecumenism page of my website  
[www.amilner.org](http://www.amilner.org)

## LIBRARIES

### Centro Pro Unione

As well as a website, the *Centro Pro Unione*, next to Sant'Agnese in the Piazza Navonna, has an extensive ecumenical library. Access is from the street behind the church. Contact details are

Franciscan Friars of the Atonement  
Via S. Maria dell'Anima, 30  
00186 ROME, ITALY  
Tel.: (+39) 06.687.9552  
E-mail: [pro@pro.urbe.it](mailto:pro@pro.urbe.it)

### Anglican Centre

Once again they have a good library – obviously focusing on the Anglican side of things! In the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj, entrance from the Piazza Collegio Romano. Contact Details are

Anglican Centre in Rome  
Palazzo Doria Pamphilj  
Piazza Collegio Romano 2  
00186 Rome  
Italy  
Telephone 00 +39 066 780 302  
[www.anglicancentreinrome.org](http://www.anglicancentreinrome.org)

# A Very Short History of Ecumenism

## DIVISION IN THE CHURCH

Division in the Church is not a new phenomenon. In the booklet for 2nd Vespers of the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul 2009 – at which both the Centenary of the Week of Prayer for the Unity of Christians and the 50th anniversary of the calling of the Second Vatican Council were commemorated, there was presented a short history of the division of the Church.

### 5<sup>th</sup> Century

Following the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) the Assyrian (or Persian) church, the Copts, The Syrians, the Ethiopians and the Armenians developed autonomously which impaired their full communion with the rest of Christianity

### 11<sup>th</sup> Century

East and West are no longer in communion

### 16<sup>th</sup> Century

Division extends to the Church of the West, at first in the Germanic world with the Protestant Reform (1517) and latter in the Anglo-Saxon world with the *Act of Supremacy* of the Church of England.

### Across the Centuries

Injustices, battles, violence, and above all indifference, ignorance and hostile attitudes between hundreds of millions of Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox and Anglicans.

### Today

Christians want to proclaim Christ to the world, but they are not as one in proclaiming the message of love and peace. They come across as divided. How can people recognise the good news?<sup>1</sup>

Of course while major and lasting divisions between whole blocks of the Church may only go back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the fact of tension and division goes back much earlier – indeed to the very beginning.

## UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### Paul and Corinth

For an exposition of some of the issues around Paul and Christian Unity, particularly in respect of the Corinthian community, see the text of my lecture *Paul and Corinth: Implications for Ecumenism*

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<sup>1</sup> *Secondi Vespri della solennità della conversione di San Paolo Apostolo a Conclusione della Settimana di Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani* Tipografia Vaticana 2009, p.6. Translation mine

### **The “First Ecumenical Council”**

There is not time to deal with all the issues surrounding the “Council of Jerusalem” (Acts 15),<sup>2</sup> suffice here to note that this meeting could be called ‘ecumenical’ in the commonly understood sense in that it sought to deal with a division in the early church which threatened to split it in two – a Jewish and a Gentile church. Although Paul’s letter to the Galatians suggests that there were still a few matters to clear up following the Council, the fact that Luke can write about the event some 30 years after and present it as resolving the problem suggests strongly that the Council was a success, and the split in Christianity was avoided.

### **Johannine Divisions**

It would appear that the “may they all be one” of John 17 and much used in ecumenical prayer (and, of course providing the title of John Paul II’s encyclical on ecumenism *Ut Unum Sint*) was not merely an abstract theological statement. Rather it is clear reading between the lines of the Gospel and very much on the surface in the letters that there were some very serious divisions over basic Christological questions in the Johannine community. We don’t know how these were resolved but presumably they were in some way or other – though it is possible that some of the criticised people were ‘proto Gnostics’ and we may be able to trace the beginnings of a thread which continued at least until the end of the second century.

## **SPLITS AND SEARCHES FOR UNITY**

### **Persecution, Apostasy and Reconciliation**

Prior to Constantine there were many cases of people apostatising under pressure. The church was divided as to how to handle this. People like Novatian, and to a lesser extent Cyprian of Carthage advocated a rigorous line (though Cyprian also opposed the Novatian schism), but in the end a slightly more conciliatory approach prevailed. Important in this from a contemporary ecumenical perspective was the recognition of the validity of sacraments, especially baptism, celebrated by schismatic groups.<sup>3</sup>

### **Arianism**

As is well known, the First Council of Nicaea (325) was convened by the Emperor Constantine to deal with the Arian heresy. Constantine was concerned not so much with the theology (it is generally thought that he himself had Arian sympathies) but with the potentially divisive effect on his empire of a division between Christians. Accordingly, the Council once again had an ‘ecumenical’ purpose in restoring the unity of the Church. In this it appears to have been largely successful.

### **The Oriental Orthodox etc.**

The same cannot be said about the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, a little more than a century later. The Christological conclusions there did not satisfy everybody, and some churches rejected their conclusions – those rejecting Ephesus traditionally (and inaccurately) being referred to as ‘Nestorian’ – these days as the Assyrian Church of the

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<sup>2</sup> The tensions between Paul’s account of events and that of Luke is well known. For a discussion and an attempt to resolve the question see D. Catchpole: “Paul, James and the Apostolic Decree” in *NTS* 23(1977) pp. 428-444

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Cyprian *On the Unity of the Church* – note e.g. no. 5 which would appear to exclude the validity of sacraments celebrated outside the visible unity of the Church. He had rather an argument with Pope Stephen about the validity of heretical baptism – but his position did not prevail.

East, and those rejecting Chalcedon once again being inaccurately referred to as being 'Monophysite' – the accepted term being 'Oriental Orthodox' – including Syrians, Copts, Armenians and Ethiopians. These communities exist to this day. However modern research and dialogue shows that many of the divisions were as much political as theological, and that theologically there is not as much disagreement between these communities and the post Chalcedonian churches as at first appears to be the case.

### **The East West Schism**

Once again it is difficult to tease apart religion and politics. A certain high handedness by the Patriarch of the West at times cannot have helped, though there are also underlying theological issues – indeed it has been argued that different models of the Trinity (which form the basis of the disagreement over the *filioque* clause) have led to different ideas about hierarchy in the Church. Attempts at re-union were made at Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439-1445), but though both came up with agreed texts at a high level (cf. DS 851-861 & DS 1300-1353) they never gained much acceptance back in the Eastern churches. This partly goes to show the importance of 'grass-roots' ecumenism. A top-down only approach is not generally very successful.

### **The Western Schism**

Again politics and theology provide an unhealthy brew, with bits of corruption (on both sides) thrown in. Once again our key point of interest is what people tried to do about it. Certainly there were those who tried to hold things together – one thinks perhaps of Luther's Augustinian superior Staupitz. But the tone of the Council of Trent was hardly conciliatory, even if it did some of the reforming that the reformers had called for. Even in England many argue Elizabeth actually would have liked to reconcile the different denominations in her realm and take a sort of middle line, but the puritans had ever increasing power and so that was never going to happen.

## **THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT**

Most date the beginnings of the modern ecumenical movement to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, though its roots are earlier than that, and although the First Vatican Council hardly contained the seeds of ecumenism in any very obvious way, the fact that it was in fact a somewhat moderating force within Catholic theology – actually circumscribing infallibility quite strictly for example – helps pave the way in the Catholic Church for what is to come. At the same time movements in Catholic theology from the 19<sup>th</sup> century – notably the work of theologians such as the recently rehabilitated Antonio Rosmini (1797-1855) who was prepared to point out the Church's shortcomings, and Gustav Adam Möhler (1796-1838) – who took a close look at the relation between real and ideal in his *Unity in the Church* and also looked more closely at the relationship between the faith of Catholics and Protestants in his *Symbolik* – meant that the way was being opened for a certain self critical approach which in turn meant a perhaps less absolutist stance.

So in the 20<sup>th</sup> century ecumenism starts to happen on a much broader scale. The Edinburgh conference was at the beginning of international co-operation between Protestant denominations in the field of mission. Initially the Catholic Church stood aside from this – indeed it was rather sceptical, and although Leo XII in his encyclical *Praeclara, Gratulationis* of 1894 expressed a strong desire for Christian unity, Pius XI in his 1928 encyclical *Mortalium Animos* roundly condemned the Faith and Order conference of

Lausanne in 1927, believing it to be founded on indifferentism, and forbade Catholics from being involved. The tone changed with the Holy Office instruction *Ecclesia Catholica* of 1949<sup>4</sup> which was more cautiously positive. Meanwhile the ecumenical Life and Works (which began in Stockholm in 1925), and Faith and Order (which began at the 1927 Lausanne conference) movements both came under the umbrella of the World Council of Churches, which had its roots in the Edinburgh conference of 1937, but whose formal constitution was delayed by a little military trouble until 1948.

Then on the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, the 25<sup>th</sup> January 1959 Pope John XXIII, at the end of the now established Week of Prayer for the Unity of Christians announced that he was calling a General Council. In 1960 The pope also set up the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (now a Pontifical Council) with the *motu proprio* *Supremo Dei Notu*.<sup>5</sup> And so the stage was set for a major Catholic entry into the Ecumenical Movement.

### ***UNITATIS REDINTEGRATIO***

As is well known, this document, promulgated on 21 November 1964, marked a new departure for the Catholic Church, though of course the document, while recognising the new flowering of grace in the desire for unity, argues that the impetus to unity in itself is of the very nature of the Church. We will be discussing the composition and contents of the Decree on Ecumenism in the next session.

### ***FROM UNITATIS REDINTEGRATIO TO UT UNUM SINT***

In a sense this is what the rest of the course is about – the things that have recently happened and indeed are still in progress. They are marked by an explosion of dialogues and co-operation at a wide variety of levels. The dialogues are witnessed to by the four substantial volumes of papers – and those are just dialogues at an international level. It also saw the growth of unity schemes among protestant denominations, some of which came to fruition, like the United Reformed Church in the UK and the Church of South India. Others – like the various efforts towards union between the Methodist and the Church of England in the UK, were less successful.

The period is also marked by a much greater degree of practical co-operation, especially in those countries in those countries where no one denomination has an overall majority. Another spur to this has been a general disquiet in the churches over a growing secularism in some countries, and the recognition of a need to work together in order that the Gospel message is heard. The end of this period saw the publication of a new *Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* in 1993, which we shall be examining in due course.

### ***UT UNUM SINT***

In 1995, 30 years after UR, Pope John Paul II published his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*. This takes stock of the past 30 years and looks forward to the future. We will be looking at this more closely later.

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<sup>4</sup> AAS 42(1950) 142-7

<sup>5</sup> AAS 52(1960) 433-7

# *Unitatis Redintegratio*

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TEXT**

For a detailed history of the genesis of the text of *Unitatis Redintegratio* see Werner Becker “Decree on Ecumenism: History of the Decree” in Vorgrimler (ed.) *Commentary* pp.1-56 Here I will just summarise the key points.

### **De Ecclesiae Unitate: “Ut omnes unum sint”**

The newly formed *Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity* was responsible to the Council for work on ecumenism, and October 1962 Pope John decided it should be of equal rank with the other 10 commissions of the Council. However the only working document for the Council was *De Ecclesiae Unitate: “Ut omnes unum sint”* which had been prepared by the Commission for the Eastern Churches.

This document took a basically hierarchical/ juridical approach to ecumenism in its opening paragraphs, and although later sections look rather more like material we find in UR, with emphasis on prayer for unity, and recognising how much we have in common, and recognising that division in the past was caused by sins on both sides, and that no burden should be placed on other communions than the essentials, nevertheless it concludes with a sense that it is the job of the churches – in particular the eastern churches – to ‘come back into the fold.

The Council fathers were not happy with the text. In particular the eastern rite bishops pointed out that many of the eastern churches did not derive their apostolicity from Rome but rather were apostolic in their own right. As the Melchite Patriarch Maximos IV declared

The Eastern Churches are apostolic Churches, founded by the apostles. They are not derivative Churches, for they have existed from the very first. The schema does not show how Peter came to have his leading position in the college of bishops. It is necessary to lay more emphasis on the collegiality of the government of the Church, and the papacy would then be manifested as the foundation of this collegiality.<sup>6</sup>

The fathers were also critical of the generally juridical approach to ecclesiology found in the document. Archbishop Vuccino was of the opinion that in its current form the decree would “provoke an almost instinctive rejection” from the Orthodox.<sup>7</sup> There was a widespread opinion that “Catholics need to have true humility, to understand that they are “not the lords but the servants of truth””<sup>8</sup>

### **Chapter XI of the schema on the Church**

At about the same time Chapter XI of the schema on the Church was placed before the full council. This final chapter dealt with Ecumenism, and was felt to be similarly lacking. Indeed it was not much more than an appeal to other denominations to come home to Rome, and tended to emphasise divisions. In fact this was never formally discussed, as the council decided overwhelmingly that there should be only one treatment of ecumenism, and so it was dropped from the schema on the Church.

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<sup>6</sup> Becker, p.11

<sup>7</sup> Becker, p. 13

<sup>8</sup> Becker p. 15 quoting Bishop Ancel

Thus a new schema was produced in 1963 which had a far more theological (rather than juridical) approach to the unity of the Church. This was much closer to the present text, but the Fathers in general wanted a little more in some areas, notably a greater emphasis on the hierarchy of truths, and a more positive attitude to common worship. There was some discussion over the language used for other denominations, desiring to recognise that there are not only Christians outside the visible Catholic church, but “ecclesial communities”. A further question was raised over the phrase ‘catholic ecumenism’ – there was a fear that the Church might end up setting up a parallel process to those already going on. There was also the desire that Catholics should be clear that fault for divisions historically lay on both sides.

Modifications that came from the debate included changing ‘traces’ to ‘riches’ of Christ in other communions, the use of the term ‘churches’ for the churches of the east, and the change of ‘separated brethren to brethren separated from us (*fratres seperati* to *fratres seiuncti*) – indicating the division affects both sides.<sup>9</sup>

The Secretariat for Christian Unity worked on the final version of the text. Principles of Catholic Ecumenism became Catholic Principles of Ecumenism, which signalled the way for the Catholic Church to join the ecumenical movement, and after a few modifications the text we now have was accepted on 21 November 1964 with 2137 *placet* and only 11 *non placet*.<sup>10</sup>

## **THE DECREE**

### **Introduction**

1. Ecumenism is a principle concern of the Council
- Disunity contradicts the will of God
- All understandably regard the churches in which they have heard the Gospel as the Church of God
- There is a general longing for visible unity

### **Chapter I: Catholic Principles on Ecumenism**

2. The unity of the Church is clearly God’s plan according to the scriptures, founded on the apostles with Peter as their head.
3. Division has existed since the beginning.
- Major divisions involve faults on both sides
- Subsequent generations not guilty of the sin of division
- They are accepted by the Church as brothers & sisters
- Many elements which build up & enliven the Church are found outside visible boundaries of the Catholic Church
- However unity is still lacking.
4. The common search for unity has led to the “Ecumenical Movement which

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Becker pp. 34-35

<sup>10</sup> Becker p. 56

- Seeks to have a true understanding of the other and avoid false understandings
- Seeks to foster true theological dialogue
- Seeks to encourage appropriate co-operation

This should lead to the overcoming of obstacles to full communion so that all may be part of the one Church of Christ which subsists in the Catholic Church

This does not conflict with individuals seeking full communion

Catholics should keep others informed & pray for them,

First and foremost however they must look to themselves

- Examine need for internal reform
- Recognise legitimate diversity
- Recognise God's gifts to other Christians
- Recognise that these can contribute to their own edification
- Recognise that disunity hampers this

## **Chapter II: The Practice of Ecumenism**

5. Ecumenism is everybody's responsibility

6. Every renewal of the Church essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling this renewal is already taking place

7. There is no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion.

We beg pardon of God and of our separated brethren, just as we forgive them that offended us

Union is promoted by the effort to live holier lives

8. This conversion is the soul of the ecumenical movement and merits the name "Spiritual Ecumenism"

This calls for common prayer & worship where appropriate

9. We must study the outlook of others, this study should be done with charity and with a proper grounding in our own tradition

10 Theology etc. should be taught with due regard for the ecumenical POV.

Future priests should be taught in this way & not polemically

Missionaries need to understand the implications of ecumenism for mission need

11. Ecumenism is not served by watering down the faith. Nevertheless there exists a hierarchy of truths.

12. Co-operation, especially in social matters, should be developed

## **Chapter III. Churches and Ecclesial Communities Separated from the Roman Apostolic See**

13 There are two principle divisions – East/West & Reformation. In the latter the Anglican communion occupies a special place. The divisions vary greatly.

### **i. The Special Position of the Eastern Churches**

14. Many eastern churches are apostolic in origin

They have a rich treasury of liturgy & theology

Developed differently in different places – this needs special consideration

15. Their liturgy expresses many profound truths

They have priesthood & sacraments, enabling common worship where appropriate

They have monastic riches

16 They have their own ancient disciplines

17 There is also a legitimate variety of theological expressions.

These exist also in Eastern Catholic churches

18 In working towards union one must impose no burden beyond what is indispensable.

## **ii. The Separated Churches and Ecclesial Communities in the West**

19. A variety of differences which cannot be described here

20. We have a common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Lord

21. These communions have a deep reverence for Scripture, though they see the relationship between Scripture & Church differently

22. With many we are united through baptism which is ordered eventually towards complete integration in eucharistic communion.

Although we believe they have not preserved the proper reality of the Eucharist because of a defect in Order, nevertheless they commemorate the Lord's death & resurrection, so dialogue is appropriate on these matters.

23. There is a deep spirituality, and much liturgically we have in common.

Many have a lively sense of justice

Although there are some differences in morals, fruitful dialogue can be had.

### **(conclusion)<sup>11</sup>**

24. Avoid frivolous and imprudent zeal – ecumenical activity cannot be other than fully and sincerely Catholic

Ultimately the work transcends human powers and gifts, and our hope is entirely in the prayer of Christ for the Church

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<sup>11</sup> N. 24 is not marked as a conclusion, but clearly has that character

## *Ut Unum Sint*

On May 25 1995 Pope John Paul II published his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (UUS). *Ut Unum Sint* is a number of things. It is a review of where the Church has got to in the 30 years since UR. It is a commentary on UR, and as such it is also a strong affirmation of the Church's commitment to ecumenism. It is also to some extent a looking forward to what needs doing next.

In as much as it is a review of the ecumenical story and a repetition of UR I will not repeat that here – the document speaks for itself.<sup>12</sup> Instead in the brief commentary I intend to highlight some things which seem to be developments, and also to look at what the Pope sees as the tasks for the Church that remain.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The introduction makes a number of important statements. After some general remarks on the call to unity and the challenges involved, the Pope asserts that “At the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church committed itself *irrevocably* to following the path of the ecumenical venture” (UUS 3, emphasis original). This strong statement seems to be a clear message to any who would claim that the Church's joining the ecumenical movement was a mistake. The introduction also recognises quite clearly the failings of members of the Church and the contribution of this to division. It goes on to assert the particular role and responsibility of the Bishop of Rome in the promotion of unity, and acknowledges that, just as Peter was weak and in needed conversion and God's grace, so “The Bishop of Rome himself must fervently make his own Christ's prayer for that conversion which is indispensable for “Peter” to be able to serve his brethren”. This self-examination by the Bishop of Rome will emerge strongly again at the end of the encyclical.

### **CHAPTER 1: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S COMMITMENT TO ECUMENISM**

#### **The way of ecumenism: the way of the Church**

The chapter opens with some general biblical and theological reflections, and recognises that the ecumenical is “fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit” (UUS 7). The pope states that as well as UR, Catholic principles of ecumenism are rooted in LG and take into account DH. (UUS 8). In UUS10 the now famous *subsistit in* is re-affirmed, but in UUS 11 we are reminded that this is despite the manifold failings over the centuries: “many among her members cause God's plan to be discernible only with difficulty”.

#### **Renewal and Conversion**

After largely repeating UR on the presence of ecclesial elements outside the visible boundaries of the Church, and acknowledging yet again the importance of conversion, the Pope then speaks of dialogues in this context. “By engaging in frank dialogue, communities help one another to look at themselves together in the light of the Apostolic Tradition. This leads them to ask themselves whether they truly express in an adequate way all that the Holy Spirit has transmitted through the Apostles” (UUS 16).

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<sup>12</sup> It would be an interesting project to see just how much of UR is in fact quoted verbatim in UUS. I would wager it is more than half.

### **The fundamental importance of doctrine**

The pope sees doctrine as of fundamental importance, but recognises that “the way of formulating doctrine” is “one of the elements of a continuing reform” this is “not a question of altering the deposit of faith” because “the unity willed by God can be attained only by the adherence of all to the content of revealed faith in its entirety” (UUS 18) “Even so, doctrine needs to be presented in a way that makes it comprehensible to those for whom God himself intends it”. Therefore, as Cyril and Methodius did when they brought the Gospel to the Slavs, “the content of the faith... must be translated into all cultures”. “The expression of truth can take different forms”. (19) This is in fact essential to the ongoing renewal of the Church.

“Thus it is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian Unity, is not just some form of “*appendix*” which is added to the Church’s traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work” (UUS 20, emphasis original)

### **The primacy of prayer**

UUS seems to move beyond the somewhat cautious approach to prayer of UR to state that the love between Christians “finds its most complete expression in common prayer” (UUS 21). Common prayer also breaks down barriers (UUS 22) and “leads people to look at the Church and Christianity in a new way” (UUS 23). UUS 24 commends the Wee of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Pope then goes on to give a sort of ‘travel diary’ of significant ecumenical encounters.

### **Ecumenical dialogue**

In many ways UUS28 is particularly interesting. Drawing on his personalist philosophy, the Pope sees dialogue as an “indispensable step along the path to human self realization... Although the concept “dialogue” might appear to give priority to the cognitive dimension (*dia-logos*) all dialogue involves a global, existential dimension. It involves the human subject in his or her entirety... Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an “exchange of gifts.”” This theme exchange of gifts was already becoming a key part of the language of ecumenism, and is reflected in the titles of some ecumenical documents, for example ARCIC’s *The Gift of Authority*. Dialogue also requires mutual respect and goodwill – “each side must presuppose in the other a desire for reconciliation, for unity in truth” (UUS 29).

### **Local structures of dialogue**

UUS 31 notes with approval the many local structures that have grown up and the priority that has been given to them and remarks approvingly on developments in methodology of dialogue.

### **Dialogue as an examination of conscience**

“Christian unity is possible, provided that we are humbly conscious of having sinned against unity and are convinced of our need for conversion. Not only personal sins must be forgiven and left behind, but also social sins, which is to say sinful “structures” themselves which have contributed and can still contribute to division and to the reinforcing of division” (UUS 34)

### **Dialogue as a means of resolving differences**

This section could be summed up by the phrase ‘seeking the truth in love’. “the whole body of doctrine” should “be clearly presented” but “the manner and method of

expounding... should not be a hindrance to dialogue". "Reductionism or facile "agreement" must be absolutely avoided" (UUS 36). However careful study needs to ascertain the meanings that lie behind particular formulations of doctrine. Such dialogue "helps Christian Communities to discover the unfathomable riches of the truth" (UUS 38).

It is interesting to note that the Pope chose to put this last, most obvious objective of dialogue at the end of his list, as if to emphasise the other aspects of dialogue.

### **Practical cooperation**

The chapter concludes by noting the importance of working together as well as talking and praying. (UUS 40)

## **CHAPTER II – THE FRUITS OF DIALOGUE**

### **Brotherhood rediscovered**

This most obvious and self explanatory fruit is "truly an immense gift from God" (UUS 41) seen in particular in work to highlight persecution and to overcome political conflicts, which sometimes themselves have a religious dimension..

### **Solidarity in the service of humanity**

This is seen specifically in Christian leaders speaking out together and in joint development projects etc. In this the pope also makes reference to SRS 32, which also asserts the importance of ecumenical cooperation in work for justice and charity for the poor a theme also found in RH 11

### **Approaching one another through the Word of God and through divine worship.**

Developments noted with approval include ecumenical Bible translations (UUS 44) and convergences through liturgical reform (UUS 45). The difficulties of common sacramental worship are noted but the times when this is possible are a 'source of joy" (UUS 46)

### **Appreciating the endowments present among other Christians**

This section is self explanatory.

### **The growth of communion**

"It is not a matter of becoming aware of static elements passively present in those communities. Insofar as they are elements of the Church of Christ, they are by their nature a force for the re-establishment of unity" (UUS 49)

The next few sections (50ff) look at particular progress in various dialogues and what they can offer. These will be addressed when we look at particular dialogues in the course. The Pope is realistic but not downbeat here "The process has been slow and arduous, yet a source of great joy". In UUS 54 the Pope uses the now famous phrase "the church must breathe with her two lungs" referring to East and West. In UUS he sanctions the use of the phrase "Sister Churches" for those churches of East and West which have preserved the historic episcopate in its fullness.

The pope goes on to look at some "achievements of cooperation" (74ff), noting in particular the word days of prayer for peace.

### **CHAPTER III – QUANTA EST NOBIS VIA**

Where do we go from here? The headings largely say it

#### **Continuing and deepening dialogue**

The goal is “to re-establish full, visible unity among all the baptised” – developments so far are all well and good, but though this goal may seem far off, we must not give up on it. This requires “patient and courageous efforts” (78)

Key areas for further dialogue are listed as

- The relationship between Scripture and Tradition
- The Eucharist
- Ordination
- The Magisterium
- Mary

In this we must avoid “settling for apparent solutions which would lead to no firm and solid results” (79)

#### **Reception of the results already achieved**

The bilateral agreements must be examined together as a whole using a “broad and precise critical process” to test “their consistency with the Tradition of faith received from the apostles and lived out in the community of believers gathered around the bishop, their legitimate Pastor” (80) “Significant in this regard is the contribution which theologians and faculties of theology are called to make.” “In all this, it will be of great help methodologically to keep carefully in mind the distinction between the deposit of faith and the formulation in which it is expressed, as Pope John XXIII recommended in his opening address at the Second Vatican Council.” (81)

#### **Continuing spiritual ecumenism and bearing witness to holiness**

Once again the need for conversion is stressed, as is the fact of martyrdom for Christ among those not in communion with Rome. (82-85)

#### **Contribution of the Catholic Church to the quest for Christian unity**

Ecumenical dialogue leads to mutual enrichment. We have received much from others. We also have gifts to offer

#### **The ministry of unity of the Bishop of Rome**

The service the Pope is something we have to offer. However the concrete reality has sometimes been a cause of division for this “I join my predecessor Paul VI in asking for forgiveness” (88). The pope welcomes a growing study of the role of the Bishop of Rome (89) and goes on to look at the NT foundations of that role (90-93) noting in particular the weakness of Peter. The service of unity is exercised in communion with the bishops. The Pope goes on to briefly elaborate Catholic understanding of the role of the Bishop of Rome (94-95). He concludes this section by acknowledging the need to seek “the forms in which this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognised by all concerned” (95). The section concludes with a significant invitation.

“This is an immense task, which we cannot refuse and which I cannot carry out by myself. Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this

subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea “that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (*Jn* 17:21)?” (96)

**The communion of all particular Churches with the Church of Rome:  
a necessary condition for unity**

“Do not many of those involved in ecumenism today feel a need for such a ministry?” (97)

**Full unity and evangelization**

“How indeed can we proclaim the Gospel of reconciliation without at the same time being committed to working for reconciliation between Christians?” (98) “Ecumenism is not only an internal question of the Christian Communities. It is a matter of the love which God has in Jesus Christ for all humanity; to stand in the way of this love is an offense against him and against his plan to gather all people in Christ.” (99)

**EXHORTATION**

How is all this to be done? By commitment, through grace, obtained through prayer, thanksgiving and hope, and if we ask how is it possible the answer is that given to Mary “with God, all things are possible”

## The Unity of the Church<sup>13</sup>

The Catechism states:

*The Church is one because of her source:* ‘the highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.’ (UR 2) *The Church is one because of her founder* for ‘the Word made flesh, the prince of peace, reconciled all men to God by the cross,... restoring the unity of all in one people and one body.’ (GS 78) *The Church is one because of her ‘soul’:* ‘It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church’s unity.’ (UR 2) Unity is of the essence of the Church. (CCC 813)

I would want to add that the Church is one because of her destiny, for reasons that, I hope, will become clear.

It is important to ask, at this point, what do we mean by the Church? Do we mean, as in Thomas, the totality of the divine communion? or do we mean the visible Church on earth, perhaps even just the Catholic Church. *Lumen Gentium* states that

This is the unique church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which Our Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care (Jn 21:17), commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it (see Mt 28:18, etc.), and which he raised up for all ages as the pillar and mainstay of the truth (see 1 Tim 3:15). This church, constituted and organised as a society in the present world, *subsists in* the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines.

Since these are gifts belonging to the church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards catholic unity. (LG 8, emphasis added)

A term of some importance here is ‘subsists in’. The encyclicals *Mystici Corporis* (1943) and *Humani Generis* (1950) had both insisted that the ‘mystical Body of Christ’ and the ‘visible Church’ - by which was meant the Roman Catholic Church - are one and the same thing.<sup>14</sup> *Mystici Corporis* puts it thus:

If we would define and describe this true Church of Jesus Christ - which is the holy, Catholic, apostolic, Roman Church - we shall find no expression more noble, more sublime or more divine than the phrase which calls it “the mystical Body of Jesus Christ” This title is derived from and is, as it were, the fair flower of the repeated teaching of Sacred Scripture and the holy Fathers. (ND 847)

However at the council there was included the affirmation that ‘elements of sanctification and of truth’ existed outside the visible Church, which led to a debate on the wording of the previous sentence. It originally read

This church, constituted and organised as a society in the present world, *is* the Catholic Church.

But it was felt by many that this did not fit in with the admission of ecclesial elements outside the Catholic Church, and so the text was changed to ‘subsists in’, softening the rather hard line of the previous documents.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> These are note extracted from a course on Ecclesiology I taught at St John’s Seminary, Womersley, England a few years ago. The material ought to be familiar from your ecclesiology course at the Greg

<sup>14</sup> See SULLIVAN *The Church we Believe in* (Dublin Gill & Macmillan 1988). p. 16,

<sup>15</sup> See SULLIVAN *op. cit.* pp. 23-25. For more information see G. PHILIPS “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution” in H. VORGRIMLER (ed.) *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* Vol. 1 (Burns & Oates, London, 1967) pp.105-137

Further light may be thrown on this issue by a look at what the council had to say about the Church's relationship to other Christian communities.

The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptised who are honoured by the name of Christian, but who do not however profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter... these Christians are indeed in some real way joined to us in the Holy Spirit for, by his gifts and graces, his sanctifying power is also active in them and he has strengthened some of them even to the shedding of their blood. <sup>16</sup> (LG 15)

So in some sense one can be part of the Church even if one is not in full communion with Rome. By "subsists in" I take to understand that the Catholic Church does not lack any essential elements, and so in that sense it can be identified as 'the Church', but it is not so in an exclusive sense. Sullivan concludes:

To sum up: the Decree on Ecumenism provides us with a clear answer to the question as to how the council intends us to understand the statement that the church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church. It means that the church of Christ still exists in the Catholic Church with that particular kind of unity, and with all the means of salvation, with which Christ endowed it: and it is only in the Catholic Church that it continues so to exist.

However he warns against triumphalism:

Of course it must be kept in mind that this is a question of *institutional* integrity: of fullness of the *means* of salvation. There is no question of denying that a non-Catholic community, perhaps lacking much in the order of means, can achieve a higher degree of communion in the life of Christ in faith, hope and love than many a Catholic community. The means of grace have to be used well to achieve their full effect, and the possession of a fullness of means is no guarantee of how well they will be used. <sup>17</sup>

More recently the question has emerged again. In the 1998 document *One Bread One Body* the Bishops conferences of England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland state that

Christ's Church is a communion, a community whose members share or hold in common the divine life and the mystery of salvation: 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism'. (Eph 4:5) The Catholic Church claims, in all humility, to be endowed with all the gifts with which God wishes to endow his Church (cf. UUS 11) all the invisible and visible elements needed by the Body of Christ for its life of discipleship and mission. This is what we mean by our firm conviction that the one Church of Christ 'subsists in the Catholic Church', (LG 8) that the fullness of the means of salvation, the entirety of revealed truth, the sacraments and the hierarchical ministry are found within the Catholic communion of the Church. (DAPNE<sup>18</sup> 17) These means of grace are there to serve our communion with each other in Christ, to keep us open and listening to one another in the Spirit of Truth, and to bring us into conformity with the Father's will. Christians are in 'full communion' with the Catholic Church when they hold in common all the gifts of grace with which Christ has endowed his Church.

This is a cause of some tension with our ecumenical partners, and when this teaching was repeated by the bishops in *The Search for Christian Unity*<sup>19</sup> some of our ecumenical partners

<sup>16</sup> Somewhat different to CYPRIAN'S opinion!

<sup>17</sup> *op. cit.* p. 28. For the full discussion see pp. 23-33

<sup>18</sup> Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity *Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism*, 1993

<sup>19</sup> BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 2002. This is a popular version of DAPNE

once again stated their reservations. In point of fact in OBOB the bishops are at pains to point out that this is not to be understood triumphalistically.

Our belief that the Catholic Church is uniquely gifted in this way does not imply that Catholic people and their ordained ministers are perfect in the life of the Spirit. As Catholics we should be very conscious of our failings over the centuries. We have much of which to repent, and we know very well that we have not made and do not make full use of the many means of grace entrusted to the Church by our Lord. We can often be put to shame by the holiness, love and missionary zeal of our fellow Christians. The fullness of communion which we claim is not only a gift, but also a challenge to the Catholic Church from the Lord: to become more fully and truly in its life and work what it already is by God's free gift of grace. This claim still means, however, that the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is to be found in its fullness, though imperfectly, in the visible Catholic Church as it is here and now.

The CDF document *Dominus Iesus* is somewhat more forthright in tone, though not in fact fundamentally different in content. In N. 16 it states

The Catholic faithful are required to profess that there is an historical continuity — rooted in the apostolic succession (LG 20) — between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church: ... [quotes LG8] ... With the expression *subsistit in*, the Second Vatican Council sought to harmonize two doctrinal statements: on the one hand, that the Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that “outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth”, (LG 8) that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. But with respect to these, it needs to be stated that “they derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church” (UR3).

In a footnote the congregation quotes an earlier document:

The interpretation of those who would derive from the formula *subsistit in* the thesis that the one Church of Christ could subsist also in non-Catholic Churches and ecclesial communities is therefore contrary to the authentic meaning of *Lumen gentium*. “The Council instead chose the word *subsistit* precisely to clarify that there exists only one ‘subsistence’ of the true Church, while outside her visible structure there only exist *elementa Ecclesiae*, which — being elements of that same Church — tend and lead toward the Catholic Church”<sup>20</sup> DI 17 then goes on to reiterate the distinction between “The Churches which, while not existing in perfect communion with the Catholic Church, remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist” and which are therefore “true particular Churches” and those “which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery” which the document says are “not Churches in the proper sense”. This latter phrase cause some offence, leading to headlines in the style “Carey says ‘We are a proper Church’”. It is a perhaps unfortunate translation of *sensu proprio Ecclesiae non sunt* where *sensu proprio* clearly means “in the full sense understood by the Catholic Church”. However one might argue that to put such a paraphrase in a translation of this nature would also be problematic.

*Lumen Gentium* then moves on from the relationship with other Christians, and with regard to those who are not Christian says:

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<sup>20</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Notification on the Book “Church: Charism and Power”* by Father Leonardo Boff: AAS 77 [1985], 756-762

Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways. There is, first, that people to which the covenants and promises were made, and from which Christ was born according to the flesh (cf. Rom. 9:4-5): in view of the divine choice, they are a people most dear for the sake of the fathers, for the gifts of God are without repentance (cf. Rom. 11:29-29). But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator..... Nor is God remote from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, since he gives to all men life and breath and all things ... Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation. Nor shall divine providence deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, and who, not without grace, strive to lead a good life. (LG 16)

Where does this leave the phrase “no salvation outside the Church”. We are left with two possibilities. Either we say that these people are, in some sense, part of the Church, or we say that one or other of the statements is in error. This appears to be one of the issues over which the Society of Pius X split with Rome, for they maintained that there had been a real reversal of doctrine. Certainly there has been a change of understanding, but is it a real reversal?

To try to resolve this question let us once again think eschatologically. If we maintain the Church is not merely the aggregate of its earthly members, but is also the communion of saints who enjoy the beatific vision, then we know that all who are to be saved are part of the Church at least as far as their destiny is concerned. Again to rephrase Boniface, there is no-one who is saved who is not part of the Church.

How does this relate to our commitment to mission? Surely this renders mission unnecessary? The Councils answer is this:

But very often, deceived by the Evil One, men have become vain in their reasonings, have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and served the world rather than the Creator (cf. Rom. 1:21 and 25). Or else, living and dying in this world without God, they are exposed to ultimate despair. Hence to procure the glory of God and the salvation of all these, the Church, mindful of the Lord's command, "preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15) takes zealous care to foster the missions. (LG16)

In other words they can be saved outside the visible Church, but they are more likely to be saved in it! We may wish to supplement this by a desire to proclaim what has been done, making explicit what is implicit. For the Kingdom of God is not only a thing of the future, but also something to be realised in the present, and if we see the Church as a people on a journey to that kingdom then the natural response is to want to join in solidarity with those who are also on that journey, and also to help those who have a less clear vision of that goal to see more clearly the way in which they are going.

The same goes for ecumenism. Our belief that the prayer of Christ “that they may all be one” will eventually be realised does not blunt but rather sharpens out thirst for its realisation in our own time. If we state our belief in ‘one’ Church then we must work to make that unity ever more visible. Thus the unity of the Church can be seen under the following ‘titles’:

**A unity of origin**

The Church is a divine reality having its origins in the Trinity

**A unity of nature**

If the Church is the Body of Christ then the Church is united with and in Christ.

**A unity in Baptism**

For the most part we recognise the validity one another's baptism, hence saying that we are all incorporated into (one) Christ.

**A unity in the Spirit**

If all who are being saved have within them God's Spirit then they are united, since there is only one Spirit.

**A unity of Charity**

Where charity and love are, there God is. Despite disagreements, Christians are joined by love. This is expressed both in particular churches<sup>21</sup> and in the relationship between particular churches.

**A Unity of Life**

All 'particular churches' (in the narrow sense of dioceses) are the Church fully present. But they share a common structure and a common life with all other particular Churches. In the Catholic church this is seen visibly in our communion with Rome. But this is also partly true ecumenically, for though there are differences, there remain elements which are shared between all Christians. We have a common heritage, most notably the Scriptures, but also in other 'structural' and liturgical elements.

**A Unity of Destiny**

If we are headed for one destiny then that unity as it were 'stretches back' to our own age. It is something which is already begun but not yet fully realised. And it seems to me that this promise, this hope, is actually much the same as the unity of origin, for in God origin and destiny would seem to be one.

What we must be careful of, however, is a simple identification of the Church with the eschatological reality, for this will lead to complacency.

Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right. (2 Th 3:13)<sup>22</sup>

One can perhaps say that the Church Militant is the promise and hope of the Church Triumphant. For God's promises are not something abstract. They are concrete, real, revealed to us in Christ and in the Church through Christ. In this sense the Church militant can be seen as the 'yeast' or the 'seed' of the parables of the Kingdom. So the promises do not distance us from the world, but rather they inspire us to involvement in it, buoyed up by the knowledge of the love of the Father, the presence of Christ and the power of the Spirit.

May they become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me (Jn 17:23)

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Mt 28:19-20)

<sup>21</sup> By 'particular church' I mean, above all, a diocese gathered around its bishop. But by extension the term is sometimes used to refer to smaller units (such as parishes) and also other ecclesial communities. These also are not true particular churches in the proper sense!!

<sup>22</sup> The Thessalonian problem was precisely that some saw God's promises as an excuse for inaction. What is the point in carrying on working if God is shortly going to sweep all things away?

# The Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms on Ecumenism

The directory introduces itself as follows

The Directory begins with a declaration of the commitment of the Catholic Church to ecumenism (Chapter I). This is followed by an account of the steps taken by the Catholic Church to put this commitment into practice. It does this through the organization and formation of its own members (Chapters II and III). It is to them thus organized and formed, that the provisions of Chapters IV and V on ecumenical activity are addressed.

## I. The Search for Christian Unity

### **The ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church based on the doctrinal principles of the Second Vatican Council.**

This chapter basically goes over ground we have already covered, and I don't wish to repeat that here.. A few points of note.

Where ecumenical work is not being done, or not being done effectively, Catholics will seek to promote it. Where it is being opposed or hampered by sectarian attitudes and activities that lead to even greater divisions among those who confess the name of Christ, they should be patient and persevering. At times, local Ordinaries Synods of Eastern Catholic Churches and Episcopal Conferences may find it necessary to take special measures to overcome the dangers of *indifferentism* or *proselytism* (23)

Indifferentism is the attitude which ignores or regards as unimportant real differences that exist. In reference to Proselytism the Decree says in footnote 41

Cf. Conciliar Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* (DH), n. 4: "In spreading religious belief and in introducing religious practices everybody must at all times avoid any action which seems to suggest coercion or dishonest or unworthy persuasion especially when dealing with the uneducated or the poor". At the same time the Declaration affirms that "religious communities have the further right not to be prevented from publicly teaching and bearing witness to their beliefs by the spoken or written word" (*ibidem*).

n.27 notes that the limitations to sacramental sharing can be a spur to ecumenism.

nn.31-33 notes that the diversity of ecumenical situations will affect the nature of the ecumenical activity undertaken.

Finally nn. 35-36 make a distinction between ecumenical activity and engaging with new sects and religious movements. For more on this latter see *Jesus Christ, Bearer of the Water of Life* (dealing with aspects of the New Age etc.) published in 2003 by the PCC and the PCID

## II. *Organization in the Catholic Church at the Service of Christian Unity*

Persons and structures involved in promoting ecumenism at all levels, and the norms that direct their activity.

Each diocese should have a Diocesan ecumenical officer (DEO) who will among other things

- Encourage prayer for Christian Unity
- Foster ecumenical attitudes in diocesan activities
- Represent the Catholic church to other Christian bodies
- Be an advisor to the bishop
- Maintain contact with other diocesan ecumenical officers (41)

Each diocese (or group of dioceses) should have an Ecumenical Commission (DEC) which should

- Be representative of the diocese
- Include competent laity, clergy & religious
- Cooperate with existing ecumenical initiatives
- Support the DEO
- Foster contacts at various levels in the diocese
- Put into practice ecumenical decisions of the bishop
- Maintain relationships with the territorial ecumenical commission
- Foster spiritual ecumenism
- Offer formation to clergy and laity
- Promote friendliness between Catholics and other Christians
- Propose experts for dialogue
- Promote joint witness in collaboration with other diocesan bodies and Christian organisations
- Propose observers and guests for important meetings and occasions. (42-44)

Each Eastern Catholic Synod or Bishops Conference should have an Episcopal commission for ecumenism whose function which has similar functions at an appropriate level to Diocesan Commissions. In addition it should

- Put into practice the norms issued by the Holy See
- Assist bishops in the setting up and support of commissions
- Encourage and collaborate with the commissions of other conferences and synods
- Promote co-operation among Christians, both spiritually and materially
- Establish dialogues with church leaders and councils of churches
- Appoint experts to consultations and dialogues
- Maintain relations with religious and other catholic organisations
- Inform bishops about developments in its territory, and share this with the PCPCU
- Maintain relations between the Conference or Synod and the PCPCU in general. (46-47)

48 speaks of supranational bodies (an example of such is the CCEE which works with CEC) .49 speaks of particular organisations within the Church which have ecumenism as a specific charism (e.g. Focolare)

Institutes of consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life have a particular role to play, in accordance with their own particular character, including tp

- Foster an attitude of conversion of heart
- Contribute to an understanding of the ecumenical dimension of holiness

- Organise ecumenical meetings of prayer
- Maintain relations with similar institutions in other Christian Communions
- Conduct their educational institutions in accordance with the principle of ecumenism
- Collaborate with other Christians in work for social justice
- Co-operate, where possible, in missionary activity (50-51)

52 reminds Organisations of the Faithful that

They should see that the ecumenical dimensions of their work be given adequate attention and expression even, if necessary, in their statutes and structures

53 & 54 speak of the work of the PCPCU

### **III. Ecumenical Formation in the Catholic Church**

#### **Categories of people to be formed, those responsible for formation; the aim and methods of formation; its doctrinal and practical aspects.**

Formation of all the faithful involves first hearing and studying the word of God (59). In Preaching (60) and Catechesis (61) which should both promote unity rather than division, and should both proclaim the Catholic faith in its fullness, but also present the teaching of other Churches and communions “correctly and honestly”.

Formation also involves liturgy, (62) and the spiritual life (63)

Suitable settings for formation include the family (66) in particular mixed marriages, The parish (67), the school (68), and various groups within the church (69).

The document talks at some length about the formation for those to be ordained (70-82), which should include a specific course on ecumenism. This course was originally conceived to meet that need for students at the VEC! However ecumenical formation is not just a course, but in fact an attitude that should pervade all courses (this is generally the case with theology at the Gregorian in my experience). Further space is given to the formation of other church workers (83-86), and to the development of specialized courses and institutes (87-91)<sup>23</sup>

### **IV. Communion in Life and Spiritual Activity Among the Baptized**

#### **The communion that exists with other Christians on the basis of the sacramental bond of Baptism, and the norms for sharing in prayer and other spiritual activities, including in particular cases sacramental sharing.**

Part A deals with the Sacrament of baptism, and after noting in n. 92 that

Baptism, of itself, is the beginning, for it is directed towards the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ. It is thus ordered to the profession of faith, to the full integration into the economy of salvation, and to Eucharistic communion. (CF UR 22)

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<sup>23</sup> In 1995 the PCPCU published what was effectively an expansion of this section in a document *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Those Engaged in Pastoral Work*. It can be found at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/general-docs/](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/general-docs/)

Goes on to outline the essentials for baptism to be valid and encourages further studies towards expressions of common agreement, key to which are

- People baptised in Churches or ecclesial communities where the rituals and liturgical books involve immersion in or pouring of water and the Trinitarian formula are presumed valid.
- The ministers insufficient faith does not invalidate a baptism
- Where doubts exist about the form in a given community, serious investigation must be made before any pronouncement is made. (95)

Baptism is incorporation into Christ & his church, but always in a given church or community. Therefore 'joint baptism' is not possible (97). However ministers can participate in non-essential ways in a valid baptism of another community if appropriate and with the permission of the local ordinary. Similarly Godparents must be of the same traditions, but Catholics can stand as Christian witnesses<sup>24</sup> to non Catholic baptism and vice versa (provided in this case there is at least one Catholic godparent - 98)

N. 99 deals with uncertainty about the procedures regarding baptism of someone received into the Catholic Church.

Part B deals with sharing spiritual activities and resources. The central principle is summed up neatly in n. 104

c) The sharing of spiritual activities and resources, therefore, must reflect this double fact:

- 1) the real communion in the life of the Spirit which already exists among Christians and is expressed in their prayer and liturgical worship;
- 2) the incomplete character of this communion because of differences of faith and understanding which are incompatible with an unrestricted mutual sharing of spiritual endowments.

105 recognises the need for reciprocity where possibility, and 107 reminds Catholics to have respect for the liturgical and sacramental disciplines of others (which implies a knowledge of them)

Shared prayer is commended in 108-115, where some general guidance is given. 116-121 talks of sharing in non-sacramental liturgical worship noting that

In some situations, the official prayer of a Church may be preferred to ecumenical services specially prepared for the occasion. Participation in such celebrations as Morning or Evening Prayer, special vigils, etc., will enable people of different liturgical traditions—Catholic, Eastern, Anglican and Protestant—to understand each other's community prayer better and to share more deeply in traditions which often have developed from common roots. (117)

In fact increasingly this has been found to be much more fruitful than a rather bland amalgam.

In sharing in Sacramental worship (122-136) the Directory carefully sets out general principles and recommends in n. 130 that the Synod or Bishops Conference establish more specific general norms for their own territory. The Conferences England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland did this together in 1998 and we will turn to these for further guidance.

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<sup>24</sup> Slightly confusingly Orthodox can be godparents to Catholics and vice versa, but the requirement for a godparent from the tradition into which the child is being baptised still stands.

137-142 speaks of pastoral co-operation and sharing of material resources – such as buildings.

Section C speaks of mixed marriages in some detail, both recognising the challenges involved and the contribution they can make to ecumenism. (143-160) .We may return to this subject at a later date.

## **V. Ecumenical Cooperation, Dialogue and Common Witness**

### **Principles, different forms and norms for cooperation between Christians with a view to dialogue and common witness in the world.**

Much could be said about this, but the text is fairly self explanatory, therefore I shall just list the headings.

The introductory sections urge the importance of the theme (161-162). After which the document talks about

- Forms and structures of Ecumenical Cooperation
- Councils of Churches and Christian Councils
- Ecumenical Dialogue
- Common Bible Work
- Common Liturgical Texts
- Ecumenical Cooperation in Catechesis
- Cooperation in Institutes of Higher Studies
- Pastoral Cooperation in special situations
- Cooperation in Missionary Activity
- Ecumenical Cooperation in the Dialogue with Other Religions
- Ecumenical Cooperation in Social and Cultural Life

All of which, arguably, deserve a lecture to themselves. And some will get them!

# One Bread One Body

In 1998 the Catholic Bishops Conferences of England and Wales (CBCEW), Scotland, and Ireland published a teaching document on the Eucharist entitled *One Bread one Body*<sup>25</sup>. Originally planned as a simple statement on the norms of sacramental sharing, the bishops decided they needed to precede it with more detailed teaching on the Eucharist in order to enable people to understand the norms. The teaching focuses on the Eucharist particularly as an expression of unity and communion, and then addresses the reality of division in the church which impairs this communion, and uses this idea of 'real but imperfect communion' as the basis for the norms, which I reproduce below (NB footnote numbering is different in the original)

## PART 4: GENERAL NORMS

### Introduction

95 The Directory strongly recommends that each diocesan bishop should establish norms for judging situations of grave and pressing spiritual need when Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church may be admitted to Holy Communion and to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick. These norms should take into account any which may have been established already by the Bishops' Conference. In the absence of norms established either by the diocesan bishop or by the Bishops' Conference, Catholic priests are to follow those of the Directory. In order to guide Catholic pastors in our countries, our Bishops' Conferences now establish norms on this important matter. There are two sets of norms: one concerning Christians from Eastern Churches, the other concerning Christians from Churches and ecclesial communities of the West. Catholic priests are to discern each individual case only in accord with the norms established by their diocesan bishop, or, in the absence of such diocesan norms, those which the Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland promulgate in this document, each for its own territory.

96 According to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, the doctrine that 'common worship' should signify the unity of the Church generally rules out sacramental sharing, but the gaining of grace may sometimes commend it. (UR8) The then Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity established norms for such sharing in several documents, including the Ecumenical Directory (1967), the Instruction on admitting other Christians to Eucharistic Communion in the Catholic Church (1972), and a Note interpreting the 'Instruction on admitting other Christians to Eucharistic Communion under certain circumstances' (1973). The current Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism (1993) refers to the second and third of these documents in the establishing of norms. (DAPNE 130 n.135) Canon 844 of the Code of Canon Law, canon 671 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, and articles 104, 122-125, 129-132 and 159-160 of the Directory form the foundation of the norms which we establish in this document. We also refer our Catholic community to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (nos. 1398-1401) and to Pope John Paul's encyclical letter *Ut unum sint* (no. 46).

97 The question of sacramental sharing is a serious one, and a proper understanding of the issues involved is a matter of urgency. This is true not only in our own countries, but

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<sup>25</sup> Published by CTS, London. Online version available at [http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/ccb/catholic\\_church/publications](http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/ccb/catholic_church/publications)

in many parts of the world. It is not merely a local question, or one relevant only to situations brought about by sectarian bigotry. It has been a serious issue from the first days of Catholic involvement in the ecumenical movement, and now often takes centre stage in our meetings and gatherings together. There have been strong appeals from the leaders of other Christian communities, from Catholics and other Christians involved in ecumenical activities and events, and from wives and husbands involved in inter-church marriages, for a more open approach by the Catholic Church to the admission of other Christians to Holy Communion.

98 We are aware that ministers in other Christian communities often invite all baptised Christians in good-standing with their own churches, including Catholics, to come forward for Communion. Some Catholic priests have acted outside the prescribed norms and invited other Christians to receive Communion, on occasion even issuing an open invitation. There are Catholics who do not see the difficulty in receiving communion at the Eucharist of another Christian denomination; some have alternated, for example, between receiving communion at Catholic and Anglican Sunday services. In these ways, Catholic teaching about the Eucharist, and the discipline that reflects this, has been either ignored or judged negatively against the practice of 'open Communion' by others.

99 There is clearly need for greater catechesis on the meaning of the Eucharist. We hope this document will help Catholics and our fellow Christians to a deeper understanding and acceptance of Catholic teaching and discipline on this matter. It is precisely our own desire for the full communion of all Christians, as well as our fidelity to Catholic doctrine on the nature of the Church and the meaning of the Sacraments, which make us appeal to Catholics to remain faithful to the discipline of our Church. We appeal also to our brothers and sisters in other Christian communities, and to their pastoral leaders, to respect that discipline, just as we seek to respect the liturgical and sacramental discipline of other communities. (DAPNE 107) Such mutual respect is an essential courtesy as we journey together in Christ.

100 We recognise, however, the growth of unity and mutual understanding between Christians in recent decades. Although 'it is not yet possible to celebrate together the same Eucharistic Liturgy', increasingly we speak together to the Father 'with one heart' in a degree of communion with each other which would have been unimaginable a century ago. (UUS 45) This new context means that we can look at our ancient faith and current practice in a renewed way, with new possibilities opening up before us. It is in this light that, as Catholic bishops, we gladly echo the words of Pope John Paul II: 'It is a source of great joy to note that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases, to administer the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion but who greatly desire to receive these sacraments, freely request them and manifest the faith which the Catholic Church professes with regard to these sacraments.' (UUS 46)

101 At the same time, such sharing can only be 'by way of exception' (DAPNE 129). The Codes of Canon Law and the Directory do not allow regular reception of Holy Communion by Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church. For the doctrinal reasons which run through this document, our starting-point is the canon that 'Catholic ministers may lawfully administer the sacraments only to Catholic members of Christ's faithful, who equally may lawfully receive them only from Catholic ministers'

(CCL 844.1, CCEC 671.1). Exceptions to this are allowed for by the same canon, and it is to those that our norms are addressed. (CCL 844.2-5, CCEC 671.2-5)

### **Sacramental sharing with Christians from Eastern Churches**

#### ***Norm on the admission of Christians from Eastern Churches***

102 Catholic ministers may lawfully admit to Holy Communion, and to the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick, members of the Eastern Churches not in full communion with the Catholic Church, if they spontaneously ask for these sacraments and are properly disposed. (CCL 844.3, cf. OL 26)

#### ***Commentary***

103 Between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches not in full communion with it, there is a very close communion in matters of faith. Pope Paul VI spoke of there being 'an almost total communion'<sup>26</sup>. These Eastern Churches 'possess true sacraments, above all - by apostolic succession - the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are still linked with us in closest intimacy.' (UR 15) These fundamental bonds of faith, sacraments and ministry allow the Catholic Church to permit and even recommend some sharing in liturgical worship, even the Eucharist, with these Churches, 'given suitable circumstances and the approval of the Church authority'. (UR 15) In this, proper respect should be given to the discipline of the Eastern Churches for their own faithful, and any suggestion of proselytism should be avoided.

#### ***Norm on Catholics approaching ministers of the Eastern Churches***

104 Whenever necessity requires or a genuine spiritual advantage commends it, and provided that the danger of error or indifferentism is avoided, it is lawful for any Catholic for whom it is physically or morally impossible to approach a Catholic minister, to receive Holy Communion, or the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick, from a minister of an Eastern Church not in full communion with the Catholic Church. (CCL 844.2, CCEC 671.2, DAPNE 123 cf. OL 27)

#### ***Commentary***

105 It is comparatively rare for Catholics in our countries to seek to share in the sacraments of the Eastern Churches. The Catholic Church permits such participation on certain conditions, but it is very important that Catholics carefully respect the discipline of those Churches which may not allow such sacramental sharing. (DAPNE 124)

### **Sacramental sharing with Christians from other Churches and ecclesial communities**

#### ***Norm on the admission of Christians from other Christian faith communities***

106 Admission to Holy Communion and to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick may be given to baptised Christians of other faith communities if there is a danger of death, or if there is some other grave and pressing need. This may at times include those who ask to receive them on a unique occasion for joy or for sorrow in

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Instruction on admitting other Christians to Eucharistic Communion in the Catholic Church (1972), no. V.

the life of a family or an individual. It is for the diocesan bishop or his delegate to judge the gravity of the need and the exceptional nature of the situation. The conditions of Canon Law must always be fulfilled. The exceptional nature and purpose of the permission should be made clear, and appropriate preparation should be made for the reception of the sacrament. (CCL 844.4, DAPNE 129-131)

### ***Commentary***

107 The Catholic Church recognises that in particular circumstances, by way of exception and under certain conditions, admission to Holy Communion and to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick may be permitted, or even commended, for Christians belonging to communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church. The norms we establish apply to individual cases rather than categories of situations. When applying these norms to a particular case, there is no intention to present that case as a type or precedent for other apparently similar cases. In other words, a specific and particular case is being acted upon rather than a category being created. Each individual case in which admission is sought must be examined on its own merits.

108 In what particular circumstances might admission to the sacraments be allowed? The Directory gives general permission in one case only: danger of death. In other cases, a discernment of the situation of the individual has to be made. The general description of such need is that it be 'grave and pressing'. What, then, would be examples of such 'grave and pressing need'? The 1967 Ecumenical Directory highlights people suffering persecution or in prison, but also mentions 'other cases of such urgent necessity'. (n.55) A later document made clear that such cases are not limited to situations of suffering and danger. Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church could find themselves 'in grave spiritual necessity and with no chance of recourse to their own community', such as when scattered in predominantly Catholic regions.<sup>27</sup> The Church's law requires the need to be both grave and pressing. Such a need is more than a passing desire, or something arising simply from the sadness of feeling left out in a particular celebration.

109 What do we mean by a 'unique occasion' in the life of a family or an individual? We are thinking of an occasion which of its nature is unrepeatable, a 'one-off' situation at a given moment which will not come again. This may well be associated with the most significant moments of a person's life, for example, at the moments of Christian initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion), Marriage, Ordination and death.

110 The Directory also envisages that a grave and pressing need may be experienced in some mixed marriages. This is the only circumstance explicitly added to those mentioned in previous documents. Precisely because of problems concerning Eucharistic sharing which may arise from the presence of other Christians, it is envisaged that a mixed marriage will usually be celebrated outside Mass. In our countries, the bishops have given consent to the celebration of such a marriage within Mass, when it seems appropriate to the couple and to the presiding Catholic minister. If a large number of people belonging to different Christian traditions is to be present, the fact that they cannot receive Holy Communion needs to be considered. They should, however, be invited to participate in every other way they can, and the priest or deacon should encourage them to do so.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Instruction on admitting other Christians to Eucharistic Communion in the Catholic Church, no. VI

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Mixed Marriages, Revised Directory (1990), norm 9.

111 The decision whether the bride or groom who is not a Catholic may be admitted to Eucharistic communion must always be made in keeping with the general norms regarding the conditions for such admission, 'taking into account the particular situation of the reception of the sacrament of Christian marriage by two baptised Christians.' (DAPNE 159) As we stated earlier, the sharing together of the sacraments of baptism and marriage creates a sacred bond between husband and wife, and places the couple in a new relationship with the Catholic Church. The spouse who is not a Catholic remains, however, someone who is not in full communion with the Catholic Church, and for this reason the Directory stresses that 'Eucharistic sharing can only be exceptional'. (DAPNE 160) Even when the bride or groom is indeed admitted to Holy Communion at a 'Nuptial Mass', it is not envisaged that this be extended to relatives and other guests not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

112 What might be meant by other unique occasions for joy or sorrow in the life of a family or an individual? These are situations in which there may be an objectively grave and pressing spiritual need for a person to receive Holy Communion. We give examples of such circumstances, without in any way intending to suggest categories of situations in which admission to the sacrament would be generally granted. The admission of a particular individual on one such unique occasion does not mean that another individual would necessarily be admitted in a similar situation. Requests to be admitted to Holy Communion may come from the parent of a child to be baptised during Mass, or receiving First Holy Communion or Confirmation; the parent or wife of someone being ordained;<sup>29</sup> the intimate family of the deceased at a Funeral Mass; Christians who cannot easily approach a minister of their own community, such as those confined to an institution of some kind, although most hospitals and prisons in our countries have Anglican, Presbyterian, Church of Scotland and Free Church chaplains who minister there on a regular basis. There may be occasions when it is admission to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick which is the most grave and pressing spiritual need, due in part to the absence of such sacramental rites in some faith communities. Each situation will be judged individually according to the norms.

113 Who is to make the decision in each case? Except when there is a danger of death, it is for the diocesan bishop or those delegated by him to judge whether there is a grave and pressing need. When an individual Christian decides, after prayer and reflection, that he or she should approach the local priest about their circumstances, the latter must also make a discernment about whether this should be brought to the local bishop or his delegate for a decision. A Catholic priest may not make such a decision himself unless duly delegated by his bishop.

114 What conditions must always be fulfilled? The Code of Canon Law lists four conditions which are re-stated in the Directory: (CCL 844.4, CCEL 671.4, DAPNE 131)

- that the person be unable to approach a minister of his or her own community for the sacrament desired;

In our countries, occasions when such fellow Christians cannot physically find a minister of their own community will be rare. There may be times, however, such as in the

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<sup>29</sup> Besides the parents of ordinands, this may also include the wives of permanent deacons or of former Anglican priests being ordained to the Catholic priesthood

particular circumstances or on the unique occasions exemplified above, when access to one's own minister is impossible given the very nature of that occasion.

- that the person greatly desire to receive the sacrament, and ask to receive it of his or her own initiative;

The grave and pressing spiritual need should be something discerned by the person concerned, rather than in response to an invitation given by the Catholic priest. Priests and other Catholic ministers should issue neither general nor specific invitations to other Christians to receive Holy Communion. It is important that there be adequate time for the proper process of discernment and judgement, and for appropriate preparation for reception of the sacrament.

- that the person manifest Catholic faith in the sacrament desired;

In this document we have given an outline of the fundamental aspects of Catholic faith in the Eucharist, and to a lesser extent of Catholic faith in the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick. For a Christian who does not regularly worship at a Catholic church, being a frequent communicant at his or her own church may well indicate a love for the Eucharist. Others may regularly attend a Catholic celebration of the Eucharist, with their Catholic spouse or family for example, and this may speak loudly of a commitment to the Eucharist. It does not necessarily follow, however, that their understanding of the Eucharist and its implications is in harmony with that of the Catholic faith.

- that the person be properly disposed.

The same is asked of a Christian not in full communion with the Catholic Church as is expected of a Catholic wishing to receive the sacraments. There are Catholics who are unable to receive Holy Communion because of their being, for example, in a state of serious sin or in an irregular marital situation; the same may be true of another Christian seeking admission to Holy Communion. The Eucharist is an awesome and holy gift of God to his Church: it should be approached with reverence and great care as we seek to welcome the living Lord into the temple of our lives.

115 Catholic priests should treat with kindness and sensitivity other Christians who seek admission to these sacraments, welcoming them with pastoral love even when their request cannot be granted. Asking a few simple questions can help to discern the situation in each individual case. What is the nature of the person's spiritual need? Are all of the necessary conditions fulfilled? What special circumstances prevent the person from approaching a minister of his or her own community? What is unique about this particular moment or occasion? Is there sufficient faith in the sacrament desired? That is, does the person believe in general terms what the Catholic Church believes, and certainly not deny the essentials of Catholic belief in the particular sacrament? Is he or she properly disposed, a person not in a state of serious or scandalous sin and ready to approach the sacrament with humility and reverence? Is he or she open to the growth of visible unity among Christians? Such careful discernment is very important, as the sacraments should not be denied to those whom the present law of the Church allows to receive them.

***Norm on Catholics approaching ministers of other Churches and ecclesial communities***

116 Whenever necessity requires or a genuine spiritual advantage commends it, and provided the danger of error or indifferentism is avoided, Christ's faithful for whom it is physically or morally impossible to approach a Catholic minister may lawfully receive

Holy Communion, and the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick, from ministers in other faith communities whose sacraments are accepted as valid by the Catholic Church. (CCL 844.2, DAPNE 132)

### ***Commentary***

117 Whereas in the case of the Eastern Churches, it is lawful for Catholics to receive the sacraments in such situations from a minister of an Eastern Church, this is not the case with those Christian communities which find their roots in the Reformation. A Catholic seeking these sacraments must do so 'only from a minister in whose Church these sacraments are valid and from one who is known to be validly ordained according to the Catholic teaching on ordination.' (DAPNE 132) For historical and theological reasons, there are special difficulties with regard to Anglican orders. These remain unresolved in spite of what some see as a change of circumstances in the twentieth century, for example through achievement of reaching some important agreement between Catholics and Anglicans on the nature of ordained ministry. We are very much aware that this is a sensitive question, and one which can be a source of hurt to ministers of communities with whom we seek to work as friends in the name of Christ. However, we have to say to members of the Catholic community in our countries that it is not permissible for Catholics to receive Holy Communion, or the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick, from ministers of the Anglican Communion (the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Church in Wales, the Scottish Episcopal Church), the Church of Scotland or of other faith communities rooted in the Reformation. It is for this reason that exceptional sacramental sharing between the Catholic Church and these faith communities cannot be reciprocal, whereas this is sometimes a real possibility with the Eastern Churches not in full communion with the Catholic Church

### **'May we all be one'**

118 Many will have hoped for encouragement of greater sacramental sharing. Others will think we have gone too far. We too are conscious of the difficulties of not being able to share one table of the Lord with our brothers and sisters in Christ. As Christians together, we walk in pilgrimage towards the Father, still deeply wounded by our lack of full communion in faith. The fundamental principle which underlies our norms, is that 'the Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with the Church.' (CCC1395) It is important that Catholics themselves understand this doctrine. We appeal in love and in truth to the whole Catholic community in our countries for their faithfulness to the deepest meaning of the Mass. Our norms are also rooted in our desire for the full visible unity of all Christians. We echo the words of Pope John Paul: it is precisely 'for the sake of furthering ecumenism' that we appeal for our norms to be respected. (UUS 46)

119 We bishops have addressed together the situation in our countries at this moment, open to the spiritual needs expressed by others and yet at the same time faithful to the Catholic understanding of the Church and the Eucharist, and to the discipline of the Catholic Church. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church suggests, 'The more painful the experience of the divisions in the Church which break the common participation in the table of the Lord, the more urgent are our prayers to the Lord that the time of complete unity among all who believe in him may return.' (CCC1398) We know only too well that the Catholic Church's understanding of itself and our convictions about who may and may not be admitted to Holy Communion can and do cause distress both to

other Christians and to some Catholics.<sup>30</sup> It is not, however, the Church's norms on sacramental sharing which cause division: those norms are simply a reflection and consequence of the painful division already present because of our Christian disunity. People often ask, 'What would Jesus do?', implying that he would offer the gift of himself to anyone who asked. Jesus himself was often the cause of division. His will was that all be one, but his teaching and actions led to people going away from him. This was even true of his 'hard saying' on the Bread of Life. (cf. John 6:60f.) Unity in Christ is unity both in truth and in love.

120 We are fully committed to our common pilgrim path towards reconciliation and full visible unity as Christians. As stated in the Swanwick Declaration in 1987, our earnest desire is to become more fully, in God's own time, the one Church of Christ, 'united in faith, communion, pastoral care and mission.' We rejoice at the growth of understanding and deepening of communion between us. At the same time, however, no far-reaching progress will be made unless we recognise that serious matters still divide us and respect the sincerely held convictions of one another. We are deeply grateful to our friends in other Christian traditions who with great understanding and patience respect the disciplines of our Church.

121 These norms on sacramental sharing are a reflection in practice of the Catholic Church's self-understanding and Eucharistic faith presented in the earlier part of our document. They are intimately connected with our sense of identity as Catholics. The link between the 'Body of Christ' which is the Eucharist and the 'Body of Christ' which is the Church is very profound. We hope that common study of these difficult questions may lead to a deeper understanding of the nature of the Church, and bring nearer the day when we can come together united in faith at one Eucharist. Let us walk together towards that day when we can truly say together one great 'Amen' to the whole mystery of the Eucharist, to the Body of Christ given for us and the Blood of the Lord poured out for us. Our prayer to the Father is the same today as that expressed in one of the very earliest Christian writings, the Didache:

As this broken bread, once dispersed over the hills,  
was brought together and became one loaf,  
so may your Church be brought together  
from the ends of the earth  
into your Kingdom (no. 9.4.)

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Mixed Marriages: Revised Directory* (1990), p. 6.

# Ecumenism in Europe

## CCEE, CEC AND THE CHARTA OECUMENICA

In 2001 the Council of European Churches (CEC) together with the Council of European Bishops conferences (CCEE)<sup>31</sup> produced The Charta Oecumenica which is subtitled *Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe*. The document seems relatively unambitious to those of us who have been working ecumenically for many years, but given the fact that it was intended for the whole of Europe, including areas where there has been (and in some cases remains) significant mistrust in recent history the document is highly significant.

An earlier draft of the document – which I saw when a member of the Committee for Christian Unity (CCU) of the CBCEW – was marked by the distrust of the orthodox churches of the western churches – Catholic and Protestant, whom they suspected of proselytism. While some of their concerns were genuine the document was rather inward looking and negative in tone, and the feedback said as much. The document that was eventually published is much more positive.

The document is in four parts

### **I. We believe “in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church”**

This is a statement of the basic theological underpinning of the ecumenical movement and a commitment to respond to Eph 4:3-6 and work towards the visible unity of the Church

### **II. On the Way Towards the Visible Fellowship of the Churches in Europe**

This essentially deals with both the urgency of mission and the dangers of treading on each other's toes. This touches on the difficult area of conversions, but also emphasises the need to become more open to one another, and to work and pray together, and to enter into dialogue at various levels.

### **III Our Common Responsibility in Europe**

This section talks of the common responsibility for promoting justice, peace and reconciliation in Europe, to encourage responsible stewardship of resources, and to promote good relationships with Judaism, Islam and other faiths.

The full text can be found on the CEC website. There is a link on my web page.

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1. <sup>31</sup> CCEE stands for *Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae*

## **THE 'CHURCHES TOGETHER' MODEL IN THE UK**

### **The Swanwick Declaration 1987**

At the end of a conference, at which were present representatives from England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland (including the Catholic Church led by Cardinal Hume) the following declaration was made:

Appointed by our churches and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we declare that this, the broadest assembly of British and Irish churches ever to meet in these islands has reached a common mind. We are aware that not all Christians are represented amongst us but we look forward to the time when they will share fully with us.

We came with different experiences and traditions, some with long ecumenical service, some for whom this is a new adventure. We are one band of pilgrims. We are old and young, women and men, black and white, lay and ordained and we travelled from the four corners of these islands to meet at Swanwick in Derbyshire. There we met, we listened, we talked, we worshipped, we prayed, we sat in silence, deeper than words. Against the background of so much suffering and sinfulness in our society we were reminded of our call to witness that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. We affirmed that this world with all its sin and splendour belongs to God. Young people called on us to be ready to sort out our priorities so that we could travel light and concentrate on our goal. Driven on by a gospel imperative to seek unity that the world may believe, we rejoiced that we are pilgrims together and strangers no longer.

We now declare together our readiness to commit ourselves to each other under God. Our earnest desire is to become more fully, in his own time, the one Church of Christ, united in faith, communion, pastoral care and mission. Such unity is the gift of God. With gratitude we have truly experienced this gift, growing amongst us in these days. We affirm our openness to this growing unity in obedience to the Word of God, so that we may fully share, hold in common and offer to the world those gifts which we have received and still hold in separation. In the unity we seek we recognise that there will not be uniformity but legitimate diversity.

It is our conviction that, as a matter of policy at all levels and in all places, our churches must now move from co-operation to clear commitment to each other, in search of the unity for which Christ prayed and in common evangelism and service of the world.

We urge church leaders and representatives to take all necessary steps to present, as soon as possible, to our church authorities, assemblies and congregations, the Report of this Conference together with developed proposals for ecumenical instruments to help the churches of these islands to move ahead together.

Continuing to trust in the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, we look forward with confidence to sharing with our own churches the joys of this historic Conference. We thank God for all those who, from Lent '86 and before, have been part of this pilgrimage. We feel their presence with us. We urge our churches to confirm by decision and action the hopes and vision on which we have laid hold, and which we shall not let go.

This is a new beginning. We set out on our further pilgrimage ready to take risks and

determined not to be put off by `dismal stories: We resolve that no discouragement will make us once relent our avowed intent to be pilgrims together. Leaving behind painful memories and reaching out for what lies ahead, we press on towards the full reconciliation in Christ of all things in heaven and on earth, that God has promised in his Kingdom.

Lord God, we thank you  
 For calling us into the company  
 Of those who trust in Christ  
 And seek to obey his will.  
 May your Spirit guide and strengthen us  
 In mission and service to your world;  
 For we are strangers no longer  
 But pilgrims together on the way to your Kingdom.  
 Amen

### **‘Council of Churches’ to ‘Churches together’**

The Swanwick meeting had grown out of the British Council of Churches (BCC), on which the Catholic Church was an observer but not a member. The problem with the Council of Churches model is that it acts on behalf of the partner churches and communions. This could not be squared with Catholic ecclesiology as it recognised an equality of status between the Catholic Church and other Churches and Ecclesial Communities.

The Swanwick declaration led to the setting up of the Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland (CCBI) later to be renamed Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and four other bodies were set up: the Irish Council of Churches (ICC), Action of Churches together in Scotland (ACTS), CYTUN (Welsh for ‘together’) and Churches Together in England (CTE). The key change was the function of these bodies. Their remit changed from being organisations which acted on behalf of the partner churches and communions to organisations that facilitated co-operation between them. Thus you will not find CTE issuing statements on behalf of the churches<sup>32</sup>. Rather if this sort of response is needed it facilitates the production of joint statements of the leaders of the churches.<sup>33</sup>

With this change it became possible for the Bishops Conference of England and Wales to become full members of CTE and CYTUN, and for the Scottish Bishops Conference to join ACTS. In Ireland things were complicated by certain Protestant groups not being prepared to be part of an organisation of which the Catholic Church is a member, so the Irish Bishops Conference still only has observer status of the ICC. Interaction between in the Catholic Church and the ICC is through the Irish Inter-Church Meeting (IICM).

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<sup>32</sup> For sake of brevity I will use the term ‘churches’ to mean ‘The Catholic Church and other Churches and Ecclesial Communities’ from here.

<sup>33</sup> The relatively recently form Christian Churches Together in the USA seems to fulfil a similar function – see [www.christianchurchestogether.org](http://www.christianchurchestogether.org) for more information. I will however focus on the work of CTE, with which I am familiar, in the hope that it will communicate how Catholics can be involved in ecumenical cooperation more broadly

In England the national body CTE serves what are referred to a ‘regional’ or ‘sponsoring’<sup>34</sup> bodies. My regional body in England is Churches Together in Surrey (CTS). These bodies in turn support local initiatives which generally involve a manageable number of congregations in a given village or urban area. My home parish is part of Churches Together in Knaphill, a suburb of Woking, about 50km SW of London.

This may seem a lot of levels (and there is occasionally another level in larger towns and cities linking up the smaller groups of congregations) but as the aim is to get people working together at all levels in fact it largely works. In many ways it mirrors our own structures of Nation, Diocese, Deanery and Parish, though of course geographical boundaries don’t always match between denominations.

### **Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs)**

I mention these here because they are a key part of the work of Churches Together groups and they are one of the key concrete ways in which ecumenical cooperation works in England. I here simply reproduce a section from the text of the leaflet of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales which introduces these partnerships.<sup>35</sup> Anne Doyle DSG, who has worked in local ecumenism for many years, will speak of these in more detail as examples of good practice when she visits us in May.

A Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) is defined as existing ‘where there is a formal written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life, buildings, and/or mission projects of more than one denomination; and a recognition of that agreement by the Sponsoring Body and the appropriate denominational authorities’.

For Catholics the ‘appropriate denominational authority’ is the Ordinary of the Diocese (the Bishop).

At a Churches Together In England consultation in 1994 the churches agreed the following categories for LEPs:

#### **1. Single Congregational Partnerships**

Ministry is shared by an Ecumenical Ministry Team and congregations consist of members of several denominations. The buildings may be in a formal Sharing Agreement. There is a common purse and an Ecumenical Council which manages the life of the LEP.

#### **2. Congregations in Covenanted Partnerships**

There is a substantial sharing in worship, church life, mission and ministry between congregations of differing traditions. Many Catholic parishes belong to this type of LEP, where there is freedom to negotiate the level of involvement. Some denominations within the LEP share ministry and sacraments while others do not.

#### **3. Shared Building Partnerships**

The church building is shared by two or more denominations. Formal agreements come under the *Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969*, but there are many instances of informal sharing.

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<sup>34</sup> The word ‘sponsoring’ comes from their role in supporting Local Ecumenical Partnerships, about which more later.

<sup>35</sup> The full text of all eight leaflets can be found on the CBCEW website – see my website for a link

#### **4. Chaplaincy Partnerships**

The chaplains working in an institution commit themselves to work together as an ecumenical team e.g. in education (universities, joint schools), in prisons or in hospitals.

#### **5. Mission Partnerships**

These include a variety of contexts e.g. industrial mission, social responsibility, broadcasting, overseas twinning and others.

#### **6. Education Partnerships**

These include Lay Training, Ministerial Training and joint or shared schools.

### **MIXED MARRIAGES**

Mixed marriages – by which I mean marriages between Catholics and another baptised Christian – are dealt with in the Code of Canon Law nn. 1124-1129 and by DAPNE in nn. 143-160.<sup>36</sup> The Code and the Directory recognise that each bishop has a responsibility to determine how these laws and guidelines are applied in their own diocese, so any comments here are necessarily general. The Archdiocese of Cincinnati has some useful basic guidelines for mixed marriages on its website.<sup>37</sup>

In many cases encountered in a parish the non-Catholic party will be quite comfortable with all this. However when a Catholic wishes to marry a devout member of another denomination questions may arise such as:

- How will we worship together?
- To which Church will our children belong?
- How are we to strike a balance between our two traditions in teaching them the faith?

Families for which these questions are significant are often referred to as ‘Interchurch Families’, and indeed there is an Association of Interchurch Families.<sup>38</sup> The Church regards this sort of mixed marriages as both a challenge and an opportunity (cf. DAPNE 145). One key area of struggle is that of ‘dual membership’, especially in respect of children, which is not possible from a Catholic perspective at least. As the AIF Rome document puts it

#### **B, 4 The ‘church-belonging’ of interchurch family children**

The primary responsibility for the Christian upbringing and education of children rests with their parents. They are together their first teachers. It is natural that both parents will want to share with their children the treasures of the particular ecclesial communion in which they personally are members.

There is therefore a substantially different experience of ‘double belonging’ (or whatever it is called) felt by the partners in an interchurch marriage from that felt by their children. For the most part the parents of an interchurch family started by belonging to one ecclesial communion and have had to make a conscious choice to experience regularly the life and worship of their partner’s church. They continue to feel themselves rooted in one tradition. Their children however will normally have

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<sup>36</sup> If the other Christian is either unbaptised or their baptism is not recognised by the Catholic Church then canonically the rules for marriage to a person of another or no faith applies. However most of the ecumenical implications are the same.

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.foryourmarriage.org/interior\\_template.asp?id=20398787](http://www.foryourmarriage.org/interior_template.asp?id=20398787) – accessed 13/3/09

<sup>38</sup> [www.interchurch.org](http://www.interchurch.org)

been brought up to feel at home in the traditions of both their parents. This may be the case when their parents made a clear decision to have their children formally baptised and brought up in one church rather than the other. It is even more likely where they did their best to bring them up in both communities, inviting the ministers of both churches to share to some extent in their baptism, and later, perhaps, encouraging the children to attend catechism classes or religious education programmes in both churches. These children, of course, like their parents, cannot as yet have formal and canonical membership of two ecclesial communities, but it can be very difficult for them to make a decision to be confirmed or to make a personal profession of faith in one church rather than the other. To make such a choice can feel like cutting themselves off from one of their parents and from one of the church communities in which they feel they have their roots and to which they belong. It may also seem to them like going against the Holy Spirit who is the creator of unity and not of discord.

It is partly for this reason that very many ministers and some interchurch family parents counsel that the decision about the ecclesial communion of which the child will become a member is taken before baptism to avoid confusion later on. Such a choice need not prevent the young people from making their own decisions when they have grown older. However, we need to listen to the words of some of our teenage young people who say: 'It is not we who are confused in refusing to choose one church or the other. It is you of former generations who have been confused in accepting and perpetuating the divisions of the churches. Christ willed only one church.'