

CHURCH-ECUMENISM TOPIC SESSION

Topic: The Word and Sacrament in Ecumenical Dialogue
Convener/Moderator: Catherine E. Clifford, Saint Paul University, Ottawa
Presenters: Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., Loyola Marymount University
Kimberly Alexander, Regent University
Rhodora Beaton, St. Catherine University

This year's Church-Ecumenism topic session drew our attention to progress and possibilities for mutual learning from the experience of bi-lateral and multi-lateral ecumenical dialogue. Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., in "Eucharistic Hospitality: Revisiting the Question," asked whether growth in agreement establishes the ground to consider a more generous practice of sacramental sharing in carefully defined contexts, to respond more generously to situations of genuine pastoral need, and to better recognize the role of the sacraments as means of expressing ecclesial unity. He argued together with George Tavard, one of the drafters of *Unitatis redintegratio* 8, that the dual principles for the practice of *communio in sacris*—the means of unity and the grace to be obtained—ought not to be separated. The criteria for such sharing would require a common faith in the sacrament. Special attention might be given to cases of inter-church marriage, as the Directory for Ecumenism has suggested. Some examples of a generous pastoral application of canon 844 can be found in existing Guidelines for sacramental sharing, including a number of Canadian dioceses. Rausch also invited us to reconsider the principle of reciprocity in particular cases where Catholics might appropriately receive the sacraments in other churches even while we await a full recognition of ministries.

Rhodora Beaton's paper, "Graced Unity: Language of Sacrament, Language of Participation," looked at the place of the Word of God in liturgical texts and traced some of the recent history of the relation of "Word" and "Sacrament" as a moment of ecumenical retrieval. In particular, she looked at some of the parallel discussion of the proclaimed Word at the 1963 meeting of the Faith and Order Commission in Montreal and at the discussions of liturgy leading to the December 1963 promulgation of the Sacred Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, at the Second Vatican Council. In this history and in these texts, she found evidence for the retrieval of a shared ecumenical understanding of the "sacramentality of the Word of God," in which the proclamation of the Word and the gathered assembly's participation in that proclamation have a sacramental and incarnational quality.

Our invited ecumenical guest, Kimberly Alexander, argued for the recognition of a sacramental sensibility in the practice of Pentecostal prayer, where prayers for healing hold a central place, in accordance with James 5:14–15. Her study focused on the documented practice of many Pentecostal communities where the ministry of prayer for the sick extends to those who are absent and is symbolized at times by handkerchiefs and other symbolic objects which are prayed over and anointed. In some cases the anointed objects are later returned to the intended subject of the prayer. While Pentecostals themselves might resist the term "sacrament," Alexander contends that these rituals and in particular the symbolic use of material objects might be considered a form of prayer rooted in the principle of sacramentality.

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