

PRINCIPLES OF INTERCOMMUNION

Many non-Catholic Christians receive Communion in Catholic churches each Sunday. In some large urban parishes this figure may surpass 5% of the communicants. Catholics also, in smaller but ever-increasing numbers, are crossing denominational lines to receive the Eucharist from their fellow-Christians.

Some applaud this trend. They see no need for the prior approval of Church authorities but propose that intercommunion be begun and carried on while theologians still grapple with the problems involved. They feel that Church authorities will ultimately, if reluctantly, give their approval. As justification, they point to the Vatican Council's Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches, nos. 26-29, which formally approved what had long been going on in the Middle East: giving the sacraments to other Eastern Christians and receiving the sacraments from them in certain circumstances. Advocates of beginning intercommunion without prior approval tend to underplay the decree's stipulation that the *communicate in sacris* be regulated by the local Catholic bishops and its suggestion that this can be done only after consultation with the bishops of the separated Churches.

Others point out that intercommunion with the Orthodox is quite different from intercommunion with other Christians, for the Roman Catholics recognize the validity of the Eucharist and of the apostolic succession in the Eastern Churches (Decree on Ecumenism, no. 15), whereas they do not recognize the validity of orders among all Western Christians (*ibid*, no. 22).¹ Jerome Hamer, O.P., of the

¹ The Orthodox do not grant that recognition of validity of the Eucharist and apostolic succession is enough for intercommunion. The Eucharist must always be a sign of full unity already accomplished. Cf. John Meyendorff, "Notes on the Orthodox Understanding of the Eucharist," *Concilium*, 24, 1967, pp. 57-58: "Orthodox ecclesiology, precisely because of its 'Eucharistic' dimension, precludes the notion of validity *per se*. It is impossible for us to say simply that sacramental presence is created by 'valid orders,' for the sacramental presence of Christ in the community of the Church implies not only that, but also truth, catholicity, unity, or at least the formal acceptance of the tradition of the Church in its fulness."

The present paper will attempt to show that much more is involved than

Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, is quite outspoken. "In our theology, which recognizes a close bond between eucharist and Church, there is no room for intercommunion. How could there be eucharistic communion between separated ecclesiastical communions, while these two communions—the eucharistic and the ecclesiastical—are dependent on each other?"²

This is also the position of George Tavard, S.A., who writes, "[The priest] should act as guardian of the communion in which he has been ordained and which he serves. In other words, he may admit the members of other Churches to the common Table of his own only to the extent that his Church holds that, in spite of existing divergences and breaks of unity, the Churches concerned still belong to one Communion. . . . the practical question of inter-communion [in the West] may be raised but cannot be solved until the Churches have reached a consensus in which one can recognize the traditional faith on the Eucharist and the ministry."³

In such a view full ecclesiastical communion must be achieved before any Eucharistic intercommunion may be permitted.

Between these two extremes of "unregulated intercommunion now" and "no intercommunion with Protestants at all till full reunion" lies a middle ground: intercommunion may and should be

simply a recognition of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and of valid orders in the minister. The work of the Holy Spirit—so important in Orthodox ecclesiology—is at the heart of the Eucharist in all Christian Churches.

Furthermore, a "new ecclesiality" or at least a new ecclesial theology is emerging, particularly under the influence of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church, no. 8. Cf. Jan Witte, S.J., "From Theological Discussion to Concrete Results in Ecumenism," *Concilium*, 44, 1969, pp. 77-81.

² *The Ecumenist*, 6, 1967-1968, pg. 144. Gregory Baum charitably comments that Father Hamer may have meant to exclude "a formal disciplinary agreement between two Churches to permit their members to receive the sacraments in the worship services of either Church, according to their own choice" rather than "common eucharistic worship as it arises at ecumenical gatherings and at special occasions in the life of the parish." In the context of the questions and answers which followed the talk of Father Hamer, however, he appears to want to exclude all intercommunion. This paper will attempt to answer Hamer's question. It is significant that Hamer modified his position in the article, "Why Not Intercommunion?" *America*, 18, June 1, 1968, pp. 734-737: "In our theology, which recognizes a close bond between Eucharist and Church, there is no room for intercommunion as a *common and normal practice* (italics mine)."

³ *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 4, 1967, pg. 649.

permitted on certain special occasions under proper ecclesiastical supervision as a sign of unity already achieved and as a means to further unity. What are the theological principles which justify such a position?

Four problem areas will be singled out for mention: reception of the Roman Catholic Eucharist by non-Catholics; reception of the Eucharist by Catholics at a non-Catholic liturgy; validity of orders; concelebration across denominational lines.

I. ALL BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS IN GOOD FAITH MAY SOMETIMES RECEIVE THE EUCHARIST AT A CATHOLIC LITURGY FOR THIS IS THE COMPLETION OF WHAT WAS BEGUN AT BAPTISM

Consider the following statements in the Decree on Ecumenism:

22. By the sacrament of baptism, whenever it is properly conferred in the way the Lord determined and received with the appropriate dispositions of soul, a man becomes truly incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ and is reborn to a sharing of the divine life. . . . Baptism, therefore, constitutes a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been reborn by means of it. But baptism, of itself, is only a beginning, a point of departure, for it is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ. Baptism is thus oriented toward a complete profession of faith, a complete incorporation into the system of salvation such as Christ Himself willed it to be, and finally toward a complete participation in Eucharistic communion.

3. . . . For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are brought into a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church.⁴

Repeatedly the Vatican Council stressed the real but imperfect union with the Catholic Church affected by baptism. Nothing except serious sin separates a Christian from Christ or from the Church. Unless he definitively rejects God through sin, he may accept the Lord's invitation to partake of this meal. "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I shall not turn away. . . . The bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the

⁴ Cf. also no. 4 and the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, nos. 8, 14, 15.

world." (John 6:37, 51). This sensitivity to the unity of the Church as well as to the reality of Christ's presence lies behind Paul's insistence that a man examine his conscience before "eating this bread and drinking this cup" (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). Certainly some union with the Catholic Church is needed as a prerequisite for the Eucharist—but some union is had through baptism and the life of grace.⁵

The key principles are clearly stated by the Decree on Ecumenism, no. 8:

As for common worship, however, it may not be regarded as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of unity among Christians. Such worship depends chiefly upon two principles: it should signify the unity of the Church; it should provide a sharing in the means of grace. The fact that it should signify unity generally rules out common worship. Yet the gaining of a needed grace sometimes commends it.

This important paragraph demands some interpretation. "Common worship," *communicatio in sacris*, may not be used "indiscriminately"—therefore it may be used discriminately for the restoration of unity among Christians. The same decree had stated earlier that Christ "instituted the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist by which the unity of the Church is both signified and brought about" (no. 2). The union among Christians is imperfect but real. Its imperfection is made manifest by the fact that intercommunion is to be done only under certain circumstances, only on certain days, such as during the Week of Prayer for Church Unity. But the reality of the union should also be made manifest occasionally. Intercommunion is an excellent way—perhaps the most excellent way—to convince Christians of their basic fellowship in Christ, for the liturgy, especially the liturgy of the Eucharist," is the outstanding means

⁵ Even in the case of serious sin, one may receive the Eucharist after an act of "perfect contrition," sorrow springing from love for God with an implicit resolve to do all that He wishes. Catholics believe that this resolve includes the intention to confess the sin, given a suitable opportunity. Not all Protestants feel this obligation, and at this particular stage of the ecumenical movement it is doubtful whether "a suitable opportunity" really exists for them. The sacramentality of the absolution given in the course of the liturgy of the Eucharist is peripheral to the question of intercommunion and must be treated elsewhere.

by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church."⁶

"The gaining of a needed grace sometimes commends" intercommunion. This should not be interpreted in too narrow a sense, as if it referred only to danger of death. The Council explicitly stated many times that fulness of unity is a needed grace.⁷ Indeed, to restrict the ambit of "needed grace" to individuals is to ignore the emphasis of the Council on community and solidarity, a concern which found expression in every document it produced.

Who should determine the occasions when intercommunion should be practiced as a means to fuller unity among Christians? The bishop. The Decree on Ecumenism is quite clear: "The practical course to be adopted, after due regard has been given to all the circumstances of time, place, and personage, is left to the prudent decision of the local episcopal authority, unless the Bishops' Conference according to its own statutes, or the Holy See, had determined otherwise" (no. 8). This is nothing else than an application of the general norms set down in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy:

22. Regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See, and, as laws may determine, on the bishop.

26. Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the "sacrament of unity," namely, a holy people united and organized under their bishops.⁸

Granted that some unity of faith exists among all Christians, how much agreement is needed for reception of the Eucharist? We must remember that faith is primarily a response of the whole person to God, accepting wholeheartedly God and whatever He reveals to us. Other Christians who receive the Catholic Eucharist should

⁶ Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 2.

⁷ Decree on Ecumenism, nos. 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 24, and the Decree on the Ministry of Priests, no. 6: "No Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist." The context of this last citation refers to the local Church, but the principle applies also to the universal Church.

⁸ Cf. also nos. 41 and 42.

believe that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist *in the way which He intended when He instituted the sacrament*. They come in obedience to Christ's command, "Do this in memory of me," and as a petition for growth in unity and love. This general assent of faith suffices.

Complete unity of faith in all matters is not required, for the Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches (no. 27) allows the Orthodox access to Roman Catholic sacraments without recognition of the primacy of the Pope: "Eastern Christians who are separated in good faith from the Catholic Church, if they ask of their own accord and have the right dispositions, may be granted the sacraments of penance, the Eucharist, and the anointing of the sick."

Although it would be wrong for one to receive the Eucharist who does not believe that Jesus is present in any way—for this would make a mockery of the sign and contradict the assent of faith expressed in the "Amen"—it is not necessary to have complete agreement on the doctrinal formulation of faith in the Eucharist. So long as one accepts Christ and believes what He says, he has sufficient faith, even though it may be partial and incomplete. A child, for example, may receive the Eucharist if he can "distinguish the Eucharistic bread from ordinary and material bread so that he approaches it with that devotion proper to his age."⁹

Vatican II in several places distinguishes between the mysteries accepted in faith and the words in which the mysteries are expressed. "There is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down."¹⁰ "Revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood, and set forth to better advantage."¹¹ "The deposit of faith or revealed truths are one thing; the manner in which they are formulated without violence to their

⁹ Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, "*Quam Singulari*," Denzinger-Schönmetzer, #3532 (2139); Code of Canon Law, 854.

¹⁰ Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, no. 8.

¹¹ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, no. 44. Cf. also the encyclical "*Humani Generis*" of Pius XII: "The phraseology of such notions, not only as employed in the schools but also by the magisterium of the Church itself, can be perfected and polished." Denzinger-Schönmetzer, #3833 (2311).

meaning and significance is another."¹² "It is essential that doctrine be clearly presented in its entirety. . . . At the same time, Catholic belief needs to be explained more profoundly and precisely, in ways and in terminology which are separated brethren too can readily understand."¹³

When dealing with a mystery, we never adequately comprehend it nor exhaust it; still less can we fully express what we believe. Should then a difference in terminology, even an inability to recognize a better formula as better, be taken as an indication of a different faith—or simply a different theology? If it does point to a partial appreciation of a mystery, should we not rejoice in the appreciation which is there and help it to grow rather than erect its partial and incomplete character into a barrier excluding the believer from the Eucharist?

It is in the light of the above principles that the Directory published in May, 1967, by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity must be interpreted.

55. Celebration of the sacraments is an action of the celebrating Community, carried out within the Community, signifying the oneness in faith, worship, and life of the Community. Where this unity of sacramental faith is deficient, the participation of the separated brethren with Catholics, especially in the sacraments of the eucharist, penance, and anointing of the sick, is forbidden. Nevertheless, since the sacraments are both signs of unity and sources of grace (cf. *Decree on Ecumenism*, n. 8) the Church can, for adequate reasons, allow access to those sacraments to a separated brother. This may be permitted in danger of death or in urgent need (during persecution, in prisons) if the separated brother has no access to a minister of his own Communion, and spontaneously asks a Catholic priest for the sacraments—so long as he declares a faith in these sacraments in harmony with that of the Church, and is rightly disposed. In other cases the judge of this urgent necessity must be the diocesan bishop

¹² Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, no. 62. Cf. also the speech of John XXIII at the opening session of the Council: "The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of the faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another." AAS, 54 (1962), p. 792.

¹³ Decree on Ecumenism, no. 11. Cf. also nn. 4, 6, 17.

or the episcopal conference. A Catholic in similar circumstances may not ask for these sacraments except from a minister who has been validly ordained.

The general or indiscriminate participation of other Christians in the Catholic Eucharist "is forbidden" for the same reason as it was excluded by the Decree on Ecumenism: it signifies oneness in faith, worship, and life. But access to the Eucharist is permitted "for adequate reasons." As examples of such adequate reasons the Directory specifies danger of death, persecution, prison. Is this list exhaustive? Evidently not. As was stated above, the Decree on Ecumenism considers unity among all Christians to be a needed grace. Other adequate reasons such as growth in holiness, friendship, joint retreats of Christians, mixed marriage, or the baptism and first Communion of a child of a mixed marriage, are to be judged by the bishop or the episcopal conference.¹⁴ For the time being the American bishops have decided to limit such sacramental participation to a minimum. Such a decision is based on pastoral and prudential grounds and may be reversed. As the theological justification for *communicatio in sacris* becomes clearer and more widely known, and as the need for the grace of unity and for the sacramental expression of already achieved unity grows more intense, the bishops may adopt another stand.¹⁵

¹⁴ Gregory Baum, commenting on the Directory in *The Ecumenist*, 6/1, Nov.-Dec., 1967, pg. 98, points out that if sharing sacraments with other Christians is limited to cases of urgent necessity, there would be no real change in the practice of the Catholic Church, as if the ecumenical movement and the Decree on Ecumenism had never happened. "The only correct interpretation is that the Directory permits that the sacraments may be given to other Christians for adequate or good reasons." He adds that the bishop regulates such actions, "unless a private demand, made urgent by charity, is fulfillable in a non-public way." Baum is right in presuming that the Directory must be interpreted in the light of the Council's Decree. The function of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity is to *implement* the Council's decisions, not to ignore, restrict, or reverse them.

¹⁵ The Dutch bishops decided to permit the non-Catholic partner of a mixed marriage to receive the Eucharist if he is baptized, desires the Eucharist, can accept the belief of the Catholic Church as it is expressed in the celebration of the Eucharist, and is admitted to communion in his own Church. Cf. *Katholiek Archief*, 23, 1968, pp. 376-377.

At the 1968 Eucharistic Congress in Bogotá, Columbia, the Catholic hier-

It is to be noted that the faith-requirement specified by the Directory for other Christians is not total acceptance of Catholic doctrine nor even of dogma, not even Eucharistic dogma, but simply a "faith in these sacraments in harmony with that of the Church." Such a phrase seems to exclude only those who formally deny the sacramental character of these actions and who exclude any presence of Christ in the sacraments. It is doubtful if such people would request Catholic sacraments anyway. The Directory makes no mention, either, of any need to confess before Communion.

II. CATHOLICS MAY SHARE IN THE LORD'S SUPPER AT OTHER CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

More and more those engaged in ecumenical work are realizing that ecumenism is a two-way street. Intercommunion must extend in both directions according to the principle of reciprocity.¹⁶

But this raises special problems for those Churches which traditionally follow a "closed communion": Lutheran, Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic. Would reception of the Eucharist at the Lord's Supper of another Church be a compromise of the faith? Would it be disloyalty to one's own Church? And if not, why not?

Certainly for a Catholic to receive the Eucharist from another Christian is a profession of faith that Jesus Christ is somehow present and operative in that liturgy of that Church. But Vatican II has clearly taught that very fact.

The brethren divided from us also carry out many of the sacred actions of the Christian religion. Undoubtedly, in ways

archy invited several non-Catholic clergy to receive the Eucharist, and in fact an Anglican, two Methodists, a Lutheran, and a Presbyterian did receive. The rest had already left. The Roman curia was displeased, but it is noteworthy that the Latin American bishops did not feel it necessary to consult Rome beforehand.

Other Latin American and Asian bishops have permitted both intercommunion and concelebration under certain circumstances, but never as a normal and ordinary practice.

¹⁶ J.-J. von Allmen, "The Conditions for an Acceptable Intercommunion," *Concilium*, 44, 1969, pp. 7-15, makes some very wise comments about reciprocity and the need for mutuality in all aspects of intercommunion: authorization, understanding and respect of one another's Christian faith, liturgical reform, etc.

that vary according to the condition of each Church or Community, these actions can truly engender a life of grace, and can be rightly described as capable of providing access to the community of salvation.

It follows that these separated Churches and Communities, though they suffer from defects already mentioned, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.¹⁷

The ecclesial Communities separated from us lack that fullness of unity with us which should flow from baptism, and we believe that especially because of the lack of the sacrament of orders they have not preserved the genuine and total reality of the Eucharistic mystery. Nevertheless, when they commemorate the Lord's death and resurrection in the Holy Supper, they profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and they await His coming in glory.¹⁸

Long before the Council Catholics could recognize the sincerity of their fellow Christians in celebrating the Supper of the Lord. They could interpret this as a kind of "spiritual Communion," a desire to be united with Christ as far as possible. They could compare it to their own experience of sharing in the effects of the Eucharist—union with Christ and one another—when physical reception of the Eucharist was impossible because of a previous reception of the sacrament that day or to observe the legislation about fasting before Communion.

But the Council seems to have gone much further. This is a "sacred action," one of many which "can truly engender a life of grace." Although these Western Churches "have not preserved the genuine and total reality (*genuinam atque integram substantiam*)" of the Eucharist, they have preserved something of that reality. Several of the bishops at the council felt that in the absence of orders there was neither the full nor a partial reality of the Eucharist but only a non-efficacious sign (13 fathers); there is no reality of the Eucharist

¹⁷ Decree on Ecumenism, no. 3. Cf. also Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 15.

¹⁸ Decree on Ecumenism, no. 22.

because they do not admit the real presence and a real sacrifice (115 fathers); there is no "true" reality without orders. The Secretariat replied to these objections, "The majority of Protestants believe in some presence of Christ in the Eucharist . . . It cannot be said that nothing of the truth is preserved."¹⁹

If *something* of the reality of the Eucharist is present, what is it? The very least that happens is "transfinalization" and "transsignification." (In the light of modern Eucharistic theology it may sound paradoxical to speak of this as "the least.")²⁰ This expression is chosen because even though not all Catholics believe that "transubstantiation" occurs without a validly ordained minister, the text of the council makes it clear that something real happens. Other Christians truly commemorate the death and resurrection of the Lord. In this memorial the bread and wine are removed from ordinary use and receive a new purpose: they are to be a bond of unity with Christ and with all who share the meal. They somehow become for the believer the body and blood of Christ. They receive

¹⁹ Harry J. McSorley, C.S.P., discusses this at length in a fine article, "Protestant Eucharistic Reality and Lack of Orders," *The Ecumenist*, 5/5, July-Aug., 1967, pp. 68-75. For a discussion of the inadequacy of an explanation in terms of "spiritual communion" or "communion of desire," cf. Franz. Jozef van Beeck, S.J., "Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Sacraments," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 3, 1966, pp. 64-66. A substantial area of agreement exists particularly between Lutherans and Roman Catholics, as can be seen from the joint statement reprinted in *Unity Trends*, 1/7, Feb. 15, 1968, pp. 6-10. Theologians representing both communities wrote, "We affirm that in the sacrament of the Lord's supper Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is present wholly and entirely, in his body and blood, under the signs of bread and wine. . . . Jesus is "really," "truly," and "substantially" present in this sacrament. . . . We affirm his presence because we believe in the power of God and the promise of Jesus Christ. . . . The presence of Christ does not come about through the faith of the believer, or through any human power, but by the power of the Holy Spirit through the word."

Cf. also the important contribution of F. J. Leenhardt, "This is My Body," in Oscar Cullmann and F. J. Leenhardt, *Essays on the Lord's Supper* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958).

²⁰ Some theologians use the terms "transfinalization" and "transignification" in a broad sense so as to include the kind of objective change expressed in the term "transubstantiation," as Piet Schoonenberg, S.J., explains in "Transubstantiation: How Far is This Doctrine Historically Determined?" *Concilium*, 24, 1967, pp. 78-91. Other theologians give them a narrower meaning, so that they form a complement to the term "transubstantiation". They are used here in the minimal sense given them by Paul VI in his encyclical, "Mysterium Fidei".

a new meaning: they become a symbol of Christ's body and blood given to the Father for us. No longer is this ordinary food, simple nourishment for man's everyday life. Something has happened to it. Now it is to nourish and strengthen the new life of children of God begun at baptism.

That much is certain. What is open to dispute and further discussion is whether there is a change in the bread and wine which is objective, corresponding to the faith of the minister and communicants. In other words, may Catholics admit that "transubstantiation" occurs in a Protestant Eucharist when the Catholic Church has not officially recognized the validity of the orders of that particular minister?

Before treating that issue, it should be noted that it is not truly central to intercommunion. A Catholic (or an Orthodox or Anglican) could receive Communion from a Baptist or Presbyterian as a profession of faith in his real unity with that congregation in virtue of baptism and as a profession of faith that Christ is *somehow* present. This does not compromise his faith as a Catholic nor his fidelity to his own Church, for that is what the Church itself teaches: all Christians are united by baptism into Christ and His Church; some true and real presence of Christ is had in the Lord's Supper of all Christian Communities. Our inability to explain that *what* and *how* of this mystery does not destroy the fact.

The strongest argument for the reality of transubstantiation in the Protestant Eucharist is based on the nature of Christian prayer.

It is the Ecclesial Community, the Church, which gathers prayerfully to commemorate the Lord's Supper. The sacramental celebration of the Paschal Mystery is an act of worship of the Father in union with Christ. It is an act of obedience to the Son, who told the whole Church through His apostles to do this in memory of Him. And like all Christian prayer, it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, who makes us cry out, "Abba, Father," and bears witness that we are children of God. He

comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well

what he means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God (Rom. 8:26-27).

In the unity of the Holy Spirit Jesus joins His prayers to that of His faithful. And this prayer is infallibly efficacious because it is directed to the all-loving Father in the name of Jesus under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

"If two or three of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted by my Father, for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am in the midst of them." (Matt. 18: 18-20).

"Whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will give you" (John 15:16).

"There at God's right hand he stands and pleads for us" (Rom. 8:34).

"His power to save is utterly certain, since he is living forever to intercede for all who come to God through him" (Heb. 7: 25).

"What father, when his son asks for bread, would hand him a stone? . . . If you being evil know how to give your children what is good for them, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?" (Matt. 7: 9-11).

These texts all seem to have a liturgical reference. Matthew 18 may refer to a prayer of penance and absolution; it may refer to all Christian prayer in common; its parallel in John is in the context of the Last Supper. The citation from Romans is paralleled by the description of Christ's priesthood in Hebrews. The Eucharistic undertone in Matthew 7, with its mention of asking the Father for bread (cf. Matt. 5:11—the Our Father), is clarified still more by the parallel in Luke 11:13, "How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

The Holy Spirit is given to all Christians in Baptism. He brings about unity in the Church by inspiring Christians to come together and pray in union with Christ and in obedience to the Lord's command. In response to this prayer of the Church God the Father sends the Holy Spirit to bring about a special unifying presence of Christ.²¹

²¹ Might this not be one way to harmonize the Eastern tradition of the

In this way the bread and wine are really and objectively changed. Why should the Spirit inspire Christians to pray for what is impossible? If this prayer is not efficacious, would this not be a kind of deception on God's part, giving a stone instead of bread? Once the Council grants that the Holy Spirit is at work in the separated Churches; once it includes the Eucharist as part of the work of the Spirit, the conclusion is inescapable: Jesus is present, not because of man's work but because of the activity of the Spirit, really, truly, substantially, objectively.

Because we have so often neglected it in the past, there is need now to stress this approach to the sacraments as prayer, and as the prayer of the Church. Theologians generally are becoming more sensitive to the prayer-dimension of sacramental life. The real power operative in the Church is the power of the Holy Spirit, which finds expression in community prayer with Christ. This realization stands behind the statement of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy that no other action of the Church can match the liturgy's claim to efficacy (nos. 6, 7, 10).

Our growing sensitivity to the work of the Spirit in and through the Body of Christ makes us vividly aware that a purely juridical approach to the sacraments is inadequate—and at times downright misleading.

How then explain the declaration of the Council that "because of the absence of the sacrament of orders they have not preserved the genuine and total reality of the Eucharistic mystery?" The deficiency must not be located in the reality of the presence of

efficacy of the epiclesis with the Western tradition of the efficacy of the minister who acts *in persona Christi*? In answer to the prayer of the community God sends the Holy Spirit to empower the minister to transform the Eucharistic elements. Cyril of Jerusalem in his *Mystagogic Catecheses* states, "After we have been sanctified by spiritual hymns, we ask God to send the Holy Spirit in order that He might make the bread the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ; for absolutely everything which the Holy Spirit touches is sanctified and changed" (23, 7; *P.G.* 33, 1113). John Chrysostom, too, says that the change is due to the Holy Spirit working through the ministry of the priest: *In Joan. hom.* 45 (*P.G.* 59, 253).

On the infallible efficacy of prayer of the Church in a sacramental context, cf. Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, (New York: Herder and Herder) 1963, pp. 60-68.

Christ but in the ecclesial dimensions of that presence. As ecclesial it is a defective *sign*, for there is a lack of full visible unity with the apostolic community of the New Testament. The visible structure must not be exclusively identified with the Church; neither must it be minimized.

It is indeed true that the succession of the episcopal ordination by the imposition of hands is to be regarded as a sign for the apostolic succession of offices and of the Church. It is a sign which represents the Church as the true Church of Christ only when she knows that her foundation rests upon the apostles. The continuous succession of the episcopal laying on of hands is equally the sign for the unity and catholicity of the Church. . . . As a sign of the apostolic succession, ordination in the continuing succession of Episcopal imposition of hands throughout the history of the Church is something to be welcomed and to be striven for where it is lacking.²²

Because the absence of orders makes such a Eucharist deficient as a sign; it is deficient in what is effected: union with the whole Church is not perceived nor achieved in all its breadth and richness of time and place.

The Eucharist may not legitimately be separated from its ecclesial dimensions. It is not just a piece of bread, not just a piece of consecrated bread, not just a ceremony in special vestments with special readings and prayers. The Eucharist is a sign of what the Church considers itself to be. "The Liturgy is the outstanding means by which the faithful express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church."²³

Therefore a liturgy celebrated outside full communion with those bishops who have all the visible elements of the apostolic succession is not the sign of the unity of Christ's Mystical Body that it should be. It is imperfect, incomplete.

Yet even though the ecclesial reality of such a Eucharist is not all that it should be, it is not totally absent.

²² E. Schlink, "Die apostolische Sukzession," in his collected works: *Der kommende Christus und die kirchlichen Traditionen* (Göttingen 1961), p. 194, cited in Hans Küng, *Structures of the Church*, (New York: Nelson) 1964, p. 188.

²³ Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 2.

It follows that these separated Churches and Communities, though we believe they suffer from defects already mentioned, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.²⁴

Catholics must joyfully acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren . . . Whatever is truly Christian never conflicts with the genuine interests of the faith; indeed, it can always result in a more ample realization of the very mystery of Christ and the Church.²⁵

The one Church of Christ "which subsists in the Catholic Church"²⁶ is in a mysterious but real sense engaged in the Eucharist of every Christian Community, for the reality of that Eucharist is ultimately derived from what has been entrusted to her. Because of this, "Roman Catholics do in fact 'participate' in every eucharist celebrated at a Lutheran altar and vice versa."²⁷

Looked at from another viewpoint, every eucharistic celebration in a divided Church—Protestant or Catholic or Orthodox—is imperfect. Imperfections will differ in each Church, but of all of them we can truly say in some sense,

The intentions of priest and people are imperfect; the love among communicants is imperfect; the manner of celebrating is imperfect; the understanding of what is being done is imperfect. That is to say, the liturgy is always a provisional action anticipating the unprovisional perfections of the Kingdom of God.²⁸

This very real imperfection does not keep us from celebrating the Eucharist within the borders of our own Communities now. Nor should imperfection in the ecclesial reality signified by a Eucharist prevent intercommunion across those boundaries. In fact in some ways intercommunion would be less imperfect than our present

²⁴ Decree on Ecumenism, no. 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 4.

²⁶ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 8.

²⁷ Richard John Neuhaus, "Intercommunion Dialogue; Celebrations Imperfect and Imperative," *Liturgy*, 12/9, No. 1967, pg. 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 2.

practice. It would be a more faithful reflection of the teaching of the Vatican Council about the real Christian unity which transcends confessional boundaries. The liturgy must not perpetuate a "closed" and inadequate view of the Church. That would betray its nature as teacher. For Liturgy does teach—both by words and by celebration.²⁹

It is true that the present Directory issued by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity does forbid Catholics to receive the Eucharist from a minister who has not been validly ordained.³⁰ But this disciplinary regulation need not remain in force always, particularly since the Decree on Ecumenism has provided solid doctrinal principles which point in the other direction.

Finally, to suggest that intercommunion be begun on special occasions under the direction of the hierarchy is not to reduce the Eucharist simply to a means instead of a goal, to "a place subordinate to some kind of jurisdictional and structural unity, as if this last were a higher and fuller incarnation of the gospel."³¹ Rather the already existing jurisdictional and structural unity based on baptism is celebrated and manifested for all to see. By their approval and participation the bishops would be joining in what the Church recognizes as the most efficacious prayer for the most urgently needed graces. They would be exercising their roles as teachers and servants of the whole Church of Christ. Bishops of the Catholic Church and those who exercise similar functions in other Christian communities—whether they are called "bishops" or not—have the responsibility to do all in their power to lead the communities which they serve to the fulness of unity, interior and exterior, which Christ himself desires.

III. THE PRESENCE OF ORDERS IN PROTESTANT MINISTERS

Vatican II clearly teaches that the Orthodox Churches "possess true sacraments, above all—by apostolic succession—the priesthood and the Eucharist."³² It also presupposes a "lack of the sacrament of

²⁹ Cf. the discussion of this point begun by Gregory Baum in *The Ecumenist*, 6/1, Nov.-Dec. 1967, pp. 99-100, and continuing through succeeding issues, particularly 6/3, Mar.-Apr. 1968, pp. 137-139.

³⁰ Nos. 55, 59.

³¹ Robert W. Hovda, "Intercommunion Dialog: Difficult Questions," *Liturgy*, 12/9, Nov. 1967, pg. 3.

³² Decree on Ecumenism, no. 16.

orders" among at least some of the separated Christian Communities of the West.³³

The absence of "valid" orders is not an insuperable obstacle to some form of reciprocal intercommunion. Christ is really present in a Catholic Eucharist. The same Christ is really present in a Baptist Eucharist in some way. This fact is not dependent on our attempted theological explanations as to how He becomes present. Nor should intercommunion be postponed until theologians can all agree on how the Holy Spirit is working through various liturgies. Nevertheless, some suggestions about the nature and function of the Christian ministry may accelerate episcopal approval of intercommunion.

In an important and detailed article Franz Josef van Beeck says that "validity" is a juridical notion which implies recognition by the Church of an ontological fact. First comes the fact, then the recognition. In his view the Holy Spirit has raised up ministers in all Christian Churches to celebrate the Eucharist and supply other sacraments for the community in virtue of their baptismal priesthood. They are not ordinary ministers but extraordinary, because of the unusual situation of large groups of Christians in good faith who do not have a ministerial hierarchy descended from the apostles through the rite of imposition of hands. Van Beeck appeals to Church History to confirm his contention that Christ intends the sacraments to be given by extraordinary ministers in emergency situations, even if the emergency is protracted.

In other words there exists in all Christian Churches a ministry which the Catholic Church can recognize as valid. This ministry is based on the baptismal priesthood common to all the faithful.³⁴

Van Beeck's position was warmly welcomed and advanced by Daniel J. O'Hanlon, S. J., who pointed out that Trent and *Mediator Dei* did not condemn the nuanced thesis of van Beeck but "the ex-

³³ *Ibid.*, no. 22.

³⁴ F. J. van Beeck, S. J., "Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Sacraments," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 3, 1966, pp. 57-112. He sums up his thesis on page 89: "The theological basis of the authenticity of the extraordinary ministry seems to be the common priesthood of the faithful, which under normal circumstances operates through the persons of the recognized ministers, and which in cases of emergency is exercised through the ministry of those who deputize."

treme one-sided assertion that ministers are authorized *only* by delegation from the community."³⁵ He goes on to say, "the sacrament of order is an intensification and specification of the sacrament of baptism."³⁶

George Tavard, S. A., in an address to the Fifth National Workshop for Christian Unity, took a different approach. He felt that to place the theological basis for the validity of the Protestant ministry solely in the baptismal priesthood of all believers would be inadequate. "One cannot in this perspective reduce the post-baptismal sacraments to an 'intensification and specification of the sacrament of baptism.'"³⁷ Nevertheless, he agrees that the sacramental ministry is genuinely present in some but not all Protestant Churches. Recognition of the sacramental significance of such ministry cannot come first from Catholics but from the Protestant community itself.

If a given Protestant church does recognize its ministers as eucharistic hierarchs (even with a totally different vocabulary, with another form of designation or ordination, with another concept of succession, with another theological frame of reference), I see no reason why the Catholic church should not take note of this fact and recognize the sacramental dimension of which this community has the experience, thus acknowledging its ministry as the authentic ministry of the Eucharist, without asking historical questions about the forms in which this ministry was transmitted.³⁸

In other words, Tavard accepts the main lines of van Beek's argument as well as his conclusions, but differs about the theological principles, demanding more than the baptismal priesthood.

³⁵ "A New Approach to the Validity of Church Orders," *Worship*, 41, 1967, pg. 417.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 418.

³⁷ "Tavard Says the Ordination of Ministers Potentially Valid," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 26, 1968, pg. 6. Apparently he attributes this same position to Hans Küng also. Actually, Küng in his book, *Structures of the Church*, (New York: Nelson), 1964, pp. 183-212, appeals to charisms over and beyond baptism to explain the Christian ministry. The same principle appears in Küng's *The Church*, New York: (Sheed and Ward), 1967, pg. 443.

³⁸ *Loc. cit.* To be more exact, since apostolic succession is involved, historical questions must be asked, but they are not the only decisive factors.

Tavard is correct. Baptism alone does not suffice. Beyond the deputation to offer the Eucharist which flows from the Christian's baptismal consecration it seems to me that there must be present: 1) a special charism, 2) a special intention, and 3) ecclesial authorization.³⁹

1) Vatican II taught plainly:

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated. Each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ.⁴⁰

Because of the essential difference between the baptismal priesthood and the ministerial priesthood a special charism, a gift of the Holy Spirit, is needed. Church ministry is charismatic.⁴¹ Trent defined that the Holy Spirit is given at ordination.⁴²

But the Holy Spirit does not come only at ordination. His charisms are not exclusively tied to the actual reception of sacraments. He can raise up ministers for the Church in other ways, ways which are defective as signs but which nevertheless empower men to function as priests.⁴³ Tavard would base a recognition of the

³⁹ A fuller development of this view is made by Joseph Duss-von Werdt in "What Can the Layman Do without the Priest?" *Concilium*, 34, 1968, pp. 105-114. Only that minister can consecrate the Eucharist who is baptized, and "Can make good his claim that he has received a call from Christ and a special charism from the Spirit, sanctioned by the imposition of hands by the consecrating ministers. Through the concept of collegiality these ministers represent the whole Church as the bearer of apostolic succession, and in the same liturgical formulas they testify, on behalf of the Church, that the enabling power is granted by God to the candidate in respect of the dispensation of both the Word and the sacraments." Maurice Vallain, S.M., reaches this same conclusion in his article, "Can there be Apostolic Succession outside the Chain of Imposition of Hands?" *Concilium*, 34, 1968, pg. 101.

⁴⁰ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 10. Cf. also no. 28; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, nn. 2, 5, 7; Decree on Ecumenism, nn. 15, 22.

⁴¹ Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, (New York: Herder & Herder), 1963, pp. 105 ff.; David M. Stanley, "Authority in the Church: A New Testament Reality," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XXIX, 1967, pg. 562; Hans Küng, *Structures of the Church*, pp. 190-201; *The Church*, pp. 393-444.

⁴² Denzinger-Schönmetzer, # 1774 (1964).

⁴³ Schlink, *op. cit.*, 193, cited in Küng, *Structures of the Church*, pp. 202-201. Küng develops a theory of *ordo in voto* which will be taken up presently.

validity of orders in a Protestant Church on two factors: Do its ministers function as priests? Does that Church recognize that this is a priestly ministry?⁴⁴

2) In those ceremonies in which a minister is dedicated or set aside for special service to the community there must exist an implicit Eucharistic dimension. The Church which calls him must *intend to do what Christ and the Church intend*, i.e. to consecrate and empower him to celebrate the Lord's Supper in obedience to the Lord's command. The minister himself must also share in that intention.

Hans Küng compares this to baptism *in voto*, in which at least some of the effects of the sacrament are rendered present without the established sign of the sacrament.

What happens, for example, if the ordination of a bishop in a certain case is not validly administered [say because of a deficiency of intention; because of a mistake in form], without this being noticed, indeed without the possibility of its being noticed? Is the whole "chain of ordination" irreparably and unperceivedly demolished? . . . May [a Catholic] assume in such a case that *such* a consecration may nevertheless be valid and would be "completed" and lawfully "healed" by God himself; that it is correct in view of the wholeness and unity of the Church?⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Loc. cit.* Cf. also his article, "The Function of the Minister in the Eucharistic Celebration," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 4, 1967, especially pp. 636-649, where he analyzes the priestly functions, pg. 643, where he identifies this as falling within the range of "the Spirit's free and sometimes unforeseen activity," and pp. 647-649, where he explains what recognition by the Protestant church would involve. Avery Dulles, S. J., points out the great divergence among Protestants in their attitudes toward the ministry. Cf. *Revelation and the Quest for Unity*, (Washington: Corpus Books) 1968, pp. 147-148.

⁴⁵ *Structures of the Church*, pg. 206, n. 62.

Dulles, *op. cit.*, pg. 161, states, "We are of the opinion that such a person may actually (though not explicitly) desire properly sacerdotal graces. . . . An intention of this sort, vague though it be, might be sufficiently oriented toward the sacrament of order so that the ensuing graces would take on a sacramental quality . . . The Protestant rite of ordination, in so far as it fosters or expresses such a *votum sacramenti*, would itself deserve to be called a 'quasi sacrament'." Dulles maintains that Protestant ministers lack both *potestas ordinis* and *potestas jurisdictionis* but possess a *vestigium ecclesiae*, or "quasi sacrament". He cites in support Thomas Sartory, Dom Gribomont, Newman, and Rickaby: *op. cit.*, pp. 156, 160-161.

Maurice Villain, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, adds, "In the degree that the candidate

We may wonder whether a dogmatic theology which recognizes a baptism *in voto* . . . should not also consider the possibility of an ordination *in voto* and a celebration of the Eucharist *in voto*. A Church in which every Christian can administer baptism in case of necessity and in which, according to the view of several theologians, every Christian can administer absolution in case of necessity, ought surely to consider whether there are not such things as ordination and eucharist in cases of necessity, with regard to which the "case of necessity" would then cease to be a limiting factor.⁴⁶

Rather than base the analogy on baptism *in voto*—which unlike ordination is necessary for salvation and which in any case does not enable the person to offer the Eucharist⁴⁷—it would seem wiser to draw attention to penance *in voto*, and not only to those extraordinary situations in which a layman administers absolution. A perfect act of contrition, which need only implicitly contain a desire to confess and receive absolution, nevertheless does empower the penitent to offer and receive the Eucharist. Here the effects of the sacrament are present and operative before the sacrament itself is received. Sacramental graces are operative in preparing the recipient for the actual reception—one may think also of the graces of Confirmation, Ordination, Marriage at work in the whole process of disposing the Christian for the moment when the visible encounter with Christ takes place. Once this principle is recognized, it becomes easier to understand how the Spirit can be at work even where there is no visible sign of the apostolic succession through the imposition of hands.

Furthermore, it should be noted that for all the sacraments after baptism some exteriority seems to be connected to the interior intention. The sinner, for example, maintains his membership in a visible community which forgives sins, and it is through that community that the Word of God calls him to repentance and reconciliation.

would have the *votum sacramenti* (the wish to receive the sacrament, of which God alone can judge), he would receive the *res sacramenti* (the reality of the sacrament)." He is here quoting Dulles, *Protestant Churches and the Prophetic Office* (Woodstock College Press, 1961), pp. 33 f.

⁴⁶ *The Church*, pg. 443.

⁴⁷ Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, no. 14.

Certainly a Protestant ordination ceremony is not a purely invisible, internal act. The intention of the minister and of the Church is made visible in an external rite. This is much more than what some theologians mean by a *votum sacramenti*.

The final requirement—besides baptismal priesthood, a charism of the Spirit, and proper intention—is ecclesial authorization. The liturgy is not a private act. The whole Church is involved in it. No man may determine for himself what the nature of the liturgy is. No man may pronounce the words of institution of the Eucharist in his own name without authorization to speak for the Christian community and for Christ himself. The call of his own community is the minimum essential for "validifiable" ordination.⁴⁸

If all these requirements are met, the Catholic Church could recognize such an ordination as valid. The bishops receive the charism of discerning the Spirit, deciding whether He has actually given the charism of Church ministry outside the ordinary lines of apostolic succession. This "validation" by the Catholic Church would successfully by-pass the question of "validity of Anglican orders."⁴⁹ May

⁴⁸ Avery Dulles, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-162, sums up the ecclesial dimensions of Protestant ministry in five points: 1) The ordination is a visible and social recognition of certain interior qualities. 2) The recognition gives him a certain prestige. He can address his community as a trusted teacher; he can address the world in the name of his religious group. 3) He represents Christ himself in the eyes of his congregation. 4) He will receive certain graces to help him lead his people toward the truth. 5) The rite of ordination may not confer grace *ex opere operato* but be efficacious as a protestation of faith in the power of the Christian ministry and as a fervent prayer for grace to fulfill it in a manner pleasing to God. This rite is a *vestigium* of the sacrament of orders. Externally and objectively it points to the sacrament.

If Dulles' ideas are taken in conjunction with the previous section of this article about the efficacy of Christian prayer inspired by the Spirit, there is every reason to think that God hears and grants the prayers of Christians in good faith when they pray for men to carry on the work of the apostles in their midst.

⁴⁹ Tavard, *art. cit.*, pp. 647-649; van Beeck, *art. cit.*, pg. 105, n. 83. Maurice Villain, *op. cit.*, pg. 104, suggests that this might be done "in virtue of the principle of *Ecclesia supplet* or of 'economy' in Orthodox terminology, *even if the principle would have to be extended to situations where it has as yet never been applied.*" He cites Archimandrite Pierre, "Economie ecclésiastique dans la théologie orthodoxe," *Irenikon*, 1937, pp. 228-247; 339-362; A. Alivisatos, "Economy' from the Orthodox Point of View," *Dispensation in Practice and Theory*, (London, 1944), pp. 27 f.; Y. Congar, "Economie," *Catholicisme*. To

we perhaps consider such "validation" to be implicitly and unofficially given in the present desire of the Catholic Church that Protestant ordinations and Eucharists continue to go on? Surely after the Vatican Council very few responsible Catholics would want to see these real manifestations of Christian life die out among our fellow Christians. Rather, we rejoice at the vigorous new liturgical movements springing up in our sister Churches.

This approach to the question of ministry in Protestant Churches demands a widening of the concept of apostolic succession. Catholics and Orthodox have tended in the past to identify apostolic succession with the imposition of hands in the consecration of bishops as if the bishops alone were the successors of the apostles.

Several authors now remind us that the whole Church is apostolic, and that all Christians share in the mission of the apostles; bishops do so in a special way, but this must be understood in terms of the apostolicity of the entire community.⁵⁰

Working from this starting point, these authors suggest that room must be left for other forms of succession than imposition of hands by validly consecrated bishops.

Ultimately, for *full* ecclesiastical communion the defeat of *full* visibility must be remedied. This could be done by imposing hands at least as a sign of ecclesiastical recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit. Something analogous happens in the sacrament of penance if the penitent's sins have already been forgiven through an act of contrition: absolution becomes a sign of what God has already done. Just as absolution in such a case is fully sacramental, so the imposi-

this list could be added Hilaire Marot, O.S.B., "The Orthodox Churches and Anglican Orders," *Concilium*, 34, 1968, pp. 150-160.

⁵⁰ Yves Congar, O.P., "Apostolicite," *Catholicismé*, 1, (Paris, 1948) pg. 729; *idem*, "Apostolicité de ministere et apostolicité de doctrine," *Volk Gottes*, Festschrift for Josef Höfer, ed. by Remigius Bäumer and Heine Dolch (Freiburg-Basel-Vienna, 1967), pp. 84-111; Hans Küng, *The Church*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), pp. 355-358, 441-444; *idem*, "What is the Essence of Apostolic Succession?" *Concilium*, 34, 1968, pp. 28-35; Johannes Remmers, "Apostolic Succession: an Attribute of the Whole Church," *Concilium*, 34, pp. 36-51; Maurice Villain, S.M., *op. cit.*, Joseph Duss-von Werdt, "What Can the Layman Do without the Priest?" *op. cit.*, pp. 105-114; Myles M. Bourke, "Reflections on Church Order in the New Testament," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 30, 1968, pp. 493-511.

tion of hands would not be a mere formality but a true sacrament. It would not have to be given conditionally except where there is a doubt whether valid ordination had already been received, as has happened in at least some Anglican ordinations.

IV. CONCELEBRATION ACROSS DENOMINATIONAL LINES

If one accepts the principles proposed above with regard to a real presence of Christ in all ecclesial celebrations of the Lord's Supper and a genuine ministry in all Christian churches capable of providing the Eucharist for these communities, even though the Catholic Church has not yet officially recognized the canonical validity of such a ministry, then it is possible for ministers of all Christian churches to stand at the same altar and exercise their ministry together in mutual acceptance and respect.

But concelebration must not be used to evade the issue of the real presence of Jesus and the real ministry of all concelebrants.⁵¹ It would be patronizing and offensive for someone to take part under the supposition, "I know that my orders are valid and that the Lord becomes present through my ministry. I am not so sure about you. Without me you can do nothing and this would be an empty ceremony." This would be a step backwards, away from recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit in all Christian Churches. Until or unless there is at least unofficial acceptance of the orders of all Christian ministers participating, concelebration may not be used to achieve intercommunion—for it would be a false sign of unity.

In this matter as in those discussed above we should recall the words of Ignatius of Antioch:

Follow the bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and follow the presbytery as the Apostles, and respect the deacons

⁵¹ This seems to have happened in Canada with the approval of ecclesiastical superiors. Reporting on such gatherings, Gregory Baum writes, "All Christians present at such concelebrations felt free to receive the Eucharistic food. Even if they had doubts about the valid ordination of some of the ministers present, they knew that an ordained minister of their own Church was a concelebrant and hence had recited the essential part of the liturgy and that, at least in virtue of his participation, the eucharist was certainly the divine gift of the New Testament." Cf. *The Ecumenist*, 6/4, May-June, 1968, pg. 157.

as the commandment of God. Let no man perform anything pertaining to the church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist over which the bishop presides, or one to whom he commits it. Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as, wherever Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not permitted either to baptize or to hold an *agape* apart from the bishop. But whatever he approves, that is well-pleasing to God, that everything which you do may be sound and valid.⁵²

Reverence for Christ and respect for the whole of Christian tradition preclude the kind of experimentation which says, "Regardless of whether the bishop approves, let's go ahead and do it and see what happens." Sacramental acts must be acts of obedience to Christ and in response to the *Holy Spirit*—not just to any spirit. This means that the bishop—whose function it is to discern the Spirit—must somehow be involved.⁵³ Christian liturgy is a sacred action and must be undertaken responsibly.

It would not be honest to engage in concelebration, as a particularly solemn form of intercommunion and full participation in the action of the Church, without the full approval of those responsible for the liturgy. Vatican II identifies this person as the bishop in the Roman Catholic Church:

A bishop, marked with the fulness of the sacrament of orders, is 'the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood,' especially in the Eucharist, which he offers or causes to be offered, and by which the Church constantly lives and grows. This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called churches in the New Testament.

In any community existing around an altar, under the sacred ministry of the bishop, there is manifested a symbol of that

⁵² *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, c. 8.

⁵³ Robert W. Hovda, *art. cit.*, pg. 2, has some excellent remarks on the bishop's role as a kind of "community sacrament", a symbol of a structured, institutionalized world-Church, and of his local church's relationship to the other churches which are in communion with Rome. It might also be added that bishops or their equivalents in other Christian Churches are visible signs of a real though less visible unity which exists between their Churches and that of Rome.

charity and 'unity of the Mystical Body, without which there can be no salvation.'

Every legitimate celebration of the Eucharist is regulated by the bishop, to whom is committed the office of offering the worship of Christian religion to the divine Majesty and of administering it in accordance with the Lord's commandments and with the Church's laws, as further defined by his particular judgment for his diocese.⁵⁴

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy had already pointed to the role which the bishop should have in the Christian consciousness of the faithful:

The bishop is to be considered the high priest of the flock. In a certain sense it is from him that the faithful who are under his care derive and maintain their life in Christ.⁵⁵

Therefore the liturgical life of the parish and its relationship to the bishop must be fostered in the thinking and practice of both laity and clergy.⁵⁶

The Council returned to the same theme later in the thoroughly rewritten and final version of the Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church:

"Bishops are the principal dispensers of the mysteries of God, just as they are the governors, promoters, and guardians of the entire liturgical life in the church committed to them."⁵⁷

The fully mature thinking of the Council is reflected in the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, promulgated just before the close of the last session. Approaching the liturgy from the viewpoint of the priests who concelebrate, the Council declared:

All priests, together with bishops, so share in the one and same priesthood and ministry of Christ that the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical communion with the order of bishops. At times they express this in a most excellent manner by liturgical concelebration. At every

⁵⁴ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 26.

⁵⁵ No. 41.

⁵⁶ No. 42.

⁵⁷ No. 15.

Mass, however, they openly acknowledge that they celebrate the Eucharistic Action in union with the Episcopate.⁵⁸ In administering all the sacraments . . . priests are bound together by various titles hierarchically with the bishop. Thus in a certain way they make him present in every gathering of the faithful.⁵⁹

Therefore all forms of intercommunion, precisely because they are ecclesial actions expressing the nature of the Church, must include and manifest union with the bishops raised up by Christ to unify His People. If all those who share in the Lord's Supper respect one another's faith and ministry, no greater nor more impressive sign of this can be given than concelebration under the direction and guidance of those who preside as bishops or fulfill like roles in all the Christian communities. Concelebration would show in a solemn way the unity which already exists—and point forward to what is yet to come.

The future of the Church no man can clearly see. Jesus prayed that we all might be one, and the Holy Spirit is visibly bringing about greater unity among Christians, particularly in our day. Our task is to be obedient to the Spirit and to follow His inspirations with an openness that can break through all the barriers our prejudices and stubbornness have built up over the centuries. This change of heart will come about in prayer as we pray for one another and with one another, grateful for what God is doing in our midst. Isn't this in fact what we do at the Eucharist?

FRANCIS J. BUCKLEY, S.J.
University of San Francisco
San Francisco, California

⁵⁸ No. 7.

⁵⁹ No. 5. Cf. also nn. 2, 8.