

SEMINAR ON CHURCH AND SACRAMENTS: SUMMARY

I. PRESENTATION ON SACRAMENTS BY SARA BUTLER, M.S.B.T.

Topic: Ecumenical consensus and the celebration of the sacraments.

Thesis: Growth in ecumenical relationships calls for adaptation. Specifically, it calls for (1) the common development of "ecumenical rites" for certain sacraments and (2) the provision in law for ecumenical concelebration of these sacraments under the appropriate conditions.

For each of the following proposals, four questions need to be asked:

1. Does the present level of doctrinal consensus permit the joint development of an "ecumenical order of worship" for this sacrament?

2. Is it possible to build up and promote this consensus through adoption and use of this rite by several Christian churches?

3. What criteria should be used in identifying the appropriate ecumenical occasions?

4. Are there major obstacles to the concelebration of this sacrament? What are they?

A. *Ecumenical Marriage*

The sacramental celebration of marriage between a Roman Catholic and a baptized Christian of another confession is the most common occasion of *communicatio in sacris* in our country. This commonly accepted occurrence provides a key example that has implications for pastoral care in other ecumenical situations.

1. *Rites.* Presently, it is celebrated according to the Roman Catholic rite or, with dispensation from form, according to the rite of the Christian Church in which it is celebrated. Currently, there is work being done on an "ecumenical marriage rite."

2. *Doctrine.* The only effort to promote a common mind on the nature of marriage is what can be accomplished in pre-marital counselling. An advance on this is represented by the recent Anglican/Roman Catholic statement issued in West Virginia.

3. *Ministers.* Two baptized Christians of different churches.

4. *Conditions.* Explicit submission to ecclesiastical authority on part of R.C. Explicit promise of loyalty to Church required of R.C. party. Recommended: joint pastoral counselling; joint witness of marriage.

In the case of the ecumenical marriage, despite divergent understandings of the Christian doctrine of marriage and without benefit of a common rite, the concelebration of this sacrament is permitted. This is an example of pastoral care given for an exceptional circumstance. In fact, it takes place on a rather routine basis.

Does reflection on this case provide insight regarding the celebration of Baptism and Eucharist?

B. Ecumenical Baptism

The baptism of children of ecumenical marriages suggests another occasion when the use of a common rite might serve to underline the given unity of Christians. The concelebration of a common rite by the pastors of both husband and wife would witness to the one baptism we share.

1. *Rite.* As in marriage, could accept the use of Roman Catholic rite or rite of another Christian Church. The development and joint adoption of a common rite of baptism would provide another option. (See COCU rite, for example.)

2. *Doctrine.* A common doctrine of baptism is generally presumed, at least one sufficient to eliminate the necessity of conditional baptism. Numerous general (WCC, NCC, COCU) and bi-lateral consensus statements attest to common doctrine.

3. *Ministers.* Both the Roman Catholic priest/deacon and other Christian pastor could celebrate this sacrament, much as in the marriage rite, by dividing the parts of the service. Since baptism may be validly administered by any Christian, this presents no problem.

4. *Conditions.* In case of the child of an ecumenical marriage, this would not constitute dual membership; the child would be considered formal member of only one church; baptism might be recorded in both, however. Presumes a genuine, living relationship of couple with both churches. Would require a dispensation from the bishop. Might be extended to children in covenanted parishes, or to adults accepting baptism in covenanted parishes.

C. Ecumenical Eucharist

The celebration of the Eucharist on ecumenical occasions could employ a common order to worship, jointly accepted as conveying all that is essential. Concelebration of this rite on certain occasions would open the way to eucharistic sharing.

1. *Rite.* The common preparation of a eucharistic order of worship (see COCU order) is one possibility. The adoption by various churches of an already existing rite is another. Its use ought not be limited to ecumenical occasions.

2. *Doctrine.* Consensus in eucharistic doctrine is already well-founded among many Christian traditions. It could be supported and promoted through use of a common rite.

3. *Ministers.* Concelebration by authorized eucharistic ministers of the participating churches, as a limited and occasional expression of unity already achieved. Rite could include confession of sinful separation and invocation of the Spirit on ministry of participating celebrants.

4. *Conditions.* Ecumenical congregation, e.g., couples on Marriage Encounter, participants in ecumenical dialogue, retreatants, members of covenanted parishes. Permission of bishop and corresponding church authorities. Special occasions.

II. PRESENTATION ON SACRAMENTS
BY FRED KRAUSE, O.F.M. CAP.

Topic. The sacrament of marriage as illustrative of both the reality and problematic of divine institution and human adaptation.

A. Search for a Model

From the time of its formal recognition as "sacrament," marriage has always posed a problem for traditional sacramental models, beginning with the "matter-form" model. Even today marriage is often regarded as the "weakest" area of sacramental theology because the sacrament does not fit well our general models. How can we address this problematic? Some specific questions of interest might include:

1. Sacraments generally are described as the "visible sign of invisible reality." What is the "visible reality" in the sign of marriage?

2. Sacraments involve ritual celebration generally. Yet the Church has regarded not only as valid but in some circumstances

as appropriate a-ritual "celebrations" of marriage—e.g., "rec-tory" weddings when the woman is pregnant; or recognition of mutual consent when no priest is available for a period of time. In what sense can such a-liturgical realities be given the name "sac-rament"?

3. Sacraments normally involve a celebration of the church community presided over by an ordained minister. In marriage, we speak of husband and wife as "ministers" of the sacrament. Yet we recognize as "sacramental" marriages where the parties pre-sumptively do not have the "intention" to act as ministers re-quired of ministers in all other contexts—e.g., two baptized Pro-testants being married in a civil ceremony. Does this suggest a "magical" notion of sacrament?

4. Sacraments are called "signs of faith." Yet we have not only permitted but often encouraged Catholics whose faith by their own admission was weak or even non-existent to be married "sacramentally." What view of "sacrament" does this imply?

These questions, I believe, illustrate the problematic regard-ing the understanding and adapting of marriage today.

B. Permanence of Marriage

Roman Catholic tradition and practice has regarded marriage in Christ as both permanent and absolutely indissoluble. This was attributed to the "divine institution" of marriage as indissoluble by Jesus. Today, many people find such a position theologically rigid and biblically unfounded, and urge the Church to adapt her pas-toral practice from one founded on this presupposition.

How do we meet this question in a way that respects both divine institution and human adaptation?

C. Ecclesiological Implications

Lumen gentium (n. 11) speaks of the Christian family unit as a "domestic Church," and *Gaudium et spes* (n. 48) says the Chris-tian family "manifests the nature of the true Church." Such a theological understanding would seem to call for a re-evaluation of certain notions regarding marriage as sacrament, e.g.:

1. What degree of faith-commitment must be demanded of those who will form such a "domestic Church" through Christian marriage?
2. What implications might this have regarding the nature, meaning, and appropriate setting for infant baptism?

3. What implications might this have for the religious education of children?

III. PRESENTATION ON THE CHURCH BY CARL J. PETER

Topic: Papal primacy: ecumenical developments.

A. "Renewal of the Papacy"

1. A promising theological context for a consideration of our topic is that of the papacy's potential for Christian service to different local churches throughout the world. The churches which I have in mind include those of the Protestant and Orthodox confessions as well as Roman Catholic. In suggesting that a case may be made for a renewed papacy it is primarily this potential for Christian service that I shall offer as grounds for my position.

2. By papacy I mean an institution in time and space, not some abstract, other-worldly, perfect ideal; I mean in fact the historic Roman episcopate with its influence on other churches besides the Roman See.

3. This institution, I maintain, is one that: (a) permits of, (b) needs, and (c) rightly deserves efforts aimed at adaptation that will enable it to render more effective Christian service to more churches.

4. It permits of such change because in our day it has already changed notably, perhaps more by way of the personal style of the one exercising its chief role than through statutory reorganization of its functions. There is no good reason to think it cannot or may not be modified more yet while retaining its identity and a continuity with its past in much more than time, space, and name.

5. It needs to change to serve local churches better. Even when due allowance is made for the enormous difficulty of knowing how to adapt to conditions on a planet containing so many different worlds, efforts at *aggiornamento* in the papacy itself seem to many sympathetic Christians to be at most a beginning. The future may regard those efforts as extremely significant but too many in the present see them as characterized by hesitancy and reluctance. More is needed if more effective service is to be forthcoming for more churches.

6. It rightly deserves efforts aimed at effecting such change. The latter is worth dialoguing about, working for, and praying for because of the potential service a unifying office can render by

proclaiming in season and out the central truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ; by striving despite its own weaknesses to exemplify evangelical charity, and by serving as a call and sign over against the factionalism and nationalism that can in our day be threats to the Christian character of churches no less than was the case in the past.

7. In the collective task of renewing the papacy, the insights of all men and women of good will must be welcomed but especially those of fellow Christians. In this case the would-be helper, the papacy, surely needs help from those to be helped. Unless this is admitted the whole venture could be easily dismissed as another instance of Roman Catholic arrogance—triumphalism by another name in another day. But the renewal in question is—all this notwithstanding—a peculiarly Roman Catholic task. Members of that church must be honest enough to recognize and criticize the historical and historic failings of the papacy. At the same time a conviction regarding the importance of their task is called for. They must have sufficient respect for the contributions of the papacy of the past and present to work to give it a chance for a future of more effective service to more of mankind. This will take study, reflection, prayer, and courage. Patience and a sense of humor will also help.

8. My final remarks have to do with power and in particular with fear of papal power. The renewal in question is important precisely because the papacy has at times exercised an extremely significant influence for good. The example is getting shopworn to be sure but John XXIII is a fine instance of what I have in mind. So too is Paul VI in his efforts directed toward Eastern Orthodoxy. Still the problem is obvious. When great power—moral no less than physical—is vested officially in one individual, it is open to frightful abuse. The fear thus engendered is not assuaged by the reassurance that groups have been every bit as unjust as individuals when wielding power in church or state. That fact provides small consolation. Still fear of abuse is one thing and quite legitimate. But efforts to eliminate any significant power from the papal office are quite another. To perform a unifying function among Roman Catholics does, it seems to me, require genuine rights as well as duties on the part of the pope. Those rights are compatible with safeguards, or perhaps more appropriately in the year of our bicentennial with checks and balances if you wish, that might be set up to protect the rights of other believers. Something akin to a

constitution or at least bill of rights for the Roman Catholic Church could be formulated. The renewal I am talking about envisions efforts along these lines. They would, it seems to me, be an initiative taken to put into practice the dictum of Vatican II: "The church's teaching office is not above the Word of God but rather serves it" (*Dei Verbum*, 10). Such efforts are called for to make a more healthy Roman Catholic Church. Their effect on other Christians might be surprising. The problem of who really speaks for the Church, how, when, and with what authority is after all not a peculiarly Roman Catholic one today. We share it with many fellow Christians in other confessions. Our attempt to come to grips with it in a renewal of the papacy should at least show a commitment to making church office serve the cause of Christ's Kingdom more faithfully.

9. Roman Catholic concern for the implications of divine institution and human adaptation suggests the following questions as a helpful beginning of our discussion of the papacy and contemporary ecumenical developments:

a. "But the very notion of a Petrine trajectory in the New Testament where the image of Peter was adapted to meet the needs of a Church after his death supposes the possibility of the continued adaptability of this image to meet the needs of the present Church and of the Church of the future." R. E. Brown, "The Meaning of Modern New Testament Studies for an Ecumenical Understanding of Peter and the Papacy" in *Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church* (New York: Paulist, 1975), pp. 77-8. May we ask, with the author (p. 83), what it would mean for the successor of Peter to feed the sheep of Jesus in the last quarter of the last century of the second millenium?

b. "In other words, the establishment of monarchy is presented in the book of *Samuel* as at one and the same time the result of human historical necessity, Israel's unfaithfulness, and divine institution. . . . The tale, obviously, cannot be applied wholesale to the papacy. Yet the heirs of the Reformation can learn from it. It suggests that the papacy can be both God-willed and corrupt, a blessing and a curse, a necessity and a danger." G. Lindbeck, "How Lutherans Regard Papacy" in *Origins* 5, 19 (October 30, 1975), 304. To what extent do theologies of grace and sin affect contemporary attitudes toward papal primacy? How concretely can a

Lutheran understanding make a contribution to Roman Catholic efforts to renew the papacy? Are there limits that a Roman Catholic understanding of the papacy would wish to see respected in such efforts? What are those limits?

c. "To the extent that the Bishop of Rome allows the problems, mentalities, and potential contribution to the life of Christendom on the part of other churches to enter into his thinking and decisions and brings these to expression, to that extent could his claim to be the representative of all Christendom gain in credibility outside the Roman Catholic Church." Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Einheit der Kirche als Glaubenswirklichkeit und als ökumenisches Ziel" in *Una Sancta* 30 (1975), 221. What would the consequences be if such a *modus agendi* were to be adopted by a bishop of Rome? Should the papacy be concerned with any other kinds of credibility besides that mentioned by Pannenberg? What are they?

d. "It would be conceivable for example that the Bishop of another city might hold the primacy, or that the papacy might rotate among several sees, somewhat as the presidency of the Security Council in the United Nations rotates among representatives of various nations. From the Roman Catholic point of view the essential would seem to be that the Petrine function should be institutionalized in some way so that there is in the government of the universal Church an effective sign and instrument of unity." Avery Dulles, "Papal Authority in Roman Catholicism," in *A Pope for All Christians* ed. by P. J. McCord (New York: Paulist, 1976), p. 56. Do these remarks point to possibilities genuinely open to the Roman Catholic Church from the point of view of its previous dogmatic formulations? If so, how could Catholic Christians decide whether pursuing such a line of thought would be ecumenically helpful rather than idle speculation?

e. "We share the concern of our Lutheran partners in dialogue that safeguards should be provided against violation of Christian rights and freedoms on the part of all ecclesiastical authority, papal included. Simultaneously, we are conscious of the need to proceed with caution. In particular, the effective exercise of the papal ministry requires a large measure of power—and power, by its very nature, is capable of being abused. It is not yet clear what restrictions are

compatible with the very nature of the Petrine function to be exercised by the pope—that is his special unifying and ordering ministry with reference to the church as a whole. What limitations would leave room for the relative independence that the papacy must have to discharge its high mission?" Cf. "Reflections of the Roman Catholic Participants," in *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, Vol. V of *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*, ed. by P. Empie and T. Austin Murphy (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974), pp. 36-7. Is it any clearer to this group than it was to the authors what limitations are indeed compatible with the nature of the Petrine function exercised by the pope? What about a constitution for the Church?

f. There is considerable discussion about working out a distinct canonical status by which one or another Protestant church might enter into official communion with the Roman Catholic Church. What would the consequences be for the Roman Catholics in their relation to the bishop of Rome if other Christians were officially related to that See very differently?

g. Does the need for an ultimate court of appeal in faith and morals vary directly, inversely, or not at all with the developments in theology as a discipline?

IV. PRESENTATION ON THE CHURCH BY JOHN T. FORD

Topic: Dogmatic pronouncements.

A. *Areas for Discussion*

1. A dogmatic pronouncement emerges at a decisive point in the traditioning process as a way of attempting to "bridge" the human and the divine, as a way of communicating (i.e., not simply theorizing about) divine reality.

2. As an object of further reflection in the traditioning process, a dogmatic pronouncement may continue to offer new ways of presenting the divine; dogmatic pronouncements have an inherent openness in terms of the original text, the traditioning process, and the present interpreter.

3. Since it is impossible in advance to pre-determine either the route of development or the viability of transculturation, new ways of representing dogmatic pronouncements may range from authentic to spurious, from meaningful to meaningless.

4. Any personal appropriation of a dogmatic pronouncement, precisely because it claims to present the divine, implied a discretionary self-commitment on the part of the believer.

5. Any personal appropriation (or non-appropriation) of a dogmatic pronouncement reflects in some measure the assumptions of the particular Christian community to which a believer belongs.

6. Theological models and methods for interpreting dogmatic pronouncements must attempt to deal with the purported "bridging" of the human and divine; thus, an exclusive reliance on either critical-historical or fideistic-spiritual interpretive criteria fails to acknowledge dogmatic pronouncements as emanating from believers to believers.

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