

IX. CHURCH AS COMMUNION

THESIS:

(a) la Chiesa unita “con vincoli di intima comunione” (LG 13; 23); (b) la Chiesa di Cristo “sussiste” nella Chiesa cattolica (LG 8) ed il significato della parola “sussiste” per quanto riguarda la pienezza dei mezzi della salvezza (UR 3) e l’indefettibilità della Chiesa (UR 4); (c) la realtà ecclesiale delle Chiese e comunità ecclesiali non in piena comunione col successore di Pietro (LG 8, 15; UR 3, 13-23); (d) l’ecclesiologia di comunione come fondamento per l’impegno ecumenico della Chiesa (LG 13-15; UR 2-4).

Overview:

1. In Vatican II, there are two communion theories:

a. First Millenium Ecclesiology:

Church departs from centers of great power (Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome) and there is established a communion between them.

b. Second Millenium Ecclesiology:

Ecclesial universality centered in Rome and there is communion with Rome as principal factor.

2. In Vatican II there was also two views of communion within RCC:

a. Vatican I: juridical/hierarchical

b. Vatican II: Communion based upon ecclesial local community that forms the universal church with ties of communion.

How does one reconcile these two views?

I. The Church united “with bonds of intimate communion” (LG 13; 23).

Overview:

A. Ecclesial Communion: (Among Catholics)

Theological Communion + Juridical Communion

Acts 2:42: (Grace- faith & Sacraments) + (Structure)

B. Hierarchical Communion: (Between Churches)

Full Communion: all churches together with Rome

“Full ecclesial communion in the Catholic Church is a complex reality, involving the fullness of theological communion in grace, faith, and sacramental life (the offer of grace and the means of grace that admits of degrees) and juridical communion (that does not admit of degrees) with the pastors of the Catholic Church and fellowship with the Catholic Community.”

1. Lumen Gentium 13: (Section on People of God- “Theological Communion”)

“The Spirit is, for the Church and for each and every believer, the principle of their union and unity in the teaching of the apostles and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and prayer (Acts 2:42).

*All the faithful scattered throughout the world are in communion with each other **in the Holy Spirit...**”*

*“Finally, between all the various parts of the Church **there is a bond of close communion** whereby spiritual riches, apostolic workers and temporal resources are shared.”*

a. Chapter one spoke of the Church as a mystery and chapter two affirms the fact that the mystery of the Church also exists as a **people in history**. The Church is situated within the

context of **all** God's interventions in history. As such, the Church is by definition related to all Christians, all religions, all people.

b. Acts 2:42: LG 13 quotes this to cite the life of the early Church as a sign of its true catholicity. God wishes all to be his own.

1. **All people** are in communion with the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. The **Holy Spirit** is the interior principle who creates communion.
3. **Particular churches** form part of this communion.
4. **Rome** serves two functions:
 - a. universal communion in charity
 - b. Pope: to save legitimate diversity

c. LG #14: admits of **degrees** of communion even among Catholics: Full communion are those who are fully incorporated and share in the life of grace!

2. Lumen Gentium 1:

- a. Church: Sacrament of Communion** with God and all people.
- b. Sacrament:** sign/instrument of communion among God and all people.

3. Lumen Gentium 23: (Section on Hierarchy- "Juridical communion")

"Collegiate unity is also apparent in the mutual relations of each bishop to individual dioceses and with the universal Church. The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches which are constituted after the model of the universal Church; it is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists. And for that reason precisely each bishop represents his own Church, whereas all, together with the pope, represent the whole church in a bond of peace, love and unity."

"...they contribute efficaciously to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body which, from another point of view, is a corporate body of churches."

a. Two fundamental sources of union in the Church:

1. **Interior:** Holy Spirit as principle of communion (LG13)
2. **Exterior:** (LG 23)
 - a. Pope as visible sign of unity of the entire Church
 - b. Bishop: visible foundation of unity in particular church.

b. Insight of Vatican II: The local Church is fully the Church.

In the local Church and departing from them exists the universal church of Christ.

A. Koinonia in the New Testament

1. Usage in New Testament:

The term koinonia appears 19 times in the New Testament with diverse meanings:

- a. It can mean collection of money (Acts 11)
- b. participation
- c. communion

Essentially, it means sharing in common a bond of faith (spiritual goods) and love (material goods).

For John, it was a church united in apostolic faith and visible structure. Cf. 1 John 1,1-3: "Communion with us . . . and with God and the Son" -- horizontal and vertical.

2. Examples in the New Testament:

- a. Acts 2:42: reveals the three fundamental elements of communion are faith, sacraments and communal structure.
- b. 1 Cor. 1:9
- c. 1 Cor. 10:16: Eucharist and communion: Eucharist is seen as the communion of the Church. In other words, Eucharist is the church.
- d. Gal 2:9: “hand of communion”
- e. Phil 3:10: Communion is tied in sufferings with Christ. It is ultimately linked with the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- f. 1 Jn. 1:3-7: four uses of koinonia. Overall it shows that the effect of the preaching of believers is the creation of koinonia.

B. Communion in history (Y. Congar)

1. The First millenium: Church as Communion

The Life of the Church was under the sign of communion.

- a. The idea was “sister churches” and synod/council practices.
- b. The universal Church came from the communion of sister churches tied together.
 - 1. Signs of this schema still exist. For example, the ordination of bishops still reflects this insofar as the bishops of neighboring churches must be present.

2. Second Millenium: Church as Universal

a. After 1054 and due to Gregory VII (1070) and his reforms, liberty of churches were restricted under the Pope. The rise of canonical law occurred and defined the supreme power of the Pope.

b. Universal primacy was always accorded to Rome, even in the first millenium. However, the shift in focus now becomes towards a view of the church as universal.

3. Main point of Congar: Dialogue between these two models

Both models are important; one is not better than the other; need to keep both in dialogue. Both are present in each other as primary influence responsible.

C. Ecclesiology of Koinonia in the context of the emphases of Vatican II on the episcopate and the local church (Kasper)

1. Shift: Vatican II goes beyond the schema of Vatican I. In fact, it reverses Vatican I’s schema and influences by positing:

- a. Major concern: rights/reality of individual bishops
- b. Secondary concern: universal primacy of the Pope.

2. Definition of “Particular Church”:

Starting point is the diocese with its head termed an ordinary bishop. The accent on the bishop led to an accent on the reality of the particular church and finally an accent upon communion as the link between them.

3. Ordinary bishops: Primacy vs Legate

Ordinaries are not papal legates but a Vicar of Christ in his own diocese.

a. Thus, there are two vicars in the Church:

- 1. Pope: Vicar of the universal Church**
- 2. Bishop: Vicar for a particular Church**

In a sense, the Pope is a legate of the episcopal college.

D. Hierarchical Communion: “Nota Esplicativa Praevia #2”

This note explains LG 22, end of first paragraph.

1. This idea has two branches:

Membership in the Episcopal College necessitates both:

a. Episcopal Consecration: (“Charismatic” element)

In each bishop, there is the fullness of the presbyterial sacrament. Congar says that Vatican II uses the term “ordination” for episcopacy for the first time.

***Ordination gives ontological communion.**

b. Hierarchical Communion: (“Institutional” Element)

Communion of episcopate is hierarchical and includes the idea of sacramental fullness of priesthood. In other words, (“A canonical or juridical determination through hierarchical authority is required for such power ordered to action. . . It (communion) is not to be understood as some vague sort of goodwill, but as something **organic** which calls for a juridical structure as well as being enkindled by charity. That is: organic reality structured around the authority of the head of the communion- canonical mission)

***A union in juridical hierarchy is joined with union in communion.**

**Thus: there is an equality (ontological aspect)
and subordination (hierarchical aspect)**

Both are united in charity that allows communion.

2. Distinction between Ecclesial and Hierarchical Communion:

a. Ecclesial Communion: has Christ as source and center, exists between the local churches and Rome and also between the local churches themselves and is as such expressed in Eucharist concelebration.

b. Hierarchical Communion: *Constitutes ecclesiastical Communion or Catholic communion in general.

3. 1992 CDF Statement: The Church as Communion:

There is the danger of confusing Communion with the unity of local churches that could possibly exist independently. From the beginning the Church has had its universal unity. No individual Church has ever had a sense of being sufficient alone. When that universal Communion is lacking, something essential is lacking in the local Church.

E. Communion as a Eucharistic Ecclesiology

To understand the ecclesiology of Vatican II, we cannot forget the theology prior to Vatican I.

1. Mystici Corporis (1943) Pius XII:

a. Church as Mystical Body of Christ:

1. Ratzinger ties this notion strongly with that of communion.

(a) RCC finds it hard to accept MC because it had wanted to emphasize only the visibility of the Church against the Protestants. Thus we can see continuity between: Trent: Church as society vs. Pius XII: Church as Mystical Body

(b) MC leads us to the idea of Church as communion that participates in the life of God and our own lives.

Eucharist: is the sign of communion with the life of God.

2. So for Ratzinger the the Church is born not at Pentecost but at the Last Supper.

II. The Church of Christ “subsist” in the Catholic Church (LG 8) and the significance of the word “subsist” regarding the fullness of the means of salvation (UR 3) and the indefectibility of the Church (UR 4)

NB: Church of Creed = Church of Christ

A. The story of the redaction in *Lumen Gentium* of the word “is” and “subsist in “

1. “Est” idea roots *Mystici Corporis*. It implies a **strict identity** between the RCC and the Church of Christ (1943). In 1950, Pius XII repeats this idea in *Humani Generis*.

2. **Vatican II:** In redaction, the word *est* was changed to “**subsists in**”.

a. **Motive: Recognition that there are elements that exist outside the RCC that are not simply worthless.** For example, the Eucharist in the Orthodox Church is valid.

b. **Dilemma:** How is the RCC identical with the Church of Christ while such elements also exist? If such an exclusive identification exists between the RCC and the Church of Christ, then how is the Orthodox Church a church at all? How are there saints outside the RCC?

c. “**Subsist In**” becomes the answer

3. Redaction was done in three stages:

a. **Preparatory Schema (1960):** guided by Ottaviani and written by Tromp, chief collaborator for *Mystici Corporis*, continued notion of “*est*.”

b. **First Revision (1963):** continued to assert *est* but added **significant admission** that “many elements of sanctification can be found outside its total structure” and that these belong “properly to the Church of Christ.” Problem: how reconcile these two?

c. **Lumen Gentium: (1964) “Subsists in”**

B. The significance of “subsists”

1. Meaning of the term “subsist in”

a. **LG 8: Not exclusive identification** between the RCC and the Church of Christ. There are values that exist outside the RCC. (*“This Church, constituted and organized 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 truth are found outside its visible confines. Since these gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity.”*)

b. **UR 3: Only in the RCC (particular and special in RCC) are the fullness of means of salvation present.** (*“Moreover, some, even many, of the most significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church : the written Word of God, the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to him, belong by right to the one Church of Christ. For it is thru Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.”*)

c. **UR 4: The RCC is indefectible and the means of salvation cannot be lost in the RCC.** (*“The results will be that, little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and holy Church, which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.”*)

2. Three basic meanings to the term “subsists in”: (Sullivan)

a. Nature of Church of Christ:

Not a Platonic ideal but historical Church of the NT, entrusted to Peter by Jesus.

b. How does CC subsist in RCC?

1. Negative: No exclusive identification between the RCC and the Church of Christ.

2. Positive: The Church of Christ is present in the RCC with two aspects:

a. Fullness not found elsewhere

b. Indefectability is not found elsewhere.

“It means that the Church of Christ has continued and will continue to exist until the end of time with all its inalienable properties and with all the means of salvation with which Christ endowed it and it is precisely in the Catholic Church that it so continues to exist.”

NB: -with fullness of unity of CC -- with all its 4 inalienable properties intact -- with all the means of salvation intact --with an “authentic” magisterium intact.

C. Continuity with Pius XII’s *Mystici Corporis*, 1943 and *Humani Generis*, 1950?

Is the above contrary with *Mystici Corporis*? Yes. Yet, in a sense, it is a deepening of the idea behind *Mystici Corporis* because the foundation of Pius’ encyclical is the realization of the mystical foundation of the Church with its spiritual elements. Pius XII wanted to overcome the limited view that focused only on the visibility of the Church, a view that had predominated since the Reformation. If the life of grace is the center of the life of the Church, on seeing signs of grace outside the visible bounds of the Church, we are led to the *subsistit in*.

III. The ecclesial reality of the churches and the ecclesial communities not in full communion with the successor of Peter (LG 8, 15; UR 3, 13-23)

A. Ecclesial Elements (*vestigis, reliquiae*) (LG 8, 15)

1. Origin of the term: The term is first used by Calvin for the RCC. We recognize it now for Protestants.

2. Examples: (LG 15; UR 3)

a. Faith in Jesus Christ

b. Faith in the Trinity

c. Faith in New Testament as Sacred Scripture

d. Faith in the life of grace

e. reality of Baptism

f. Orthodox Eucharist

g. Devotion to Mary

LG 15: “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.”

3. Sullivan’s point: The Vatican II **does not simply affirm the existence of such elements** but also affirms the **ecclesial nature** of both the churches and communion separated from the RCC.

B. The Holy Spirit “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 (UR 3).

1. These churches can be “instruments of salvation” from the same fullness that exists fully in the RCC. The point here is that these communities are more than places that have ecclesial elements. Rather, they are communities that are **instruments of salvation**. (For example, the Baptist Church has something to do with baptism)

2. **UR 22:** There is a link between the Eucharist and ecclesial communities.

C. “Church” and “Ecclesial Communities” (UR 13-23)

1. Difference in meaning:

a. **Church:** is a community that possesses the real Eucharist. The Orthodox are always called churches.

b. **Ecclesial Communities:** are communities that do not have a valid priesthood and cannot celebrate the real Eucharist. (UR22). However, their ecclesial character is affirmed in their title.

2. Structure of UR 13-23 (Chapter III of document)

a. Special Position of the Eastern Churches (14-18)

1. As Churches, possess valid sacraments, esp. a valid Eucharist and priesthood. Some worship in common is possible (15).

2. Recognition of their right to self-governance (16).

3. Theologies are complimentary and not in conflict (17).

b. Separated Churches and Ecclesial Communities of West

1. Baptism constitutes the sacramental bond of unity that exists among all those who through it are reborn. Their celebrations of the Eucharist, although not valid, are for them understood as signifying life in communion with Christ and await his coming in glory. That is significant (22).

3. Is the CC present in these churches and communions?

Yes, in an imperfect way, esp. since their ecclesial nature has been accepted. To use the term “subsists” is fraught with danger.

IV. The ecclesiology of communion as foundation for the ecumenical task of the Church (LG 13-15; UR 2-4)

A. Ecclesiology of communion and the ecumenical movement

1. Shift:

a. **Ecumenism of return** (Prior to Vatican II): The problem here sees the situation as black/white alone.

b. **Vatican II: we must all return to Communal Perfection (UR 4)**

a. we do not start with zero; we have alot in common esp. with elements.

Thus: ecumenism is that process in which we remove obstacles to the perfect communion that will allow us to share the Eucharist.

B. Story of Ecumenism

1. It is a story of many dimensions:

World Council of Churches:

a. Evangelization: (1910): Edinburgh

Division seemed to be a scandal in the missions.

b. Social: Justice (1925)- Stockholm

c. Theology/Structure (1927)- Losanna

Commission of Faith and Constitution

C. Catholic Principles for ecumenism (UR chapter 1: 2-4)

Principles articulated in 5 points:

A. LG 13-15:

a. Mystery of Church's unity: "dynamic communion of faith and sacraments, visible and invisible, realized fully in the RCC with the Pope and Bishops.

1. Holy Spirit as principle of Church's unity.

2. It is under the Apostles' and their successors that Christ wishes his people to increase.

3. Trinity: Highest exemplar and source of the mystery of the Church's unity.

b. Ecclesial realities and salvific efficacy of other Christian communities are affirmed (LG 15; UR 3).

B. UR 2-4:

c. Real and imperfect communion exists with the RCC through Baptism. Efficacy of their salvific presence is due to participation/relation with the fullness of such in the RCC (UR 3) that are indefectable (UR 4).

d. Establishment of full communion is not, therefore, a return to the RCC but a mutual return to the Communal Perfection (UR 4).

Starting point: For Catholics to do what is necessary for renewal in the Church itself.

e. Practical Issues:

1. avoid rash and untrue judgements about others

2. dialogue between experts

3. actions for common good of man can be fostered

4. common prayer

5. self-renewal and reform.

D. The many dimensions of the ecumenical task: spiritual, theological, social, pastoral; according to 1993 *Directory*, to push *communicatio in sacris* would be to deny the work that remains to be done.

E. Communion as faith-sacraments-service

Sullivan's point: Universal Church of Christ can be seen as a communion, at various levels of fullness, of bodies that are more or less fully churches.

F. *Ut Unum Sint* (1995): I. Principles and praxis; II. Relations with others; III. WHAT'S LEFT TO DO!