

9.1.80
10.30 p.m.

ARCIC 217/4/5

(To follow Sub-Commission B's para 6: '...this koinonia is never entirely destroyed.')

A eucharistic community

7. It is essential for the community to assemble so that its identity may be realised; the community needs to be gathered. The basic unit of the Church is therefore the local community, especially when it is gathered in the celebration of the Eucharist in which Christ fulfils his promise of presence when two or three come together in his name (Mt. 18.20). The Church is therefore a sacramental community in the sense that it continues to embody God's promise of salvation in Christ. In the sacramental order the realities of faith become present in visible and tangible signs. The original sacramental sign is Christ himself, for in his person the divine saving action was completely manifested in history. Through his body the Church, he continues to be the sign of salvation for those who have not seen but believe (cf. Jn.20.29). The Church therefore is itself the fundamental sacrament. It exercises its sacramental activity through the sign given by the Christian lives of its members as well as by its liturgical sacramental celebration, especially in baptism and the Eucharist. The notion of memorial (anamnesis) helps to clarify the sacramental nature of the Church; for the liturgy, above all the eucharistic celebration, is the memorial of God's saving work in Christ's life, death and resurrection, and in it these past events of salvation become effective in the present through the action of the Holy Spirit.

The Eucharist is therefore central in the Church's life. In it the community is knit together as one body in Christ. In it Christ through the Holy Spirit builds up the life of the Church, strengthens its fellowship and furthers its mission. In it the Church's members give liturgical expression to the

priestly sacrifice of their Christian lives, entering into the movement of Christ's self-offering and identifying themselves with it. The Eucharist actualizes the Church.

A reconciled and reconciling community

8. The gift of fellowship is made to human beings who are divided from God and from one another by sin. The Church is therefore the community of human beings in Christ within which God's Spirit dwells, creating in it a fellowship based on reconciliation for the glory of God and the salvation of men. Its mission and its good news are for all men of all ages in all situations; it proclaims not an escape from life but the means of bringing every aspect of life under the authority of God's word and his transforming grace. It does not exist only for the sanctification of its own members. It is a missionary Church that seeks to attract those who are not yet its members into its fellowship. It is a servant Church whose members live a common life of loving service of one another and of all men. It is therefore the instrument of God's reconciling purpose in Christ.

A community of faith

9. The fellowship by which the Church is called to live and which it exists to serve rests on faith in the Good News concerning Christ. This faith is founded on the authority of God's Word, which was revealed in Jesus Christ, witnessed and preached by the apostles and recorded in the scriptures, which provide the norm to which the Church must continually refer its teaching and practice. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of these scriptures and guided the Church to accept them as foundation documents, continues to enlighten the Church so as to produce a common mind in determining how they should be interpreted and obeyed.

History and the eschaton

10. Accordingly the Church needs to make new expressions of faith for the needs of men of each place, time and situation. It is therefore a developing Church according to Newman's principle that life implies growth. This is true not only of the Church's statements of belief, but also of its forms of ministry and worship. It is a false and unnecessary apologetic which attempts to prove that all important features of church life were present from the very beginning. Such features as the canon of scripture and the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, as well as certain formulations of faith, were achieved only after decades and even centuries of deliberation and development. Some of these developments (such as the canon of scripture) have become permanent endowments of the Church. Whether all other developments (such as the threefold ministry) which are considered indispensable to our two communions now, are of similar permanence, or may later be superseded by a further development, or could be allowed to exist side by side with other patterns of church order, is an issue which the Commission did not feel called upon to examine, even though the question will have to be discussed by those responsible for relations between episcopal and non-episcopal churches.

The universal Church embraces the Church in glory as well as the Church militant here below. The Church in this world is in a state of growth. It exists now in the intermediate period when Christ's triumph, which has already been achieved in the resurrection, has not yet been fully realised in the history of the Church. It exists to promote the full coming of the Kingdom for which all Christians pray in the Lord's Prayer. The Church is, however, not only the instrument and the guarantee of the final coming of the

Kingdom; it is already the anticipation of that Kingdom. This is especially true of the celebration of the Eucharist, in which the Church receives a foretaste of the joys of the Kingdom to come, and looks forward to Christ's final appearing in the fulness of the Kingdom. By the transforming action of the Holy Spirit, earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine, the eschatological banquet for the new man: elements of the new creation become pledges and first fruits of the new heaven and the new earth.

Appendix

We have understood by 'local church' the unity of local communities under one bishop. The eucharist is the action in which the unity of the people of God in a given place is actualised. But the local churches are not autonomous communities free to go about their business without the least regard for their sister churches. They need to take counsel in synod. The solidarity of a local church with other local churches is signified when the bishops of the province gather to consecrate. In each local church all the elements of the universal church are found. But independence is limited by the mutual care that local churches have for each other or by leadership given by churches of acknowledged authority and standing. The synod implies restriction on what an individual bishop or local church may do. The ancient Church found in churches of apostolic foundation (in the west in the city where St. Peter and St. Paul taught and died) a touchstone of authentic communion in the world-wide catholica.

A council needs a president to act effectively, as he in turn needs the judgement of his synod. If the primate of the universal world-wide church here on earth is to be the bond of unity that God intends among the many local churches, that will be above all because the local churches in eucharistic communion with one another are able to look not only to their regional primate or to patriarchal authority but also to a bishop whose burden it is, at times of need and crisis, to speak to and for the whole Church of east and west.