

Proposed revision of ARCIC 204 III, commentary on Venice 24(b)

A divine institution, its means that it is part of the will of God for this Church

While koinonia will be expressed at the local level, it should also be fulfilled at the universal level if the church is to be fully as God intends. That is why it is asserted that the will of God for his church includes such a ministry of unity as the one borne by a universal primate. If this office is willed by God then it may rightly be described in western theological language as Jure divino (by divine right). This term was used of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome by Vatican I. The term has various meanings in various contexts, but the meaning intended by Vatican I could be equally well expressed by saying that this primacy is of divine institution. This description did not imply that the universal primate is a source of the Church as if Christ's salvation had to be channelled through him. Rather he was to be the focus of the full koinonia God wills for the Church and an instrument through which unity in diversity is realised. It is a universal primate thus envisaged within the collegiality of the bishops and the koinonia of the whole Church to whom the qualification jure divino can be applied.

The claim that a universal primacy is willed by God does not imply that, if a Christian community is not in communion with the see of Rome, it does not belong to the church of God. For instance it is important to note that, in spite of the division concerning the primacy, the Roman Catholic Church has continued to recognise the Orthodox truly as churches. It should also be realised that Vatican II rejected the extreme statement that the church of God was identical with the churches united with the Bishop of Rome and was exclusively embodied in them. The conciliar statements of Vatican II imply that other communions do not necessarily suffer from any defect except that of not being in communion with the Roman Catholic Church: ^{that is to say, one thing} that these communions lack is that they do not belong to this visible manifestation of Christian Communion.- the unity in truth and love of all Christian communions, which must express itself visibly if it is to be fully realised, both glorifies God and promotes the recognition by the world of the Lordship of Christ among and through his people. The Church exists for the glory of God and a disunited church contradicts this vocation - that is why a universal primacy is needed.