

# Interchurch Families

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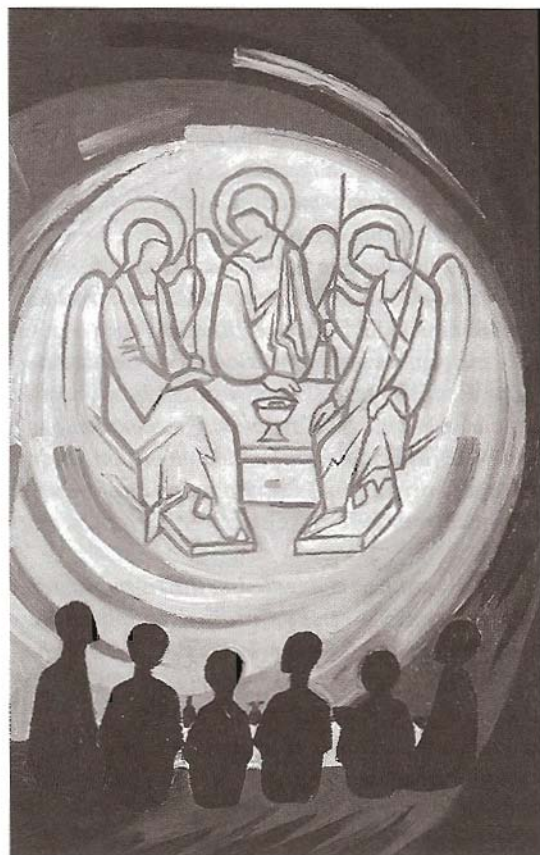
SUMMER 2000

## Unity by stages

In her John Coventry Memorial Lecture (see pp.10-13) Dr Mary Tanner shows how there has been a failure, in Anglican-Roman Catholic relationships, to keep advances in theological convergence and practical steps forward in line with one another. The Malta Report of 1968 envisaged unity by stages, each stage being entered into on the basis of *agreements in faith* which would form the foundation for *mutual recognition from the highest authorities* and lead to a *binding commitment to live closely together in many practical ways*. Now that so much agreement in faith has been achieved, we must re-capture the vision of Malta, and church leaders need to move into *mutual recognition and a binding commitment to live together in practical ways*.

Anglican-Roman Catholic couples, who have made such a binding commitment to live together, will echo the hope that the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church will **clearly and intentionally enter into a new stage of relationship**. It will not solve all our problems. Any binding commitments entered into by human beings are fragile, and need to be kept in constant repair. We know that from our own experience of marriage. Progress will still be slow. No magic wand can settle questions of eucharistic sharing nor the problems faced by young people growing up in interchurch families (see pp.8-9), however urgent they seem to us. But a public commitment on the way to full visible unity is immensely important, provided it really leads to *living together in practical ways*. **Re-commitments, like wedding anniversaries, are important in marking milestones and as occasions for celebration.**

Before they set off for the meeting of Catholic Presidents and Anglican Primates in Toronto in May, the English Association of Interchurch Families wrote to the Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster, two of our Presidents, to assure them of our prayers for the Toronto meeting. We wrote:



"As grass-roots practitioners in the field of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, we rejoice in this world level meeting. We do not know whether the subject of mixed marriages will be on the agenda of the Toronto meeting, as was suggested in *The Times* in February 1999; but we assure you of our deep desire both to be supported by our churches in our vocation as partners and parents, and also to offer to our churches what we can from our experience of living together in one family."

"Our Free Church members join in the prayers of Anglicans and Roman Catholics, since progress towards unity between two traditions is progress for all. We join you in the prayer of Christ our Lord that all his disciples may be one, as he is in the Father and the Father in him, that the world may believe."

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# A Tribute to Johannes Cardinal Willebrands

Last year a double number of the Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity celebrated the ecumenical work of Cardinal Jan Willebrands, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday.

The 140-page volume starts by recalling how, as a young priest and seminary professor who had studied the thought of John Henry Newman for his doctoral thesis, he became interested in ecumenical questions. He was President of the St Willibrord Association for ecumenical work in the Netherlands in 1946, and with a colleague organized the "Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions" and acted as its secretary (1952-1963). By bringing together in an international framework Catholic theologians interested in ecumenism, and maintaining informal contacts with the World Council of Churches, this Conference helped to pave the way for the ecumenical work of the Second Vatican Council. When in June 1960 Pope John XXIII set up the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) he appointed Jan Willebrands its Secretary, under the presidency of Cardinal Bea. In 1969 Pope Paul VI named him President in succession to Cardinal Bea, and created him Cardinal. He remained President of the SPCU (later the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity) until 1989. He was also Archbishop of Utrecht from 1975-1983.

Most of the celebratory volume is devoted to the re-publication of a number of the addresses given by Cardinal Willebrands, particularly during the time that he served as President of the PCPCU, 1969-1989. Collecting them together in this way helps to show the tremendous impact he had both in developing relationships with other churches and in putting theology at the service of ecumenism.

## **A tribute from interchurch families**

From the point of view of interchurch families, however, one important address is missing from the collection. We reprint it here, as our own tribute both to the ecumenical work of Cardinal Willebrands and also to his pastoral concern for the welfare of those who share the sacraments of baptism and marriage. It is the intervention the Cardinal made to the Synod of Bishops that met in Rome in the autumn of 1980 to consider questions related to Marriage and Family Life. From the point of view of an ecumenist, he was offering what he could to a Synod whose focus was to study and strengthen marriage and family life in the Catholic Church.

It is in the case of mixed marriages between baptized Christians that concern to promote Christian unity meets up with concern to strengthen marriage and family life. The Cardinal weaves the two themes together. The union of two Christians who have been baptized in different churches is a true sacrament and gives rise to a "domestic church". (Not all mixed marriages live the ideal, says the Cardinal – but nor do all marriages between Catholics.) It is the Synod's pastoral duty to address them with a gospel message that will give them new heart and new hope.



A mixed marriage can do much to further the unity of Christians. A good way for the churches to give common witness on behalf of Christian marriage is through the pastoral care, wherever possible the joint pastoral care, of mixed marriages.

## **Eucharistic sharing**

These are important points that still need to be heard. Here, however, we would like to single out another one for further comment. The Cardinal's address to the Synod marks a turning-point in the long effort to obtain official recognition by the Catholic Church of the spiritual need of interchurch families to share communion together. It is therefore of great historical importance for such families, as well as for all who are concerned with the question of sharing communion.

The first international conference of English-speaking interchurch families was held in May 1980 in the English Lake District. It brought together representatives of the English Association of Interchurch Families, the AIF in the Irish Republic and the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association. An interchurch couple from Australia was also there. By coming together at the international level, interchurch families found that many of the problems that faced them were similar in all countries, and they felt that together they had found a voice at international level. They agreed that they would send a letter to the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, since it was due to deal with the subject of Marriage and Family Life. One section concerned the question of eucharistic sharing for interchurch families:

Our Associations ask for an explicit statement from the Roman Catholic authorities that the serious spiritual needs of interchurch couples and families constitutes a situation different from that of an individual's separation from the ministry of his own church, but nevertheless laying a claim on the pastoral responsibility of bishops.

One of the conditions which had to be fulfilled, at that time, by a Christian of another tradition who desired to receive communion in the Catholic Church was that he "be unable for a prolonged period to have recourse to a minister of his own Church". The "for a prolonged period" had been added to the condition in 1973, apparently directed against the applications by the Bishop of Strasbourg and the Bishop of Wisconsin of the rules on eucharistic sharing to interchurch families. It was the one condition that could not usually be fulfilled by interchurch families who deeply desired to share communion. Cardinal Willebrands dealt with it in a masterly

way in his intervention to the Synod, when he commented on the "fourth condition".

Three years later, when the revised Code of Canon Law was published in 1983, the phrase "for a prolonged period" had been dropped from this condition. The omission of this phrase was crucial for interchurch families. Once it had gone, they could in some cases fulfil all the canonical requirements for admission. One partner cannot have recourse to another minister, when the two are at the eucharist together, since the need of the couple is to receive communion together as a couple. The Code had opened the way for the identification of those who share the sacraments of baptism and marriage as in possible need of eucharistic sharing "in individual cases and after due examination", as the Cardinal put it in 1980. This identification of the need of the couple who share baptism and marriage was explicitly made at world level by the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism ten years later, in 1993.

We re-print below the text of Cardinal Willebrand's intervention, therefore, in gratitude for all that he did for mixed marriages between baptised Christians. It was originally printed in the AIF Newsletter of Spring 1981. He addressed the assembled bishops as follows:

## MIXED MARRIAGES AND THEIR CHRISTIAN FAMILIES

The *Instrumentum Laboris* rightly draws attention to the need for a sincere dialogue with Christian families themselves (n.90). Among Christian families there are many which are joined in what we usually call mixed marriages. This is why it is necessary for the Synod also to bear in mind another dialogue, namely the theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and other Christian Churches and ecclesial Communities.

### Bilateral dialogues on marriage

Two Joint Commissions - one with the Anglican Communion, the other with the Lutheran and Reformed Churches - have dealt with the Theology of Marriage and the Problems of Mixed Marriages. Both Commissions have prepared reports. From these it is clear that these Churches are already in agreement with us on many elements of the fundamental doctrine concerning marriage and the Christian family:

(a) In particular it is clear that, although these Churches do not call matrimony a sacrament of the New Law, they do acknowledge it to be a sacred reality, a state instituted by the Creator and renewed in Christ as a mystery of the new covenant in Christ with the Church; indeed they admit that it is promised a special grace by Christ. They certainly do not regard matrimony as a merely civil matter.

(b) It is also clear that they admit the principle of indissolubility, as taught by Christ our Lord, even though their practice in difficult cases, especially regarding divorce, is very different from ours.

The Orthodox Churches are in total agreement with us about the sacramentality and indissolubility of marriage, although, for different reasons, they admit in certain circumstances the

possibility of divorce and so of a new marriage.

Furthermore it is clear from our dialogues that the social and moral problems that beset the Christian family today are felt equally by all Christian Churches and Communities. The Synod should be able to speak of these problems in such a way as will make it easier for other Christians to join their voices with ours to give a common witness to these values which are so endangered today.

## Mixed marriages between baptized Christians



It is in light of all this that we should give careful attention to mixed marriages (the more so since such marriages are explicitly treated of in only one paragraph, n.90, of the *Instrumentum Laboris*). I am speaking of the marriage of a Catholic with a baptised member of another Church or ecclesial community, and particular of those mixed marriages in which each partner is professing and living the Christian faith in such a way that both are striving to foster "the unity of their

conjugal and family life, a unity which ... is based on their baptism too" (*Matr. Mixta*, n.14). We know that not every mixed marriage attains to this "ideal" (and we must admit with sorrow that this has to be said of many marriages between Catholics too). It is hoped that this Synod will not content itself with stating the well-known difficulties involved in mixed marriages, but that it will fulfil its pastoral duty in a positive way by addressing to them an evangelical message that will give them new heart and new hope.

We have already seen that the number of mixed marriages is very large. Throughout the world one in every twelve of the marriages solemnised in the Catholic Church is celebrated with a dispensation either from the impediment of mixed religion or from that of disparity of cult. In many countries and dioceses at least one in two marriages of Catholics are with a baptised member of another Church or ecclesial Community.

### A true sacrament and a "domestic church"

The Church teaches that every valid marriage between baptised persons is a true sacrament which gives rise to "a certain communion of spiritual benefits" (*Matr. Mixta*, *Proem.*). The difference between such marriage and one with a non-baptised person is far from being a merely juridical one; it rests upon a fundamental truth of Catholic doctrine concerning baptism. So it is that the *Instrumentum Laboris* especially in its doctrinal section, can speak primarily of the Christian family and has only more rarely to restrict its teaching to the Catholic Christian family. Therefore it can be said of the marriage of two Christians who have been baptised in different Churches, as it is of a marriage between two Catholics, that their union is a true sacrament and gives rise to a "domestic church"; that the partners are called to a unity which reflects the union of Christ with the Church; that the family, as a family, is bound to bear witness before the world, a witness based on that "spiritual union ... which is founded on a common faith and hope, and works through love". Thus "the family itself, as a little church, is somehow called, in a similar way to the Church itself, to become a sign of unity for the world" (*Instr. Lab.* 85).

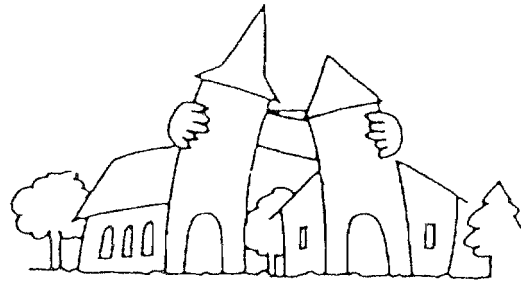
There are many foundations for such witness. The partners are one in believing marriage to be holy in Christ and in the Church, and therefore indissoluble; in their family life they profess the value of the Christian virtues. Both partners have rights, and duties regarding the religious education of their children, as Pope Paul VI reminded us in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* when he said: “Families resulting from a mixed marriage also have the duty of proclaiming Christ to the children in the fullness of the consequences of a common baptism; they have moreover the difficult task of becoming *builders of unity* (*Ev. Nunt.*, 71). The family is also called to help their neighbours in their need, and to do so for Christian motives. Their family life should be nourished by truly Christian prayer, by meditation on the Word of God, by a spirituality which runs through their whole family life.

### Admission to eucharistic communion

Such spiritual communion, an outstanding feature in many mixed families too, eventually affects even sacramental life and prompts the partners to ask permission to approach the Holy Eucharist together. For this is a moment at which they keenly feel their division, and also feel keenly their need for the spiritual nourishment that is the Eucharist. In the dialogue with other Churches and ecclesial Communities we have spoken of doctrine about the Eucharist and the Church, and of the relationship between the mystery of the Eucharist and that of the Church. This dialogue is not yet complete, but the differences seem to be less, particularly between Catholics and Anglicans. Christian life in marriage and in the education of children can lead towards unity. Therefore I wish to ask whether the time has now come to study afresh the possibility of admitting the non-Catholic partners in mixed marriages to Eucharistic Communion in the Catholic Church, obviously in individual cases and after due examination.

The Catholic Church, in the Instruction of June 1972, has already recognised the possibility of such admission as long as a number of conditions are fulfilled: it is required that the non-Catholic Christian should profess a eucharistic faith in conformity with that of the Catholic Church; that he should ask for Communion of his own accord; and that he should experience a real need for this sacrament. This need is described in the following terms: “A need for an increase in spiritual life and a need for a deeper involvement into the mystery of the Church *and of its unity*” (IV, 2; AAS LXIV 523a). It seems to me that these conditions are often fulfilled in mixed marriages. But there is a fourth condition: it is required that the non-Catholic Christian be unable for a prolonged period to have recourse to a minister of his own Church. To my mind this condition is less closely connected with eucharistic doctrine and faith.

Such a study will also need to study the pressures for “reciprocity” (that is, allowing the Catholic partner to approach the Eucharist of another Church): the Catholic Church cannot grant such reciprocity in the case of those Churches which we believe, “especially because of the lack (*defectus*) of the sacrament of Orders, have not preserved the genuine and total reality of the Eucharistic mystery” (*Unit. Red.*, 22). This is a serious difficulty, but it should not prevent the undertaking of this study.



### Mixed marriages and Christian unity

Between the Catholic Church and other Churches the degrees of communion vary. The Orthodox Churches “are joined to us in a very close relationship” (*Matr. Mixta, Proem.*) and this “almost total communion” had found initial expression in the legislation of the Decree *Crescens Matrimoniorum*. The Churches that take their origin from the Reformation are established in a real, though not perfect, communion with the Catholic Church (cf. *Unit. Red.*, 3). This communion should find expression in our pastoral practice regarding family life. The Catholic Church cannot acknowledge mixed marriages to be the *ordinary* means for the restoration of unity among Christians (*Instr. Lab.*, 90), but it should show a real “solicitude” for mixed families. For a mixed marriage that is inspired by a Christian spirit can do much to further the unity of Christians.

Over and above the witness given by families themselves, we should also consider the common witness that Christian Churches and Communities should give on behalf of Christian marriage and the Christian family. As I have already said, our dialogue has shown some convergences in doctrine; and, despite serious differences on some moral issues, on others there is no disagreement between us. The way is thus open to a common witness on behalf of Christian marriage, a witness already called for by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury in their Common Declaration of 1977 (AAS LXIX 287-8).

An important way of giving such witness is through the pastoral care, wherever possible the *joint* pastoral care, of mixed marriages. This has been widely accepted in principle (a principle stated in norm 14 of *Matrimonia Mixta*), but much remains to be done to put this principle into practice, particularly as regards preparation for marriage and also the provision of proper help in the first years of family life. It is to be hoped that this Synod will urge priests to take this duty very seriously and to seek suitable collaboration with ministers of other Churches. Above all, the parish communities from which mixed marriage partners come can give them enormous help in strengthening their family unity and in making their own contribution to the life and unity of the Church. Pastoral care, skilfully given, can help to allay the unnecessary suspicions and friction which can arise in this connection.

Finally, you will note that the words “unio” and “communio” occur on almost every page of our *Instrumentum Laboris*. As is obvious, these refer first and foremost to the unity of the family itself. But when we find these words in the context of mixed marriages we may also see a reference to the overall quest for Christian unity. “The family can respond to the desire of the Lord *that they may be one*” (*Instr. Lab.*, 52).



# The new Southern African Guidelines for Eucharistic Sharing

In January 1998 the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a Directory on Ecumenism for Southern Africa. We printed the text of the sixth section, "Sharing Sacramental Celebrations", and of the seventh, "Interchurch Marriages", together with other points of interest to interchurch families (on baptism and burials) in *Interchurch Families* vol.6, no.2, Summer 1998, pp.6-7.

The section on sharing sacramental celebrations came under close scrutiny following objections from Catholics in the United States when President Clinton was admitted to communion at a mass he attended in Soweto. An unfortunate impression was given that the Southern African Directory had simply said that eucharistic sharing was permissible at ecumenical events, which it certainly had not. However, the matter rapidly escalated into a controversy over the Directory. At the Interchurch Families World Gathering in Geneva in the summer of 1998 Bishop Duprey explained that the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity had been drawn into it, and was suggesting to the Southern African Bishops some small points where they might clarify their guidelines. In January 2000 the Bishops' Conference published a revised Directory. We give here a comparison between the Directory of January 1998 and that issued in January 2000.

## Re-organisation of Sections 6 and 7

The most obvious change is a re-organisation of the material. The original Section 6 on sacramental sharing was interspersed with references to spouses in a mixed marriage (those "bound to each other as they are by the sacraments of baptism and matrimony"). In the second version of the Directory these references have been removed, and transferred (with some changes) to a much longer Section 7 on Interchurch Marriages. (It looks as though the intention was to put everything related to interchurch marriages into Section 7, although this is not quite consistent: the references to baptisms and burials in interchurch families remain where they were in Sections 4 and 5. There is an oddity in the new Section 7.12 which says that "special consideration should be given to spouses in an interchurch marriage who may wish to approach these sacraments together". This is incomprehensible unless the reader refers back to 6.5.2 of the earlier Directory and sees that "these sacraments" refers to the sacrament of the sick and of penance.)

Sections 1 to 5 remain almost unchanged. There is an additional reference to the 1993 Ecumenical Directory from Rome in Section 3, and an explanation in Section 4 that "the Catholic Church understands itself as having deeper bonds of faith and sacramental structures with the Orthodox Church than with Christian communities issuing from the Reformation". Following this explanation, however, the Southern African Bishops repeat their encouragement of theological reflection on how far the distinction should be kept between Eastern Orthodox Christians who are able to be *official sponsors* at a celebration of baptism, and other

Christians who are allowed to act as *witnesses*. A reference to "diocesan norms" has been added to the section on burials. However, Sections 6 and 7 are reorganised, considerably longer, and contain far more direct quotations and explanations taken from the 1993 Ecumenical Directory. These quotations can often be understood as backing up what the Southern African Bishops said in their earlier guidelines.

## Section 6 on Sacramental Sharing

There is no change of substance in the revised version of these sections of the Southern African Directory. However, the language is much more careful. It sticks more closely to that of the 1993 Directory; for example, the word "advisable" is no longer applied to eucharistic sharing, and this becomes "commendable" in certain circumstances (6.3.2). "Commend" is the word used in the Decree on Ecumenism (n.8) and in the 1993 Directory (130). "When such sharing is justified" becomes "when a grave and pressing need justifies such sharing" (6.3.6). Situations of "grave and pressing need" are referred to in the code (c 844.4) and the Directory (130).

There appears to have been a great effort to bring all that the Bishops want to say more explicitly within the conceptual framework of the 1993 Directory. The 1998 Southern African Directory could be misunderstood as saying that the Catholic Bishops regarded interchurch marriages and special events as creating ipso facto situations in which eucharistic hospitality could be extended to other Christians. The Bishops were actually trying to make the point that those situations were the sort of ones in which a serious spiritual need could arise. This has become much clearer in the second version. For example, "a special need can be said to exist on occasions when Christians from other churches attend a eucharistic celebration for a special feast or event" has become: "a grave and pressing spiritual need can very well arise for a Christian from another church or ecclesial community when attending a eucharistic celebration for a special feast or event" (6.5.3).

This stress on the spiritual need of the individual is matched by a stress on the eucharistic faith of the individual. The 1998 Directory refers to the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission's agreement on the eucharist; because of this "members of the Anglican Communion may be presumed to share the essentials of eucharistic faith with us". There is a reference to ecumenical agreements in the second version of the Directory, but "in the final analysis what is required is that the individual requesting admission to the eucharist must personally manifest Catholic faith in the sacrament" (6.3.8).

Where reciprocity is concerned, the second version of the Directory contents itself with repeating the statement that Catholics can receive the eucharist only "from a minister in whose church the sacrament is valid or from one who is known to be validly ordained according to the Catholic teaching on ordination." The statement that, "as regards the churches arising out of the divisions that occurred in the West at the time of the Reformation, the matter, from a Catholic perspective, is not so clear", has been dropped (6.5.5).

## Section 7 on Interchurch Marriages

We give below the Recommendations of this section; they incorporate material on eucharistic sharing in interchurch families which was previously in Section 6 (7.13 is based on

6.5.3.2 of the earlier version). In the second version they are preceded by lengthy quotations from the 1993 Ecumenical Directory (143-148, and 159-160), which were not given before.

There is no change of substance, but what was explicit in the earlier version has become implicit. There are two particular changes to note. First, in the earlier version it is stated that “both [spouses] may experience a real need to express that unity by receiving Holy Communion whenever they attend Mass together.” This has become “a spouse in such a marriage could well experience a serious spiritual need to receive holy communion on occasions when he or she accompanies the family to a Catholic Mass”. Thus, the *need of the couple* has become *the need of one spouse* (the other Christian); this is in line with canon law, which sees exceptional eucharistic sharing as a pastoral response to the need of individuals (cut off from their own ministers). The 1993 Directory identifies those “who share the sacraments of baptism and marriage” as in possible need of eucharistic sharing, but it never actually speaks of the need of both spouses. In terms of the law, Catholic ministers have to ask themselves whether this particular individual (the other Christian spouse) has a real need for communion, not whether the couple experiences such a need as a couple. This is how it is usually understood by interchurch couples – the need is “our” need. The earlier version had picked up on this experience in a pastoral way, but so far as conformity with the law is concerned, it is not relevant. The law recognises the grave and pressing need of individuals.

Second, the statement that “the non-Catholic party may approach the local Ordinary through the parish priest for permission to receive Communion every time he or she attends Mass with his or her spouse” has been dropped, and in the quotation given above the “whenever” has become “on occasions”. What was explicit in the earlier version has become implicit. Certainly there is nothing of the flavour of the “unique occasions” of *One Bread One Body* here, and it could be read as “on all occasions”, but the earlier explicit reference to “whenever” was very welcome to some interchurch families. The sense of having a continuing need to share communion is very sharply experienced by some interchurch spouses, and an explicit reference to the possibility of meeting that need was much valued.

We give the text of the recommendations below; DE refers to the 1993 Directory on Ecumenism, and FC to *Familiaris Consortio*.

### The Recommendations

*7.9 Catholics and members of other Churches who are entering into the covenant of marriage must be adequately prepared to make an ecumenical partnership of their marriage, as envisaged by the Post-Synodal Exhortation, Familiaris Consortio, while respecting the responsibilities of the Catholic partner regarding the practice of the Faith and the education of the children (FC 78; cf. DE 150-151).*

*7.10 Full use should be made of the opportunities for the granting of a dispensation from the canonical form of marriage for a just and reasonable cause.*

*7.11 Pastors should make the full use of opportunities afforded for ecumenical celebrations for mixed marriages, taking note of the following: 'One must keep in mind that, if the wedding is celebrated with a dispensation from canonical form, some public form of celebration is still required for validity. To emphasize the unity of marriage, it is not permitted to have two separate religious services in which the exchange of consent would be expressed twice, or even one service which would celebrate two such exchanges of consent jointly or successively' DE 156.*

*7.12 Special consideration should be given to spouses in an interchurch (i.e., mixed) marriage who may wish to approach these sacraments together, if their situation justifies it [i.e. sacrament of the sick and penance: see Reorganisation of Sections 6 and 7 above].*

*7.13 A unique situation exists as regards spouses of a mixed marriage who attend Mass together in a Catholic Church. The uniqueness consists in the fact that their baptismal unity in Christ has been still further sealed by the sacramentality of their marriage bond, a bond that of its very nature seeks to be expressed and deepened by the unity of the couple at the Eucharistic table. Hence a spouse in such a marriage, now commonly called an interchurch marriage, could well experience a serious spiritual need to receive holy communion on occasions when he or she accompanies the family to a Catholic Mass. Requests for this kind of Eucharistic hospitality should be referred by the parish priest to the local Ordinary. However, this must be linked to 6.3.5.*

*7.14 It is against freedom of religion and the dignity of women that a wife should be expected to join the Church of her husband or that pressure be put on either spouse to convert, on the pretext of achieving unity of faith.*

### Comment

[6.3.5 referred to above reads: *The pastoral advisability of permitting sharing the sacraments depends both on the general situation of the local worshipping community and on the conditions to be met by the individual persons concerned.*]

It may be that nothing in the original version of the Southern African guidelines would have been called into question had President Clinton not received communion at Soweto, and had this not resulted in complaints to Rome from Catholics in the United States. Clearly a great deal of time and thought and effort has gone into this re-writing, which tries to express exactly where church discipline stands at the present time, in a way which nobody can complain about, while making a particular application of the law. It is very instructive to see how the matter has been dealt with. Without any change of substance, the Southern African Bishops have been able to say what they wanted to in terms that are more strictly in line with the provisions of the Code of Canon Law and its application in the 1993 Directory. So far as the law is concerned, interchurch families will have to live with an uncomfortable situation for a long time, since law does not change quickly. However, it is possible for pastoral understanding and developments to move faster, whether at local or national level, and prepare the way for such eventual change.

# Rockhampton Diocesan Guidelines for Eucharistic Sharing

*In May 1998 Guidelines for Eucharistic Sharing in the Catholic Church were prepared by the Ecumenical Commission of the Diocese of Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia, and these have been issued for use in the diocese. The 8-page document points out that "ever since Vatican II there has been significant development in the Catholic Church's position as it has responded to pastoral needs of people in particular circumstances". It introduces the 1993 Ecumenical Directory from Rome, and gives in brief but clear compass some of the explanations of eucharistic sharing to be found in paras.122-136. It speaks of "difficult and painful situations", and notes that "this is particularly true for couples in a marriage where both spouses are committed to their respective traditions". The last two pages are devoted to the diocesan guidelines themselves, and we give them in full.*

## Guidelines

The Eucharist is both the summit and the source of Christian life. The Catholic Church has traditionally emphasised the Eucharist principally as a sign of unity among its members.

To assist priests and others involved in pastoral work in the Diocese of Rockhampton, the following guidelines are offered:

1. Full intercommunion remains a goal to be achieved. In the context of preparing for eucharistic celebrations the practice of non-communicants coming forward to receive an acknowledgment of Christ's love can be explained and encouraged.

2. Out of respect for all present, ecumenical services in Catholic churches are currently better planned on a non-eucharistic basis.

3. Communicant members of other traditions who *manifest Catholic belief in the Eucharist*, and who wish to receive Communion, may do so on certain occasions.

Such occasions for individual decision making may include:

- a) celebrations of Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion
- b) Nuptial Masses
- c) Funeral Masses
- d) special Eucharistic celebrations.

4 The Directory on Ecumenism recognises the special needs of those in a Marriage where both spouses are faithful to their religious duties in their respective churches (pars 145-151). Such spouses who are experiencing a pressing need to receive Communion whenever accompanying the family to Mass can request admission to the Eucharist. This request is ordinarily made to the Parish Priest, but in exceptional cases can be referred to the Bishop or Vicar General.

5 If, prior to a Eucharistic celebration, the question arises regarding reception of Communion, any response should indicate clearly the teaching and practice of the Church. An explicit prohibition on receiving Communion should not be given publicly on occasions such as Marriages, Baptisms, First Communion, Confirmations and Funeral Masses, when Christians of other traditions may be attending. Neither should an explicit invitation to all be given publicly on these occasions.

Persons presenting themselves for Communion at the time of distribution should never be refused. Such persons can be considered to be acting in good faith.

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# My Experience as an Interchurch Child



*In recent numbers of Interchurch Families Karen MacRandal from the south of England told the story of her dual affirmation (7.1, January 1999, p.14), and Linda Buchanan from Montreal, Canada wrote about her dual confirmation (8.1, January 2000, p.5) Here Sarah Mayles from the north of England explains why she would like a joint celebration of her confirmation.*

I am an interchurch child; my father is an Anglican and my mother a Roman Catholic. I have grown up as an active member of both denominations and have attended confirmation classes both in the Anglican and the Roman Catholic traditions. I feel an equal member of both churches, and I have decided not to be confirmed to this date. I do not want to affirm publicly my allegiance within one particular church if in so doing I have to discard my commitment to the other.

I would like to share some of my experiences as an interchurch child, to show why I would like a joint confirmation service, in which both denominations are equally represented. I hope that this is a way forward, a closer step towards unity.

## A shared celebration of baptism



I started my Christian life with an ecumenical outlook. Both our parish priests - Anglican and Roman Catholic - took part in my baptism. It took place in a Catholic church, but a number of prayers and readings were taken from the Anglican Alternative Service Book. The Anglican priest conducted several parts of the service, including the baptismal vows and profession of faith. The baptism itself was performed by the Catholic priest, and both said the final blessing together.

Although I don't remember this service, I feel that it has helped me in my Christian life. At the very beginning of my life with Jesus, both denominations were supporting and encouraging me in my faith and this has continued as I have got older.

## My First Holy Communion

The first memories I have of an important religious event in my life are those of my First Holy Communion. I attended a Catholic primary school and at the age of eight most of my school friends received this sacrament. At that time my parents decided that it would be better for me to wait. Children in the Anglican Church are traditionally confirmed around the age of 14, and also my parents felt that I didn't really understand what was going to happen. I am glad that this decision was made, because I did not really understand the significance of the sacrament and so it would not have meant as much to me. At the age of 10 I attended First Holy Communion classes in the Catholic Church and also confirmation classes in the Church of England. These encouraged me to think more about my relationship with God and also gave me a greater insight into both denominations. At the end of my classes I received First Holy Communion in the Catholic Church.

My First Holy Communion particularly stands out in my memory, because it was the first time that I really experienced the divisions of the Church at first hand. My father wished to receive the eucharist at my First Communion service, so that we could celebrate this important event as a family. Our parish priest told him to write to the bishop. The bishop rejected his request twice. This was a hard time for our family, because we felt that we were being divided by the Church at a time when it was most important to be together. We went to a different parish and asked the priest there what he thought about the matter. He agreed that this was a very significant step in my Christian life and my family should be united in support for me. He therefore allowed my father to receive communion. At this young age I met for the first time the problems caused by the unnecessary divisions in the Church. I think that the differences between the denominations should not cause us to be separated, rather they should enrich our Christian faith and worship. Fortunately, because of the foresight (and courage) of the second priest, our family came together at this service which had been so close to dividing us.

Having made my First Holy Communion I was able to receive communion in the Catholic Church. However, in theory there were two potential difficulties with me receiving in the Church of England. The Roman Catholic Church does not recognise Anglican orders and therefore does not feel that it is right for Catholics to receive communion in Anglican churches. The



second problem was that Anglicans do not usually receive communion until they are confirmed.

I decided that it was appropriate for me to receive communion in the Anglican Church. I have developed my personal relationship with God in both churches and so feel that each tradition is equally important to me. My Anglican priest understood my situation, and had no reservations about letting me receive. The confirmation classes that I had attended had taught me the significance of communion in the Anglican Church. Although I have not been confirmed, it would feel strange for me to receive in the Catholic Church, but not in the Anglican. By receiving in both, I feel that I am benefiting from the nourishment that both churches can give me.

### **I want to be confirmed**

Recently I have attended confirmation classes in the Catholic Church, with my own age group. I found it interesting that, because I had had to think more about my faith, I seemed from my own viewpoint, more ready for confirmation than some of the other candidates. At the end of the course I was strongly advised to receive the sacrament by my Catholic priest. He expressed his concern that I may end up "falling between two stools" and so not be confirmed. I accepted his concern and thought hard about being confirmed. I know that it is an important act of commitment to God and I want to stand before God to confirm my love for him and receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, I decided not to take this step. I feel that God will support me in my work towards unity and



although I have not publicly asked for his guidance, he is with me in all that I do. This was a very hard decision, because I felt ready for confirmation, yet could not receive it, but I still feel that I was not mistaken in my decision to wait for this sacrament.

I now practise in both churches, often attending the services in both each weekend. In attending both churches I find that there is very little difference in the services and the Creed is the same in both. I understand that there are differences in the doctrine of the churches, but I do not understand why these differences, as small as they seem to me, should have a negative effect on my development as a Christian.

### **Only one world**

My experience as a member of two denominations has mostly been positive. I find that in both churches there are teachings and practice that I accept and others that I cannot. I believe in what seem to me to be the fundamental parts of the Christian faith and I feel that that is what is important. I enjoy being a member of two communities and learn a lot from both.

A Catholic priest once said to me, "It seems to me that you are trying to get the best of both worlds." I found this quite a ridiculous comment, as I believe there is only one world with God and we must struggle to find it, using whatever help we are offered.

My family are members of the Association of Interchurch Families. This group offers support for mixed-church families. I find it an enormous help, because it gives me the opportunity to meet and talk to other interchurch children who are experiencing the same problems as me. Every year there is an annual AIF conference and the young people aged 15 and older use this time to discuss any problems they have encountered in the Church and are given support by the other members.

### **Cast aside**

For many years now we have been striving for a joint confirmation service. This is becoming a real issue for us. As our single-denomination friends receive this important sacrament, we feel as if we are being forgotten or cast aside. Some of the young people in AIF are growing up and finding that confirmation is no longer an issue for them and so remain unconfirmed. This is a sad development, because despite our deep faith we are missing out on such a meaningful part of our Christian life. Confirmation is not just a time to stand at the front of the church and publicly announce that you agree with the doctrine of that denomination. It is a time to receive God's grace and develop spiritually, to prepare us better for eternal life with God.

The young people of AIF have been working together to pursue our idea of joint confirmation. It is important for us, because we want to receive the gifts from the Holy Spirit that come through confirmation, with the support of the two churches to which we belong. The different denominations are not what is important for us. We want to be able to say we are Christians, we believe in the Trinity and we are united with Christ.

### **One body in Christ**

I think that it is important that as Christians we should strive for unity between the churches, because we are all one body in Christ. Standing united we are a much better witness to the faith, giving a better example of Christianity to the world. I feel that my experience is another step towards unity as I have a deeper understanding of two Christian churches. Understanding is the most important aspect of unity, because it is only through understanding that we can ever hope to come together as one. I wish the Church to be united at my confirmation, because I believe that that is what Jesus wants. Through the unity of the Church we can develop in full communion with Christ, and support each other in our Christian lives.

*Sarah Mayles*

# A Time for Practical Steps Forward in Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations



*The English Association of Interchurch Families was privileged to have Dr Mary Tanner as its Second John Coventry Memorial Lecturer in March 2000. Recently retired from her post as General Secretary of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity, she had previously been a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II). When she gave the lecture, she was preparing for her role as a consultant to the Toronto meeting of Anglican Primates and Presidents of Catholic Episcopal Conferences, 14-20 May 2000. Her stress on the need to match theological agreements achieved since Malta 1968 with practical steps forward is very relevant to interchurch families. The fruits of ARCIC must be received*

*into living relationships, said Dr Tanner in the discussion period following the lecture; that is just what ARC interchurch families are trying to do.*

*English AIF was very grateful too that Bishop Cormac Murphy-O'Connor chaired the lecture as arranged, although he was in the throes of moving to become Archbishop of Westminster. He was previously co-chair of ARCIC, and he and Mary Tanner had worked closely together in that context. It is time now for Bishops to give a lead in taking practical steps forward on the basis of theological consensus, said Mary (or how can Anglicans and Roman Catholics commend bishops to non-episcopal churches?); the future Archbishop of Westminster did not disagree.*

*Here we have shortened the text of the lecture; it will be printed in full in One in Christ.*

## ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC RELATIONS FROM MALTA TO TORONTO

### ***I Malta begins a new chapter in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations***

On 26th March 1966 Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey issued their Common Declaration from St Paul Without-the-Walls in Rome. They talked of 'a new atmosphere of Christian fellowship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Anglican Communion', and of 'sincere efforts to remove the causes of conflict and to re-establish unity.' They announced their plan to 'inaugurate... a serious dialogue ... not only on theological matters, but also one which faced honestly matters of practical difficulty.' It is a short, passionate, declaration and the photograph of the two men, clasping hands and smiling into each other's eyes speaks volumes for 'the respect, esteem and fraternal love' which they hoped all Anglicans and Roman Catholics would come to share for each other. These sentiments supported the Decree on Ecumenism's statement that: 'Among those (communions separated from the Holy See) in which some catholic traditions and structures continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place.'

### **Unity by stages**

Two years later in 1968, after three meetings of a small Joint Preparatory Group, *The Malta Report* was published. It suggested how progress towards unity could be made by stages. A second stage would begin with 'an official and explicit affirmation of mutual recognition from the highest authorities of each Communion.' It would 'acknowledge' that both Communions accept the Trinitarian faith, the basic truths set forth in the ecumenical Creeds, and the common tradition of the Ancient Church, 'although neither Communion is tied to a positive acceptance of all the beliefs and devotional practices of the other.' Such mutual recognition and acknowledgement would lead to a binding commitment being made to act together. Annual joint meetings of hierarchies is put top of the list. Then: constant consultation between committees concerned with pastoral and evangelistic problems; agreements for shared churches; shared theological education; exchange of students; collaboration on theological scholarship; common prayer; joint retreats and close co-operation of religious communities; exchange of pulpits; shared liturgical renewal. Also: joint statements on national, international and local

issues; joint missionary endeavours; and a thorough investigation of the doctrine of marriage with the setting up of a Joint Commission on marriage.

This officially entered into second stage would lead to a third and final stage in the quest for 'full organic unity of our two Communions', although it was not possible to see in advance all that a final stage would entail.

### **An urgent issue**

In closing the *Report* refers to the question of sacramental inter-communion 'being raised on every side.' For many, 'no issue is more urgent'. The Commission could not approve this, nor sanction changes. More study of the theology was needed, not least in regard to Anglican Orders, the nature of priesthood and a serious study of the nature of authority.

The report recommends that a Permanent (an unfortunate adjective) Joint Commission be set up with two sub-commissions: one to examine the subject of inter-communion and matters of Church and ministry, the other to examine the subject of authority. Almost as an afterthought it adds that there should be a joint study of moral theology.

This was 32 years ago. *The Malta Report* was published in January 1968. Both Roman Catholic and Anglican responses were made within months. You do get the feeling that there was a sense of urgency and expectancy about in those days. By June Cardinal Bea had replied on behalf of the Holy Father expressing satisfaction and gratitude for the work done, and outlining how the Pope saw the continuation of the work. Ten points for further study were suggested including: a Common Declaration of faith; the theological and pastoral problems of the doctrine of marriage and, note the unfortunate language, 'the difficulties caused by mixed marriages'; sacramental inter-communion; the ministry and priesthood; the nature of authority; and moral theology. The letter offered thoughts on practical actions: periodic meetings of hierarchies; consultation on problems of evangelisation, common prayer and close relations of religious communities. This was an encouraging response from Cardinal Bea, on behalf of the Pope, endorsing as it did so many of the suggestions of the *Malta Report*.

However, something in the report must have made the Vatican nervous; Cardinal Bea cautions against publication, because of inexact formulations. The bishops might, he says, get the impression that it was being communicated to them for immediate implementation!

The Anglican response came two months later in the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference. Three short resolutions welcomed the report's proposals: recommended the setting up of a Permanent Commission and, because of the urgent pastoral questions raised by mixed marriages, welcomed the work of the Joint Commission on Mixed Marriages. As you know that Commission published its report in 1976.

I guess that, like me, many of you will have forgotten how the journey of the last 30 years began. Re-reading *The Malta Report*, I have some sympathy with Cardinal Bea's reaction. It isn't always easy to see just what was in the mind of its drafters. However, certain things do stand out: the strong commitment to the goal of full, organic unity; the intention of moving by steps into clearly marked, and officially sanctioned, new stages of relationship; and the determination to keep theological progress and practical progress together.

### **Theology and practice go together**

To get deeper into the thinking that lies behind Malta, one of the preparatory essays of the Commission is worth reading. Bishop Henry McAdoo (of Ossary, Ferns and Leighlin) offered a paper entitled *Unity: An Approach by Steps?* In it he proposed stages of growth, what he calls 'phased *rapprochement*', each stage being theologically justifiable. He outlined two stages. The first stage would be inaugurated by taking two steps: one in the theological arena and the second in the day to day level of church life. He was insistent that the theological and the practical went together, otherwise the result would simply be a *rapprochement* between theologians. Stage I would begin with a formal mutual recognition that each church holds the essentials of the Christian faith. The second stage would be one of limited inter-communion, inspired by the relation between the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. It would be based on an agreement similar to that of the Bonn Agreement between Anglicans and Old Catholics and would include a similar declaration on Anglican Orders as that reached in the Anglican-Old Catholic relationship. The Bishop underlined that the pattern of stages might well re-shape themselves as the relationship developed. What theologians needed to keep in mind, however, was the desire of the people for unity, their conviction of the rightness of unity.

Although there are differences between Bishop McAdoo's paper and the eventual formulation of *The Malta Report*, both support the same phased *rapprochement*. Each new stage of relationship would be entered into on the basis of agreements in faith, which would form the foundation for mutual recognition from the highest authority, and lead to binding commitment to live closely together in many practical ways.

## **II The 32 years of dialogue**

Malta gave us a vision in the heady days of expectancy after Vatican II. What has happened to Anglican-Roman Catholic relations in 32 years? The setting up of the Permanent Commission – which fortunately became the International Commission – ARCIC is well known. There is no need to rehearse the significant achievements of ARCIC I with its Final Report on Eucharistic Doctrine; Ministry and Ordination; and Authority in the Church. We know the work

of ARCIC II, produced under the distinguished chairmanship of Bishop Cormac and Bishop Mark Santer, with its reports, *Salvation and the Church*; *Church as Communion*; *Morals Communion and the Church* and the stunning text, *The Gift of Authority*. Bound together in one volume the ARCIC corpus represents a convergence in faith, which I suspect Malta could hardly have dreamed of.

Simultaneously with this search for agreement in faith has gone some growth in lived relations. The degree to which this has happened varies from country to country. Where there are national ARCs, as in this country, relations have generally progressed further.

### **No planning for unity by stages**

But this story of undeniable progress since Malta has a haphazardness about it. It is far from the ordered, officially recognised, steps taken, and new stages marked, that Malta itself looked forward to on the way to full, organic unity. Some may argue that the ordination of women to the priesthood has prevented the authorities from officially recognising and authorising any new stage of relationship. But has anyone actually asked whether, or how, these ordinations affect movement into some form of intensified relationship, some new degree of communion?

The topsy-turvy like growth of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, as distinct from the carefully planned theological dialogue, is clear. Convergence in faith and convergence in life have not been held together in the way that Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey envisaged, or that Malta looked for. This is very evident in the response process to *The Final Report of ARCIC I* and in the failure of either Communion to activate an intentional and guided response to the theological work of ARCIC II. Do you remember the two questions our churches were asked in response to *The Final Report of ARCIC I*? They were in keeping with the outlook of Malta. First, we were all asked whether these statements were consonant in substance with the faith of our churches, and secondly, we were asked whether *The Final Report* offered a sufficient basis for taking the 'next concrete steps' towards the reconciliation of our churches grounded in agreement in faith. The striking thing is the way these two questions set out to hold faith and life together. The warning of Bishop McAdoo is not far away. Unless the two are kept together the theological work will remain the preserve of a few theologians.

### **A failure to take concrete steps**

What happened in both churches was an almost exclusive concentration on the first question. Of course it is much easier to deal with disembodied theology and much less threatening. It doesn't require that costly repentance, and conversion of identity, that the road to visible unity requires of us. The Roman Catholic *Observations*, which followed swiftly on the publication of the *Final Report* in 1982, said that the next concrete step was to continue dialogue. The Lambeth Conference Resolution, six years later, in 1988, agreed that the eucharist and ministry statements were consonant with Anglican faith and went on to say they provided a sufficient basis for taking the next step. There was no attempt to suggest what step that might be, simply three pages on what the theological dialogue might examine next. When in 1991 the final response of the Vatican was published it recognised *The Final Report* as 'a significant milestone' but not yet 'substantial agreement', and talked of remaining obstacles to the restoration of full communion in faith and sacramental life. Malta, however, never thought that the next step would be that to full communion in faith and sacramental life. The Vatican response makes no reference to the second question, so

important for us in our daily lives and relationships, in our families and in the places where we live.

In neither official response was the second question given serious attention. So, the Malta vision of keeping faith and life together, Bishop McAdoo's warning that unless they were, the theological work would remain the preserve of the theologians, went unheard. Yet many of the responses of Anglican Provinces, and those from the Catholic Episcopal Conferences that were published, have much to suggest in answer to the second question about the next concrete steps. The response of the Roman Catholic Bishops of England and Wales offers a map for future moves: church-state relations, joint prayer, social action, joint study. Doctrinal discussions alone, the bishops say, 'are not sufficient'. Understanding the integral relation between the two, they say, is essential. Joint action at the local level is essential for the reception of ARCIC I. The Church of England's response also devoted three pages to the second question. It quotes extensively from Malta's list of actions that would be appropriate to a new stage of relationship entered into on the basis of the newly formulated theological convergence of the ARCIC report. It highlights regular joint meetings of the two hierarchies, sharing of theological education and alleviating the difficulties caused by mixed marriages. The response ends by saying:

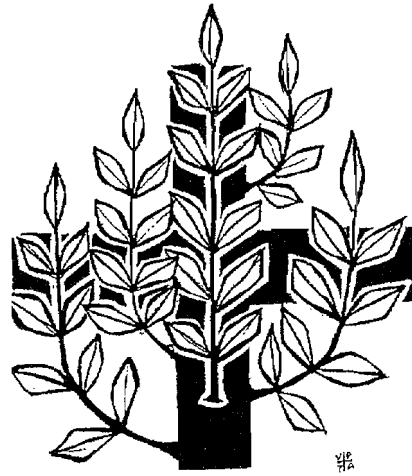
Both churches (would) need to consider:

- What degree of eucharistic sharing is appropriate on the basis of the understanding of the eucharist and of the ministry and ordination set out in the Windsor and Canterbury Statements and their Elucidations?
- What should be the next step in the recognition and reconciliation of our two ministries? In particular what might the theological agreement of the *Final Report* suggest for our understanding of *Apostolicae Curae*, and what implication does it have for the ordination of women to the priesthood? Finally, the Church of England, always looking for a party, said, we hope that some sign will be found to celebrate the theological convergence of our two churches.

But the prize for the responses must go to that of the French Conference. It begins by saying that they wanted to reply to the theological report precisely because of lived relations. It cites the advances made in *Jumelages et Exchanges* the work of French and English ARCs, which includes a statement about eucharistic hospitality for individual Anglicans when visiting France. The French bishops agree that ARCIC's Final Report offers a sufficient basis for the next step towards reconciliation.

### **Theological convergence has outstripped convergence in life**

The thirty years story shows the enormous achievement of the work of ARCIC, but also the disappointing way in which the Malta vision of keeping theological convergence together with convergence in life seems to be forgotten. Even the carefully crafted questions put to the *Final Report* were unable to keep the two together. The opportunity to take steps, however small, to celebrate new stages, however modest, has not been grasped. Instead there has grown a weariness with a process of dialogue that has little obvious cash value for personal relations or for local life and witness, and sadness at a lost opportunity to party together to celebrate what has been achieved. There is a longing among the laity for leadership from those whose ministry entails a care for the unity of the Universal Church. Clear, joint leadership from Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops would surely be a way in which episcopacy might be commended to those churches that do not have bishops.



### **III Toronto and beyond**

We are not at the end of the story. At Toronto Cardinal Cassidy and the heads of Episcopal Conferences, or their representatives, will meet with the Archbishop of Canterbury and Primates of Provinces, or their representatives. Even with its insistence on the importance of regular joint meetings of national hierarchies, Malta never contemplated such a meeting. It is a first in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. The symbolic value of the meeting will be important for all of us and especially for those who fear the steam has gone out of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. The bishops will have an opportunity to experience joint collegiality. They will have time to get to know one another, exchange stories of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations in the different countries around the world, and reflect on where we are and where we are going as we enter a new millennium. Perhaps they will dust down their copies of the *Malta Report*. Perhaps they will be struck by those thirty-year-old suggestions that have never been put into effect, and consider whether they have any mileage today. Is the time right to call for a new step to be taken, a new stage of relationship entered into, in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations? Of course the bishops at Toronto could not be expected to emerge with a document ready to be signed. It would be wrong to place too high expectations on a one off meeting. But they could call for a Declaration to be drawn up, a programme to be worked out, for intensifying relationships. This might just provide a kick-start and revive the sort of enthusiasm of the heady days that followed Vatican II. It would demonstrate that we have progressed in 32 years and show our determination to go on together.

A common declaration might set out what we understand together now about the goal of full, visible unity. This could be of service to the wider ecumenical movement, where there is confusion about the goal of the ecumenical endeavour. It would be the opportunity to receive the vision of *Church as Communion*, a report that has hardly entered the consciousness of our churches. We could also claim some of those beautiful fresh images of the Church used in *The Gift of Authority*, the walking together on the way, the symphonic life of the Church. Secondly, a declaration could claim the agreements in faith that we have discovered in the thirty-year conversation that we already share. Malta already contained an impressive list of agreements: Trinitarian faith, common baptism, creeds etc.... So much more could be added from the discoveries of the ARCIC conversation: justification by faith through grace, as set out in *Salvation and the Church*; almost substantial agreement (or perhaps substantial agreement) on the doctrine of the eucharist (the letter of Cardinal Cassidy in



response to *Clarifications* after all said that 'no further study would seem to be required at this stage'); agreement on ordination and ministry (ARCIC's own view was that their agreements stood, whoever was, or was not, ordained); and a considerable degree of agreement on the question of authority in the Church and on synodality, a ministry of collegiality and primacy (it was clear, even before *The Gift of Authority* was published that this was so). Many Anglicans have shown their appreciation of a personal ministry of oversight at world level. *The Gift of Authority* talks of both Communions re-receiving the ministry of the Bishop of Rome. The House of Bishops of the Church of England responded warmly to the Pope's invitation in *Ut Unum Sint* to help him re-think his ministry in the service of the unity of the Church. Placing outstanding areas of disagreement in the context of so much existing agreement, will make even seemingly intractable issues appear less formidable.

### A forward step into a new relationship

The degree of agreement in faith worked out so patiently over the last 32 years could surely form a firm basis for taking some modest step forward, and for reaching some new intensified stage of relationship. Would it not be possible to acknowledge publicly and thankfully the faithful witness each Communion makes to the Gospel, and to recognise the presence of the Church of Jesus Christ in one another's lives, even if we all know that we both lack something of fullness, because of our continuing separation? Such recognition could lead us to make binding commitments to one another which could be lived out intentionally in every part of the world: commitments to regular joint meetings of bishops. Surely the time is right to bring this into practice everywhere. Anglican bishops might accompany Roman Catholic bishops on Ad Limina visits to Rome, as *The Gift of Authority* suggests. There could be an intensification of shared theological education; joint statements, wherever possible on matters of social and political concern with jointly prepared documents like *The Common Good*. We know it is not only better together but it is more effective together. We could recognise the possibilities, not the problems, of interchurch families. We could commit ourselves to share at the very local level in serving the community, exchanging pulpits, building joint schools etc... A programme of commitments could be worked out which were thoroughly consonant with the degree of agreement in faith that has been reached. Perhaps, even a commitment to one another could be made not to take unilateral action on a matter that touches the communion of the Universal Church without the most serious of consultative processes. All of this would need to be seen within the wider context of Christian unity.

And, what of that 'most urgent of issues' highlighted in Malta as 'being raised on every side'? *One Bread One Body* has recently set out local guidelines. That document acknowledges that it is not the last word on the subject. The ongoing dialogue with Interchurch Families, the L'Arche Community, and the Hengrave Community might open up a way where, in very special circumstances, eucharistic hospitality might be offered in the context of the explicit agreements in faith, and the new binding commitment of our churches to one another.

So what would the advantage be of such a common declaration?

- It would provide a way of receiving into life the theological convergences of the ARCIC conversation;
- It would help us to keep agreement in faith together with concrete practical steps;

- It would show that concrete steps were being taken, not irresponsibly, but on the basis of expressed agreement in faith;

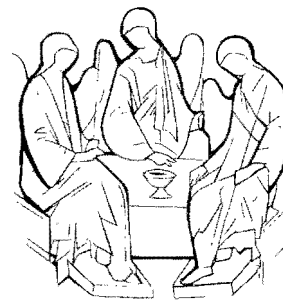
- It would provide a world-wide framework for the development of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. The Provinces where progress is slow might be encouraged by those where advance is made more quickly;

- The ratification of the declaration would certainly provide one of those symbolic photo calls for the Pope and the Archbishop which are important reminders for all of us.

And such meetings could be replicated around the world by primates, diocesan bishops and people in local parishes.

- It would provide an opportunity to celebrate together how far we have come since the end of Vatican II;

- It would be a re-affirmation of our shared intention to search for nothing less than the full, visible unity of the Church for the sake of credible and authentic mission.



### A sign of reconciliation

A declaration could give a kick-start to Anglican-Roman Catholic relations at the beginning of a new millennium. It might provide a model for others. It would be a sign that reconciliation is possible between those who once burnt one another at the stake, a sign that it is, by God's grace, possible to heal the most bitter memories. A sign perhaps to the world of its own possibility.

### A messenger

Let me end with a story. Thirty theologians are sitting around a table listening to the most eloquent of them (Fr Jean Tillard) talk. The door opens and a dishevelled man, unkempt, and poorly dressed walks in. He sits down quietly. The Moderator doesn't know what to do. She doesn't dare interrupt the flowing thoughts of one of the world's leading ecumenists. The atmosphere was tense. This was Northern Ireland. When Fr Jean finished there was silence. All eyes were turned to the stranger. He clearly wasn't one of the group. But he seemed to know that he hadn't just stumbled into that room by accident. The stranger was the one who broke the silence. 'Do you know', he said, 'what's going on out there? People get drunk, they take drugs, they hurt one another, they make petrol bombs and kill innocent children. Family is against family, community against community...for God's sake get on with it. He wanted unity. That's why he died.' The stranger got up and walked out. We never knew who he was, or where he came from, or how he knew we were meeting in that particular room, in that vast seminary with its long corridors where every room looked the same as the next. We enquired of the staff but they had no idea who the stranger might be. But for us he was a messenger. Perhaps that same messenger will turn up in the midst of the meeting in Toronto. Who knows.

Mary Tanner

# Eucharistic Sharing in Interchurch Families in Relation to Authority Issues



*Over the past few years a project on Authority and Governance in the Catholic Church has been pursued in England under the auspices of the Queen's College, Birmingham. As part of this project a number of small organisations such as the Catholic Association for Racial Justice, the Association of Separated and Divorced Catholics, the Advent Group (Catholic priests no longer in active*

*ministry), and the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology (for women) were invited to contribute. The English Association of Interchurch Families was included, and is producing quite a lengthy report on the subject it chose to study. We give below a brief interim report which had to be made this summer, as a taster of what is to come.*

## EUCCHARISTIC SHARING IN INTERCHURCH FAMILIES A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROJECT "AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE IN THE CHURCH"

There are two differences in our study from that of any other contribution. We are dealing with Roman Catholics married to members of other communions, mainly the Church of England or the Free Churches, so we have to take account of the authority of Christ as it is exercised in other churches in a different way from that in which it is exercised in the Roman Catholic Church. Second, we are focusing on a subject (*communicatio in sacris*) in which over the past fifty years it seems that Rome has been prepared for faster change and development than is welcomed by the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Therefore interchurch families have experienced the central authority in the Roman Catholic Church as supporting their aspirations.

There are many kinds of interchurch families. Not all desire to share the eucharist. Most members of AIF do have this desire. Our contribution reflects our experience, and makes no claim to represent the views of all interchurch families. It draws on the archives of the Association and the experience of couples most of whom are AIF members (some seventy couples met in twenty groups in different parts of the country). We have also gathered the reflections of some twenty-five pastors and theologians who belong to our pastoral network, and those of six of the Catholic bishops who are on our mailing list. We looked at how decisions about eucharistic sharing in interchurch families are made, and the interplay that exists between different authorities in the church.

### History

Historically the Second Vatican Council is our starting point. The Council took a far more positive view of other Christians and other churches than ever before. It took a startlingly novel and positive view of sacramental sharing (this is not normative but it is "sometimes to be commended"). It took a new and positive view of marriage as a call to holiness and of the family as "domestic church".

Thus some interchurch partners saw their vocation to marriage as caught up in the ecumenical process by which their respective churches were coming together. In the growing unity of their own domestic church some saw a foretaste of the unity to which all are called, and their longing to receive the eucharist together to express and deepen their marriage covenant was felt with increasing strength.

### Spode 1968

The issue of eucharistic sharing was already raised at the first meeting of English interchurch families held at Spode House in November 1968. Couples realised that practice was not uniform in the Catholic Church. One Anglican husband present had been given permission to receive communion at his wedding to a Catholic in Italy that summer – something unheard of in England. The Council had insisted that Christians were united in the sacrament of baptism. These couples were also united in the sacrament of marriage. The group studied marriage in Scripture, and the "one flesh" relationship which was not to be torn apart by human agency but was to image the close union of love between Christ and his church seemed of its nature to cry out for eucharistic sharing. How could the church unite them in the sacrament of marriage, and then divide them at the eucharist? They had with them a respected Catholic theologian, ecumenist and pastor who, although not allowed by his church to invite other Christians to communion, made it clear that he would think it wrong to refuse spouses who came forward responsibly and in good conscience to receive. He encouraged Catholics to consider the need to be present also at Anglican or Free Church worship with their partners, for the sake of mutuality in their marriage and family life. They had to express somehow the fact that they were one family, while at the same time being related to two churches (both local congregations and denominations). The group found a collective voice to express to their churches their need for pastoral care adapted to their circumstances; a statement went to a meeting of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission held shortly afterwards at Pineta Sacchetti, and was released to the religious press. Authority issues relating to decisions to be made at every level in the churches were already present at that first Spode meeting in 1968.

The expectations of the early 1970's – that the churches would soon understand the special needs of interchurch families and be willing to meet them – proved over-optimistic. Nevertheless, there have been many changes at every level in the church over these three decades that have been very welcome to interchurch families.

## The current situation

After tracing this 30-year history, our study looks at the current situation in England and Wales. Only a brief flavour of our report can be given here. Most of the couples who took part in the study feel the need to share communion as spouses when they are together in church (*every single time*: Anglican husband who hardly ever receives with his wife). The few who have not especially wanted to share communion tend to be relatively recently married couples. Basic decisions on church-going (to go together or to go separately) are made by the couple. Most of the couples in this study have decided it is important for them to go to church together often, most of them in both their churches (*we decided to be a two-church family, and everything else has stemmed from that*). There is a tension here between the mutual responsibility which some spouses feel to support and affirm one another in their church-going, and an expectation from some clergy that after their marriage they will continue to function as individuals. (*They can both go to communion as often as they like in their own churches*: Catholic bishop). The need to share communion is often felt more strongly when children arrive, and First Communion has been a crisis point for many interchurch families. Many couples feel that it is a bad Christian witness not to receive communion together. (*We told the parish priest that as a Christian family we are a church, and the only integrity we can have is to worship and pray together, and we have a responsibility to offer this to our children*). There is a tension here between parental responsibility and wider church authority.

If decisions about church-going are made as couples, most decisions about receiving communion seem to be made by the partners as individuals, in relation to the norms of their own church and that of their partner, and in relation to the particular context in which they find themselves. Most of those contributing to this study would decide to receive communion together in the context of interchurch family meetings (*that's different – it's in the family*) and in situations where they are not known (*nobody can be offended if they don't know*).

## Catholic ministers

Where couples are known, there are many constraints. What happens in practice often depends on the local priest and people. Most couples are concerned not to cause upset or distress to Catholic clergy and congregations, even when they are convinced in conscience that the family should receive communion together. The Roman Catholic Church admits other baptised Christians in circumstances of need, in particular cases and under certain conditions. The 1993 Directory identifies those who “share the sacraments of baptism and marriage” as in possible need of eucharistic sharing. This is often not known by local clergy and congregations. It sometimes takes a lot of courage for a couple to raise the question at all. The fear of rejection is very strong in some couples. Others will argue, but the result of that is often negative. The authority of Catholic priests is respected when they listen to a couple's need with pastoral concern and sympathy, even when they feel obliged to say no. (*The important thing was that [the priest] acknowledged my eucharistic need to share communion every time I go to mass – however because of the conservative nature of the congregation it would be a scandal... I know he understands and is on my side; that to me is crucial*: Anglican husband). Their authority is less respected when they refuse to discuss the issue or treat it as a purely canonical question, or simply say it is not possible (thus showing themselves to be ill-informed). Other couples are welcomed to communion

together by local Catholic ministers, who find that local congregations also welcome this policy. (*We must respect people's consciences – that's the teaching of our church ... I've asked my congregation about that; you have to be fair to them. I can't find people who don't want it*: Catholic priest). It is particularly difficult for such couples if their situation changes when they move. (*It's like a post-code lottery – having had the experience of nearly a year now of not being able to share when previously we could I can realise how hard it is, and it definitely does not get easier*: Catholic wife). Some Catholics decide not to receive communion in their own church if their spouse cannot do so (*I position my wife in front of me and if she doesn't receive communion I don't either*: Catholic husband).

Not many couples had approached a bishop directly; they seemed too distant. This was reflected in the bishops' experience; they were surprised to receive so few requests. Some bishops delegate responsibility for making decisions in particular cases to all their parish priests; this is in line with canon law, although the episcopal conference reserved decisions to bishops and their delegates, and in some dioceses there are very few delegates. The bishops interviewed would in any case not wish to go against the judgement of a local minister (*in the end he's the one that's got to live with it, and work it through, and pastorally counsel the couple*: Catholic bishop). A bishop only seems likely to overturn a locally established practice if it becomes a public “scandal”.

## Other churches

Different churches have different norms. The Church of England welcomes baptised communicant Christians in good standing in their own churches; some Free Churches invite all those who love the Lord Jesus. The Catholic and the other Christian partner have therefore to make different kinds of decisions (*In his church, what I can do, authority resides with the priest; in my church, what he can do, authority resides with him*: Anglican wife). The Catholic may be welcomed by his partner's church, but is however only authorised by the Catholic Church to receive communion in circumstances of need from a minister who is validly ordained, and the Catholic Church has not recognised Anglican or Free Church ordination. Some Catholics decide not to receive (*it's very difficult to break away from the tradition of doing what you're told – there's always the voice of Revd Mother ticking away in your head*: Catholic wife). Others make a conscientious decision to receive (*the responsibility is mine and I have to take the consequences*: Catholic wife).

The Bishops of England and Wales cannot authorise Catholics to receive communion from ministers whose orders are not recognised by the Catholic Church; this has been forbidden at world level. The most they could do is to recognise the right of the Catholic to make a conscientious decision to go beyond the norms without incurring ecclesiastical penalty. Where admission is concerned, however, instead of speaking of “unique occasions” they could allow spouses to receive communion together on a continuing basis in some cases, as other episcopal conferences have done. They could be less grudging and restrictive in tone, and share the “joy” expressed by Pope John Paul II at the fact that other Christians can share Catholic communion in certain cases where there is a deep desire, a spontaneous request, and Catholic eucharistic faith. (*Ut Unum Sint*, 46)

May 2000

## THE JOURNAL

INTERCHURCH FAMILIES is a twice-yearly journal which discusses the theological and pastoral issues raised by the existence of interchurch families (especially families in which one partner is a Roman Catholic and the other a Christian of another communion). It shares the experience of these families with a wider public, and helps readers keep abreast of developments which concern interchurch families, in the context of the wider ecumenical movement.

### Pastoral care

It is addressed to all who are or expect to be in any way responsible for the pastoral care of mixed marriages and interchurch families in all their variety.

### Towards Christian unity

The journal is also addressed to all concerned with the movement towards Christian unity, for in interchurch families the pain of Christian division and the celebration of Christian unity is focused at its most local level. An interchurch family is a "domestic church", and interchurch families are the smallest units of "Churches Together".

The journal is published by the English Association of Interchurch Families, but it intends to serve the needs of English-speaking interchurch families and all who care for their welfare world-wide. It welcomes contributions and editorial help from all parts of the world. The views expressed in the journal are not necessarily those of the Association of Interchurch Families.

The annual subscription (England, Scotland, Wales and N.Ireland) is £6 p.a. or £16 for three years; for the rest of Europe it is £7 p.a. or £19 for three years; for other parts of the world (sent airmail printed rate) it is £8 p.a. or £22 for three years. Subscriptions can be sent in sterling to the AIF London address given at the foot of the next column; in American or Canadian dollars to R and F Temmerman, 19 Stephen Street, Morden, MA, R6M 1C5 Canada; in Australian dollars to B and K Hincks, P.O. Box 66, Swansea, NSW 2281 Australia.

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## THE ASSOCIATION

The Association of Interchurch Families (AIF) offers a support network for interchurch families and mixed marriages and a voice for such families in the churches. Most members are interchurch couples and families; some are individuals who wish to further the Association's work.

### Mutual encouragement

AIF began in 1968 as a mutual support group, formed by couples who had found that the exchange of experience with others in similar situations could help each find its own way forward. There are local AIF groups throughout England. A national conference is held every year at Swanwick in Derbyshire.

### An Association for others

The support network which AIF offers extends far beyond its own members. Many interchurch couples find information and a listening ear a great help in times of crisis. One of the Association's most important tasks is to build up a support network of informed people ready to respond to enquirers.

### Commitment to change

AIF members are also ready to work for increased understanding by all churches of the pastoral needs of interchurch and mixed marriage families, at local, diocesan, national and international level, as their own circumstances allow. The Association is committed to the movement for Christian unity; interchurch families suffer because of Christian divisions, but they also have particular incentives and special opportunities to work for the healing of those divisions. AIF is a "body in association" with Churches Together in England, and members will work for unity within their own families and at whatever level they can.

The Association is a registered charity (no. 283811) dependent on members' contributions and the donations of others who support its work.

**Presidents are:** the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Westminster, the Moderator of the Free Churches Council, Dr Kenneth Greet. Members receive the Journal, *AIF News and Notes* and *The Interdependent* (written by and for interchurch children)

Details of membership, resources (publications, leaflets, AIF video), and a constantly up-dated list of Local Contacts throughout England are available on request. Contact:

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## AROUND THE WORLD

The Conference of Associations of Interchurch Families in Britain and Ireland includes the four English, Scottish and Irish sister-associations, who are together a "body in association" with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. AIF is also linked with other associations and groups of interchurch families around the world.

A constantly-updated list of contact addresses for English-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking interchurch families in different parts of the world is available on request to AIF-England at its London address.

A web-site for interchurch families worldwide is run by Ray Temmerman of Morden, Canada. It is to be found at <http://www.aifw.org/aif.htm>



## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

### England

*Seeking God Together: the experience of spirituality in interchurch families*  
Swanwick, Derbyshire,  
26-28 August 2000

### Scotland

*Interchurch families and the Church in the Third Millennium*  
at Scottish Churches House, Dunblane,  
8-10 September 2000

### Switzerland

*The Trinity, source of the family*  
at Finhaut-sur-Saxon (Valais)  
23-24 September 2000

### Scandinavia

*Meeting of Danish and Swedish Interchurch families,*  
Copenhagen,  
29 September - 1 October 2000

### Germany

*From divided to converging churches: our special task*  
Dornstadt, nr Stuttgart  
13-15 October 2000

*Faith in everyday life in interchurch families*

Heilsbronn, nr Nuremberg  
26-28 January 2001

### Canada

**International Conference**  
*Interchurch families: living the path to Christian unity*  
in Edmonton, Alberta,  
2-6 August 2001

### Rome

**Second World Gathering/  
Rassemblement Mondial** at Rome 2003