



UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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# NEWS

NATIONAL CATHOLIC OFFICE FOR INFORMATION

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WASHINGTON--Observations made by Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians on the question of the eucharist Ministry represent "a remarkable advance in convergence toward a common understanding," leaders of the two groups have concluded.

The opinion was voiced by Dr. Paul C. Empie of New York and Auxiliary Bishop T. Austin Murphy of Baltimore in the foreword to a volume entitled Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV: Eucharist and Ministry. The book is the fourth in a series of publications issued since doctrinal discussions between the two Christian traditions began in mid-1965.

The work is scheduled for publication during the upcoming 11th meeting of the two groups, which will be held in Chicago from October 30 to November 1.

Discussions between Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians have been cosponsored by the U.S.A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, of which Dr. Empie is general secretary, and the U.S. Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Bishop Murphy serves as chairman of the Bishops' Committee's

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subcommission for dialogue with Lutherans.

The latest volume includes a joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic statement: Common Observations on Eucharistic Ministry, in addition to chapters of separate reflections by representatives of each of the two groups. It represents more than two years spent in the preparation of studies, in conversations and the drafting of reports.

Dr. Empie and Bishop Murphy have emphasized that the studies and position papers represent the views of the authors and do not constitute official statements by the churches of which they are members.

Roman Catholic participants in the dialogue introduce their reflection by noting that "at first glance the Roman Catholic attitude toward the Lutheran eucharistic Ministry would seem easily determinable.

"A simplified expression of the traditional Roman Catholic outlook is that those who preside at the eucharist do so in virtue of being ordained by a bishop who stands in succession to the apostles...Among most Lutherans there is no claim to an episcopate in historical succession to the apostles. Thus the Lutheran eucharistic ministry would seem to be deficient in what Catholics have hitherto regarded as essential elements.

"Yet, as we Catholics in this dialogue have examined the problem, our traditional objections to the Lutheran eucharistic Ministry were seen to be of less force...and reasons emerged for a...positive reappraisal," they stated.

The Catholic participants said examination of the historical

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and theological evidence led them "to doubt whether Roman Catholics should continue to question the eucharistic presence of the Lord in the midst of the Lutherans when they meet to celebrate the Lord's supper." They said:

"As Roman Catholic theologians, we acknowledge in the spirit of Vatican II that the Lutheran communities with which we have been in dialogue are truly Christian churches, possessing the elements of holiness and truth that mark them as organs of grace and salvation.

"Furthermore...we have found serious defects in the arguments customarily used against the validity of the eucharistic Ministry of the Lutheran churches. In fact, we see no persuasive reason to deny the possibility of the Roman Catholic church recognizing the validity of this Ministry."

"Accordingly," they continued, "we ask the authorities of the Roman Catholic church whether the ecumenical urgency flowing from Christ's will for unity may not dictate that the Roman Catholic church recognize the validity of the Lutheran Ministry and, correspondingly, the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the eucharistic celebrations of the Lutheran churches."

The Catholic theologians said they did not attempt to decide whether such recognition by the Roman Catholic church "would be constitutive of validity or merely confirmatory of existing validity." And they added:

"In speaking of the recognition of a Lutheran ministry not ordained by bishops, we are not in any way challenging the age-old insistence on ordination by a bishop within our own church or covertly suggesting that it be changed."

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Participating in the preparation of the Catholic paper, in addition to Bishop Murphy, were: Msgr. Joseph W. Baker, vice chairman of the Ecumenical Commission of the St. Louis archdiocese; Bishop William W. Baum of Springfield-Cape Girardeau; Rev. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., professor of Sacred Scripture, St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore; Rev. Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., professor of Patristics at Woodstock College, New York; Rev. Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B., professor of Patristics, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.; Rev. Maurice C. Duchaine, S.S., professor of dogmatic theology, St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore; Rev. John F. Hotchkin, Associate Director, Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs; Professor James F. McCue, School of Religion, University of Iowa; Rev. Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., executive director of the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, Collegeville; Dr. Harry J. McSorley, visiting professor of theology at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto; Rev. Anthony T. Padovano, professor of dogmatic theology, Immaculate Conception Seminary, Darlington, N.J.; Rev. Jerome D. Quinn, professor of Old and New Testament, St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; Rev. George H. Tavard, visiting professor, Methodist Theological School, Delaware, Ohio.

The Lutheran participants, in their statement, affirmed the churchly character of the Roman Catholic community and the validity of the Roman Catholic Church's ministry and sacraments.

"For Lutherans," they declared, "the church exists wherever there is a community of believers among whom the Gospel of God's grace in Christ is responsibly proclaimed and applied and the sacraments are administered in accordance with our Lord's intention."

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They said they had found in the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue "a fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments which confirms...that the Roman Catholic church is an authentic church of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Lutheran theologians recommended that the churches they represent "be urged to declare formally their judgment that the ordained ministers of the Roman Catholic church are engaged in a valid ministry of the Gospel, announcing the gospel of Christ and administering the sacraments of faith as their chief responsibilities..."

Such a declaration, they said, should also acknowledge that "the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are truly present in their celebrations of the sacrament of the altar."

Working with Dr. Empie in preparation of the Lutheran reflections were: Dr. Kent S. Knutson, president, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque; Dr. Fred Kramer, professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ill.; Dr. George A. Lindbeck, professor of Historical Theology at Yale University Divinity School, New Haven; Dr. Paul D. Opsahl, Associate Executive Secretary, Division of Theological Studies, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., New York; Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn, graduate professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; Dr. Warren A. Quanbeck, professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Seminary, St. Paul; Dr. John Reumann, professor of New Testament, Lutheran Seminary at Philadelphia; Dr. Joseph Sittler, professor of Theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV: Eucharist and Ministry,

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consisting of approximately 250 pages, will be published through the facilities of the Missouri Synod's Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis in an edition of 44,000 copies.

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