



## UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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### **AN AGREED STATEMENT ON THE LIMA DOCUMENT: 'BAPTISM, EUCHARIST, AND MINISTRY'**

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Link to - ["Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry"](#) Lima, Peru 1982

The Eastern Orthodox/Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States, during its 28th and 29th meetings (1983-84), studied the "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" document of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

We welcome the "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" document and we take this opportunity to comment on its separate sections. In what follows we call attention to those elements which we particularly appreciate and affirm as representative of the faith of the Church and note those which we judge to require further clarification.

#### **Baptism**

The presentation of the theological meaning of baptism as renewal of life in Christ, participation in Christ's death and resurrection, cleansing from sin, the gift of the Spirit, incorporation into the body of Christ, and a sign of the kingdom, sets forth essential elements of faith in regard to this sacrament. Chief among these are the affirmation that Christian baptism is in water and the Spirit, in the name of the Trinity, and that baptism is an unrepeatable act. We particularly appreciate the way in which the document relates the sacrament of baptism so intimately to faith and views baptism as the foundation of a life-long process of growth in Christ. In this and in its treatment of the practice of baptism, the document offers an approach to the resolution of historical controversies over baptism, especially those about infant and adult baptism. In regard to both practices, the document gives due significance to the faith and life of the Church. Because faith is so central to baptism, we agree with the document's admonition to the churches to exercise discernment in their baptismal practice, particularly but not exclusively in the baptism of infants. At the same time we are mindful that baptism is a divine gift received and celebrated in the context of the community of faith. For this reason, we also agree that the celebration of baptism should include, as far as possible, the local community of faith.

The issue of the unity of the sacraments of initiation is treated in a sensitive way. We affirm with the Lima Statement that baptism, in its full meaning, signifies and effects both "participation in Christ's death and resurrection" and "the receiving of the Spirit." We further recognize that each of our churches expresses this unity in its rites, though there are significant differences in practice. For the Orthodox, the conferring of baptism, chrismation, and eucharist takes place in a single liturgical celebration, whether for adults or infants. For Roman Catholics, reception of eucharist and confirmation are delayed in the case of infant baptism. These practices are based on different pastoral and theological concerns. However we affirm with the document that catechesis and nurture in the Christian life are necessary in all cases.

Within this agreement on the essentials of baptism, we also recognize the need for further clarification of a number of points.

First, the action and role of the Holy Spirit in the structure of the rite of Christian initiation should be as strongly developed in the section on baptism as it is in the section on eucharist.

Second, the role of the faith of the church in baptism is not clearly enough explained. In

our view it is not sufficient to treat this matter merely in the section on baptismal practice.

Third, the way in which the unity of the sacraments of initiation is expressed in practice has doctrinal implications which need further consideration and which suggest the need for revision of practice. For the Orthodox, the unity of the sacraments of initiation is maintained in both adult and infant baptism by the acts of chrismation and reception of the Holy Eucharist. For Roman Catholics, this unity is clearly expressed in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, although it is not as obvious in the practice of infant baptism. The Consultation agrees that the practice of admitting or not admitting baptized infants to the Eucharists needs further exploration.

Finally, we find that the document's use of the terminology contrasting "believer's baptism" and "infant baptism" to be unfortunate. Despite the disclaimers in Commentary (12), it suggests, against our convictions, that baptized infants are unbelievers or that faith is lacking in the case of infant baptism. In so doing the document misses an opportunity to move the discussion beyond the terms of historical debates.

Despite the need for such clarifications, the Consultation agrees that in the Lima Statement we can recognize to a considerable degree the faith of the Church in regard to baptism. Because of this agreement, we recommend that our two churches explore the possibility of a formal recognition of each other's baptism as a sacrament of our unity in the body of Christ, although we acknowledge that any such recognition is conditioned by other factors.

### **Eucharist**

We welcome the recognition of the centrality of the eucharist in the life of the Church and the theological breadth of the document's presentation of the meaning of the eucharist. In its treatment of eucharist as thanksgiving, memorial, invocation, communion, and meal of the kingdom, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" succeeds in conveying a sense of the full significance of the eucharistic celebration. Its accent on frequent celebration of the eucharist and participation in communion we also find in keeping with the faith of the Church. The strong emphasis on the Trinitarian dynamics of the eucharist, especially the balanced presentation of the role of the Holy Spirit and the role of Christ, makes it possible to move beyond the terms of some historical controversies. The emphasis on the "epicletic" nature of the entire eucharistic celebration may help to overcome controversy about the moment of consecration. Similarly, the affirmation of Christ as High Priest and host who gathers the community and is present in the eucharistic gifts in a unique way may help to overcome excessive concentration on the eucharistic elements in isolation from the liturgical action of the community.

We also affirm the document's view of the eucharist as the sacrament of the unique and unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ in behalf of all. We likewise appreciate the way in which "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" expresses the social and ethical dimensions of eucharist by seeing in Christ's self-offering the source and model of Christians' self-offering as "living and holy sacrifices in their daily lives," as servants of reconciliation in the world. In addition we welcome the document's emphasis on the eucharist's role as uniting the whole world to the offering of Christ, and as preparing for the sanctification and transformation of all creation. Eucharist is thus integrated into the whole of life and cannot be understood as an isolated liturgical event or simply as an expression of individual piety.

Because the presentation of the eucharist is remarkably rich yet succinct, there are inevitably some points that require further clarification or development.

First, we would welcome fuller discussion of the way in which eucharist manifests the nature of the church as the body of Christ. Eucharist is related to the very being of the Church and cannot be seen simply as a strengthening of the grace of baptism. Second, the relationship between Christ's sacrifice and his presence in the eucharist requires further clarification, particularly in regard to his offering of himself to the Father and his giving of himself to us as spiritual food.

Third, we note that "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" mentions the practice of reservation of the eucharist without presenting an adequate theological rationale for it. For the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, it is our faith that the bread and wine become and remain the body and blood of Christ that allows us to reserve the sacrament. We would therefore welcome further elaboration of this point.

Finally, concerning the possibility of eucharist sharing, we do not find that growing consensus on eucharistic theology and practice is of itself sufficient for such sharing

among our churches. The resolution of questions connected with ministry and the nature and faith of the Church are also important, as we note below.

Although we find such clarifications and further considerations necessary, we nevertheless are in agreement that the section on eucharist represents to a considerable degree the faith of the Church.

### **Ministry**

By locating the ordained ministry in the context of the Church as the people of God, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" appropriately relates ordained ministry to the ministry of all Christians, while also clearly distinguishing the two. We appreciate its affirmation of the diverse and complementary gifts for ministry of all the baptized. At the same time, we recognize the importance of its assertion that the ordained ministry, tracing its origins to apostolic times, is a permanent and constitutive element of the life of the Church. In this regard, we also commend especially the recognition that "a ministry of *episkope* is necessary to express and safeguard the unity of the body.

We find helpful the treatment of the historical development of the three-fold ministry, as well as the delineation of the functions of bishop, presbyter, and deacon, are adequately outlined and balanced.

Apostolic succession is rightly interpreted as involving the total life of the Church. The view that ordained ministry is an integral part of the apostolic tradition is especially useful in advancing ecumenical discussion. Ordained ministry is thus understood as one of the expressions of the Church's apostolicity. This understanding, in our judgment, is confirmed by the act of ordination within the believing community which signifies the bestowal of the gift of ministry through the laying on of hands of the bishop and the epiclesis of the Holy Spirit.

We commend the treatment of the authority of the ordained ministry as an authority of service exercised through love. We affirm with the document that ordained ministry derives from Jesus Christ and is to be exercised in a manner that is personal, collegial, and communal. Thus interdependence and reciprocity between the faithful and their ordained ministers is rightly emphasized.

We welcome the document's invitation to all the churches to reexamine their understanding and practice of ordained ministry. Some churches are challenged by the possibility of recognizing the ministry of *episkope* in those churches which have not maintained the historical pattern of the three-fold ministry. Other churches are challenged by the possibility of recognizing the value of the historical pattern and incorporating it into their structure. These challenges may offer a fruitful way toward ecumenical agreement on the ordained ministry.

Along with the areas of agreement indicated above, there is need for clarification on other matters treated in this section.

"Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" attempts to integrate two approaches to ministry: one - personal, the other - functional, by recognizing the charism of ministry as a gift of God in and for the Church. We appreciate this effort, but do not find it entirely successful. For example, the non-repeatability of ordination is mentioned only in passing in the context of conditions for ordination; its theological rationale is not adequately developed.

In general, the document presents as possible, even laudable opinions, certain aspects of ordained ministry that we consider normative for the Church's life and structure. These normative aspects include the three-fold ministry; the historical succession of office holders in the episcopal ministry; the exclusive conferral of ordination by those entrusted with the *episkope* of the community; and the presidency of the eucharist exclusively by an ordained minister.

Although "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" recognizes, at least to a degree, the sacramental nature of the ordained ministry, it does not adequately develop this important aspect of ministry. This is particularly evident in its failure to relate more closely ordained ministry to the eucharist, as the central sacrament and expression of the Church's reality. While we appreciate the description of ordained ministry as having a priestly character, we would require a treatment of the differences between the priesthood of all believers, the ministerial priesthood, and of their relation to the priesthood of Christ.

In addition to the document's emphasis on *episkope* as necessary ministry in the Church, we affirm that the episcopal office is a constitutive element of the structure of

the Church. This office exercises primacy in teaching, leadership of worship, and government in the local church and has a responsibility for ordering the local church to the universal church. It follows that complete reconciliation of the churches will depend on the presence in those churches of this episcopal office.

In its commendable attention to the communal context of ordained ministry, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" only implies the prophetic dimension of ministry, that is to say, the God-given authority to challenge, confront, and correct the community. In this context the historical role of binding and loosing could well have been developed.

Finally, we understand mutual recognition of ministries as part of a process of growth toward unity, marked by several steps. In our view, agreement on the understanding of ordained ministry and mutual recognition of ministries are important steps in this process but they are not of themselves sufficient for the restoration of full communion among the churches. Further doctrinal consensus is required. For example, because of traditional and theological reasons the question of ordination of women to the priesthood is of greater consequence and hence a greater obstacle to eucharistic sharing than the document suggests. A prerequisite for the restoration of eucharistic sharing is the satisfactory articulation of our apostolic faith.

Douglaston, NY  
October 27, 1984  
29th Meeting

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