

# Baptism and Growth in Communion

Report of the  
Lutheran-Roman Catholic  
Commission on Unity

The Lutheran World Federation  
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

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# Preamble

Lutherans and Catholics have been in official dialogue since the mid-1960s. The bilateral dialogues and resulting reports have guided the ecclesial journey from conflict to communion, most notably the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. Dialogue matters and the resulting consensus continually strengthens the ongoing quest to be one in Christ. The Joint Commemoration of the Reformation in the Lund Cathedral (2016), presided over by Pope Francis and the leaders of The Lutheran World Federation, witnesses to the fruits of these dialogues.

The most recent Lutheran – Roman Catholic Commission on Unity completed its work in 2019 with the Report *Baptism and Growth in Communion*. This Report includes important pneumatological impulses for ongoing theological and ecclesiological discussion. It makes a significant step in proposing a differentiating consensus on baptism.

The Report was studied and received by the Council of The Lutheran World Federation in June 2019.

The Report was studied and critically evaluated by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with the assistance of experts. In the process, the Catholic side has expressed serious concerns that focus, above all, on various ecclesiological presuppositions and consequences as well as ambiguities and misunderstandings in the chosen terminology.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and The Lutheran World Federation have sought solutions. The two co-chairs of the Commission have also been involved in this process of clarification. Unfortunately, these efforts have not led to a satisfactory outcome.

Therefore, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity can only consider the report as an open-ended study document not yet ready for reception. Due to the lack of approval, the Report should only be made available to the public together with this preamble.

After a thorough assessment of the current situation, and the issues requiring further clarification, The Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity are willing to continue the ecumenical dialogue, especially in view of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Diet of Augsburg and the Augsburg Confession in the year 2030.

Geneva and Rome, June 2021

Rev. Dr Martin Junge  
General Secretary  
The Lutheran World Federation

Kurt Cardinal Koch  
President  
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

# Preface

The prayer of Jesus that his followers may be one has, for more than 50 years, been the main encouragement for the doctrinal dialogues between The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church. The fifth round of these dialogues began in 2008 when the present Lutheran – Roman Catholic Commission on Unity was appointed. In our turn, we have tried faithfully to deepen our common vision of the visible unity between our churches.

Our first document, *From Conflict to Communion* (2013) had the intention to prepare theologically for the joint ecumenical commemoration of the Reformation in 2017. Our deep joy is that both of us, Lutherans and Catholics, can confess together a common faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our guiding rule is the doctrine of justification, which expresses the message of the Gospel. The doctrine of justification constantly orients all teaching and practice of our churches towards Christ. As it shapes our teaching and practice, it also asks us where we as churches have put up obstacles in the way of the good news of God's mercy.

A decisive and encouraging step on the way to fuller unity was taken on Reformation Day in 2016, when Pope Francis and the representatives of The Lutheran World Federation solemnly prayed together in the Cathedral of Lund, Sweden. In that prayer the call was issued to seek further growth in communion sourced in baptism.

In this second document of our work, *Baptism and Growth in Communion*, we have explored the ecclesial reality that both, Catholics and Lutherans, share. The fact of this shared reality had allowed the Fathers of Vatican II to speak of the Christian communities outside the Roman Catholic church as ecclesial communities.

Since that time, there has been a growth in communion, a growth in mutual understanding and identifying what we hold in common, a growth in praying, celebrating, working and often living together. How can this situation be described theologically?

*Baptism and Growth in Communion* starts from the mutual recognition of baptism by Lutheran and Catholic communities and explores the ecclesial consequences of this fact. Baptism does not only refer to a person's relation to God, but it has – as incorporation into the body of Christ – an ecclesial dimension. Thus, the question arises since baptized individuals are members of body of Christ, are not the communities in which they live their Christian lives also members of the body of Christ.

Baptism is a once-for-all-beginning, and therefore it extends over the whole life of the baptized who need continuous nourishment for their Christian lives through the means of grace administered in the respective communities. Taking baptism seriously challenges the baptizing communities to examine whether they can recognize each other as members of the body of Christ. Here, the word "recognition" is not used in a canonical sense, rather, it is developed in four interacting levels.

"Recognition" has

- a theological meaning, in receiving the results of ecumenical studies and dialogues that have identified areas of common doctrinal understanding, as in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*;
- an existential meaning, in perceiving and acknowledging the presence of the means of grace in the other community, participating in them as much as currently possible as the means by which faith, love, and hope are created, sustained, and increased;
- a spiritual meaning in perceiving and acknowledging that the Holy Spirit uses the other community's practices and endowments to create the fruits of the Spirit;

- a practical meaning, in referring to the countless practices of cooperation between Catholics and Lutherans and between their communities.

While the call for a mutual recognition of the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic communities as churches has not been easy, insofar as the actual concepts of “church” are different on both sides, our document proposes to express the shared ecclesial reality by developing and using the concept of “member of the body of Christ.” This is a mediating concept to describe what we jointly perceive and jointly describe, notwithstanding the differences of the concepts of “church.”

The precise relation of the concept of “member of the body of Christ” to the respective concepts of “church” needs also in the future to be further explored which may challenge the discussions in both communities about the understanding of what church is. Our historical explorations of the concept of church have revealed different concepts of church even within each confession so that we needed to acknowledge broader, not only institutional and canonical approaches.

Since Vatican II, there has been a long debate in Catholic theology on the precise meaning of the “subsistit” in *Lumen gentium* and the relation between the Roman Catholic church to the Christian communities outside of it. In this debate, many different views were presented. One will find signs of this debate also in our document: In an Appendix, one Catholic member expresses his dissenting opinion from what other Catholic members have agreed upon.

The concept of the communion of these members of the body of Christ is a dynamic concept that does not describe a final stage of communion, but rather perceives and challenges these communities to grow in their communion, as the title of our document expresses.

We hope that the elaboration of the ecclesial consequences of the mutual recognition of baptism together with the perception and recognition of the shared ecclesial reality between Lutherans and Catholics will allow for and encourage the deepening of joint spiritual and ecclesial life on the way of growing to a mutual understanding of each other as churches, to increase opportunities for Eucharistic sharing, and to make progress in the recognition of each other’s ordained ministry.

We now present this document to our churches and encourage their members and leaders to study these reflections. The reception and implementation of ecumenical documents is an integral part on our common journey towards full communion.

Through the proclamation of the good news of the Gospel, we show the way to our Savior Jesus Christ and serve the world by promoting human dignity, solidarity, justice, and care for creation.

Helsinki and Woodstock, 25 March 2020.

Eero Huovinen

Bishop Emeritus of Helsinki

Lutheran Co-Chair

William Kenney C. P.

Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham

Roman Catholic Co-Chair

# Introduction

The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity worked from 2009-2018, completing two tasks: the document *From Conflict to Communion* (2013) for the common commemoration of the Reformation in 2017 and the present document, *Baptism and Growth in Communion*.

The topic of the study was mandated and the members of the Commission were appointed by their churches through The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU). The members of this Commission represented Lutherans and Catholics in many diverse areas of the world, coming from Brazil, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Norway, Switzerland, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and the United States. During its years of dialogue, the Commission met in Italy (Bose), United Kingdom (Welwyn Garden City), Finland (Helsinki), Germany (Brekum, Paderborn, Regensburg), Hungary (Budapest), Italy (Bose), Japan (Kyoto), Poland (Opole), and France (Klingenthal). The Commission mourns the deaths of two of its members who passed away before the dialogue completed its work, Prof. Dr Turid Karlsen Seim and Prof. Dr Ronald F. Thiemann.

## 1. The Context of this Study

The context for the document *Baptism and Growth in Communion* was the approaching fifth centenary in 2017 of the beginning of the Reformation. After fifty years of intense Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, the commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary raised the question of how far Lutherans and Catholics had come in their journey towards communion and what further steps could be taken towards visible unity. The document *From Conflict to Communion* described jointly the history of the Reformation and discussed its theological challenges in light of fifty years of Catholic-Lutheran dialogue. In this way it prepared for the joint commemoration of the quincentennial in Lund, Sweden in 2016.

The world-level official dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics began immediately after Vatican Council II and completed its fourth phase in 2006. The Commission that has now completed its work thus represents the fifth phase of this dialogue. It extends the work of the previous phases, relating especially to the Lutheran-Catholic world-level dialogue reports, *The Gospel and the Church* (Malta Report, 1972), *The Eucharist* (1978), *Ways to Community* (1980), *The Ministry in the Church* (1981), *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* (1990), *Church and Justification* (1993), and *The Apostolicity of the Church* (2006).

The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ, 1999), the most important basis of this current document, asked for further work on the ecclesial significance of its agreement on justification.<sup>1</sup> Christians experience the saving grace of justification in the event of their baptism. Baptism has immediate ecclesiological significance, for one enters the church through baptism. The current study on baptism and the growth in communion it initiates aims to clarify this significance.

*The Apostolicity of the Church* (2006) serves as the immediate context upon which the present document builds since both the mutual recognition of Lutheran and Catholic communities as churches and growth toward mutual recognition of one another's ordained ministries requires that both the communities and their ministries visibly mediate the faith of the apostolic church. This study of apostolicity resulted in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2000), §43. Hereafter JDDJ.

affirmation, “Today we therefore mutually recognize, at a fundamental level, the presence of apostolicity in our traditions. This recognition is not negated by the important differences still to be investigated”.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Baptism as the Source of Growth in Mutual Recognition**

Baptism is a sacrament mutually recognized in both churches and constitutes their common basis of communion. But in the dialogues to date, the incorporation of the baptized into the one body of Christ had been more presupposed than treated explicitly as a topic of dialogue. The present proposal was to work out the shared but implicit theology of baptism among Lutherans and Catholics and to do this with an eye to their growing communion as churches. By working out a commonly held theology of baptism, the present dialogue contributes to further growth in communion in two respects. First, it demonstrates the extensive communion already existing between the two churches on the basis of a common baptism. Second, it argues for a common membership in the body of Christ by Lutheran and Catholic baptismal communities.

The very possibility of Catholic and Lutheran communities being recognized as members of the one body of Christ is related to baptism insofar as it is through baptism that Lutherans and Catholics are members of the one church of Christ through sacramental incorporation into Christ’s body. Growing communion through participation in the marks or *elementa* of the church deepens their relationship with Christ and intensifies the communion of these communities with each other. Thus, there is a mutual interiority between the relationship of particular churches or communities with Christ, with the one church of Christ, and with each other.

## **3. The Method**

The aim of the present study is to make more clear to our two churches the ecclesial unity which Catholics and Lutherans currently share. This is done, first, by illuminating the consequences of sharing in the body of Christ by both communities precisely as baptismal communities and, second, by showing the consequences of this sharing in terms of the mutual recognition of each other as members of the body of Christ. The second line of argument is based on mutual recognition of each other’s church and mutual acknowledgement of the other’s ministry as an instrument of the Spirit following discernment of the fruit of the Spirit in the other community. The Commission finds precedent of this discernment in the witness of the New Testament. Growth in communion results from living out the baptismal call for an intensification of a shared sacramental life and service to the world.

The present document proceeds from the conviction that there is a single Body of Christ which is neither divided among communities nor a sum total of a collection of communities. Lutheran and Catholic communities believe that they belong to this one Body of Christ.

## **4. Outline of the Chapters**

Chapter One develops the biblical witness concerning baptism and its identification as the unifying bond between Lutherans and Catholics. Chapter Two describes the reception of the biblical witness in the liturgical rite of baptism and baptism’s relationship to ministry and the Eucharist. In these two chapters the Commission develops an ecumenical theology of baptism. Chapter Three argues that not only individuals but also faith communities are members of the body of Christ. It also argues that mutual recognition follows upon discernment of the ecclesial elements and the fruit of the Spirit in the other community. Chapter Four describes how growth in communion occurs through an intensification of

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<sup>2</sup> Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, *The Apostolicity of the Church: Study Document of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity [of] The Lutheran World Federation [and] Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2006), §160.

sacramental life and service to the world. Chapter Five proposes six commitments for expressing growth in communion arising from a shared baptism.

The commission presents this document to our respective churches through the two mandating bodies, the LWF and the PCPCU. The commission also offers this document to the members of our churches and to the wider ecumenical movement for study and reception with the hope that it both signals the growth in communion achieved these past fifty years and leads to mutual commitments that will bring our churches closer toward the goal of full and visible communion.

# Chapter 1: The Biblical Witness and the Unifying Bond of Baptism

## 1.1 The Foundational Role of Baptism in the New Testament

(1) *Mutual recognition of baptism, which unites the churches, is rooted in a shared understanding of the New Testament witness.* Many early Christian writings mention baptism as the essential rite of initiation. As far as the source texts demonstrate, baptism is the praxis of the post-Easter mission of the nascent church. Baptism plays a central role in Christian life for every believer and for the churches.

(2) *Lutherans and Catholics have a common understanding of both the liturgy and theology of baptism rooted in the New Testament witness.* This chapter will neither give a complete overview of pertinent references nor will it reconstruct a history of baptism in the biblical period. It will concentrate on those aspects which became significant for the tradition, and it will deepen and develop a common understanding and practice of baptism. The first section outlines the fundamental role of baptism in the early church. Lutherans and Catholics affirm the command of the Lord; they witness that there is one baptism for all; and they develop the relation between faith and baptism. They understand the theological power of the New Testament witness as an impulse that strengthens ecumenical relations.

### 1.1.1 The Command of the Lord

(1) *According to the Gospel of Matthew,* the risen Christ came to his disciples and commanded them: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19f.). Christians have always sought to fulfil this command.

(2) *According to Acts,* on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem those listening to Peter’s sermon asked: “What should we do?” (Acts 2:37). And Peter answered: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Luke narrates that thousands of believers followed this invitation (Acts 2:41). In this way, the first Christian community was founded: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). This description of ecclesial community has continued to be essential for the whole church through the ages.

(3) *Baptism is a Christian identity marker.* Because of the command of the Lord, there was no doubt about the praxis, the necessity, and the soteriological effect of baptism in the New Testament and the earliest faith communities. There were some prior rites of ablution, both in Hellenistic religions and in the Judaism of the time of Jesus. These washing practices helped people understand the symbolic language of baptism. The baptism of John (Mk 1:4-8, par. Mt 3:1, 5-11; Lk 3:16; cf. Jn 1:26; Acts 13:24; 19:7) was very close to the Christian practice because it was related to conversion, to confession of sins, and to Messianic expectations. But according to the New Testament, John himself promised a new baptism “with the Holy Spirit” (Mk 1:8) or “with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16). The apostles and other preachers practiced a new form of initiation in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### 1.1.2 One Baptism for All

(1) *In the New Testament, there is no self-baptizing; everyone has to be baptized by another human being.* This was the practice of John the Baptist, and it is the practice in Christian communities. Although repentance and faith belong essentially to baptism, the reception of baptism by the baptized person is the liturgical center of baptism. This receptivity is of deep theological significance because it expresses the power of God’s grace that frees sinners from their sins and incorporates them into the body of Christ.

(2) *Baptism is a free action.* The willingness of a person to be baptized is an elementary expression of repentance and faith (Acts 8:36; cf. Mk 1:15). He or she trusts the promise of God and wishes both to receive the forgiveness of sins and to become a member of the church in order to begin a Christian journey in expectation of the fulfilment of God's promise in the kingdom of God.

(3) *Every baptism is both personal and ecclesial.* A personal decision of faith, a personal confession of sins, and a personal reception of forgiveness are necessary. Baptism, however, does not isolate individuals, but connects them with all the other members of the church. Therefore, Paul is able to write "we" when he explains the rite and meaning of baptism (Rom 6:3f.). The personal and the ecclesial aspect essentially belong together because the church is a community of faith, and the baptized faithful live as members of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27; Rom 12:4f.).

(4) *Baptism makes all believers one in Christ.* In his letter to the Galatians, Paul reflects on the religious revolution which occurs through the Gospel of Jesus Christ: "For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26-28). Baptism is the same for women and men (Acts 2:41), Jews and Greeks, slaves and free persons (1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11), poor and rich (cf. 1 Cor 1:26-28), wise and foolish (Rom 1:14).

(5) *All disciples are called to baptize.* According to the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 28:16-20) and the canonical ending of the Gospel of Mark (Mk 16:15f.), it is the mission of all disciples to proclaim the Gospel and to baptize all nations. Thus, to baptize is not a privilege of the apostles, but it is a charge to all believers. Indeed, in the history of the church, the theological insight allowed for the un-baptized to baptize "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19).

### 1.1.3 Faith and Baptism

(1) *In the New Testament, there is a strong relation between baptism and faith.* Faith seeks baptism, because faith recognizes the election and mission of the people of God to which the believer wants to belong (cf. Gal 3:21-25). Baptism is an expression of faith, because it connects the believer with Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 4:4f.). Faith is a gift of God, which believers receive, share, and affirm in new life (cf. Gal 3-4). In a similar way, baptism is a gift of God, which the baptized receive and affirm in the liturgy and the faith community (cf. 2 Cor 1:21f.).

(2) *Baptism is a proper place for the confession of faith.* Many old formulas of confession of faith belong to the celebration of baptism. Recalling their conversion, Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "In every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming" (1 Thess 1:8-10). And in the letter to the Romans, Paul proclaims: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:9). The confession of faith belongs to baptism as the source of a new life of trust and obedience to God (cf. Rom 6:3-4).

(3) *Baptized children receive the gift of God's Spirit; they receive God's grace; and they share the faith of their Christian parents and that of the whole church.* This faith is itself a gift of God in which they will hopefully mature. Although they do not have to confess personal sins, they are freed from the power of sin and death, which has overshadowed human life since Adam's sin. It should be noted that the New Testament contains no explicit reference to the baptism of infants. The normal case described and reflected in the New Testament is the baptism of adults. Nevertheless, good scriptural reasons exist for the baptism of infants. It is testified that a whole "house" received baptism (Acts 16:15, 30-33; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16; 16:15; cf. Acts 10:23-48; 11:13-17). In ancient times, children belonged to a house community. Children were important members of the Christian communities (cf. Col 3:18-25; Eph 6:1-4);

as the daughter or son of a Christian mother or father, they were “not unclean,” but “holy” (1 Cor 7:14). According to the promise in Joel 3:1-5 that Peter quotes in his Pentecost sermon, “your sons and your daughters” would receive the Holy Spirit as well as adults (Acts 2:17). The comparison between circumcision, which was usually performed the eighth day (Phil 3:5; cf. Gen 17:12; 21:4; Lev 12:3), and baptism, which is seen as “circumcision without hands” (Col 2:11), may be another indicator of the baptism of infants. Children are welcomed into the house of faith. Jesus himself blessed children (Mk 10:13-16, par. Mt 19:13-15; Lk 18:15-17). When the disciples disputed who was the greatest, Jesus “took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them: Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me” (Mk 9:36f., par. Mt 18:2-5; Lk 9:47f.).

## 1.2 The Liturgy of Baptism

(1) *The theological understanding of baptism which guides Lutherans and Catholics to mutual recognition is rooted in the liturgy of baptism.* The New Testament does not describe a liturgy of baptism. However, many different references seem to belong to a common baptismal theology and liturgy in the first Christian communities. Different New Testament writings highlight different characteristics. They show the richness of New Testament baptismal theology that is to be discovered anew in every time. This section focuses on the liturgical elements of baptism found in the New Testament. It identifies the essential rites, the Trinitarian formula, and baptism with water as well as other liturgical signs which emphasize the renewal of a person in the ecclesial community.

(2) *Liturgy and catechesis belong together in a common practice and understanding of baptism.* The New Testament contains many traces of both pre- and postbaptismal catechesis. There is no baptism in faith without catechesis; there is no catechesis without reference to the celebration of baptism. The connection with catechesis guarantees that baptism is not just a rite but a true expression of conversion which leads to new life. On the other hand, the relation between catechesis and the liturgy ensures that catechesis is rooted in the real life of believers and the church.

### 1.2.1 Liturgical Elements

(1) *From the very beginning, Christian communities celebrated baptism.* Baptism is a liturgy in which people commit to a journey of faith, confess their faith, intercede, and give thanks and praise to God. Liturgy unites words, material objects, and gestures. The ritual of baptism is an effective action that accomplishes what it signifies because it is done according to the will of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Spirit.

(2) *The baptismal formula is at the center of the baptismal liturgy.* The Gospel of Matthew gives the full Trinitarian formula of baptism. The disciples are called to teach all nations and to baptize them “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). The Trinitarian formula is an old tradition already found in the *Didache*, Justin the Martyr, Ignatius of Antioch,<sup>3</sup> and other Church Fathers as well. The “and” in the Trinitarian formula is not an addition of different “Gods,” but an indicator of the Trinitarian communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The singular “name” indicates the monotheistic confession of Christian faith (cf. Mk 12:28-34, par. Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28). In Acts and in the Pauline letters, a Christological focus is typical, as indicated by the phrases “in Christ” (Rom 6:3f.; Gal 3:27) and “in the name of Christ” (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; cf. 1 Cor 1:13,15).<sup>4</sup> There are some indications of different practices in the first generations, although in those instances a Christological focus does not negate a Trinitarian emphasis, and a Trinitarian formula includes the Christological focus.

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<sup>3</sup> *Didache* 7,1.3. Justin Martyr, *Apology*, 1, 61. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 13, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Didache* 9, 5 says: “in the name of the Lord.”

Because of its comprehensiveness, the Trinitarian formula is binding for both Lutherans and Catholics, as well as for most other Christian communities.

(3) *Christians are baptized with water.* Water is an essential element of baptism. John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River (Mk 1:9-11, par. Mt 3:13-17; Lk 3:21f.). When baptizing, John the Baptist promised that another was to come with a baptism of water and the Spirit. In referring to John's baptism, the *Didache* speaks about "living water."<sup>5</sup> After Philip's scriptural catechesis, the Ethiopian eunuch, "a court official of the Candace" (Acts 8:27), responded: "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36). And Luke narrates: "Both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him" (Acts 8:38). Water became the element of baptism (cf. Acts 10:47). It is an open question whether immersion or washing was the original form of baptism, or if both forms were used. Both rites were accepted since immersion under water and rising from the water symbolize death and resurrection (cf. Rom 6:3f.; Col 2:12f.) and washing symbolizes purification from sins (cf. 1 Cor 6:11).

(4) *The New Testament contains rich symbols for the baptismal liturgy.* The metaphor of "clothing (with) Christ" in Gal 3:27 may indicate a christening robe worn by the baptized. In Hebrews, the laying on of hands is associated with baptism (Heb 6:2). The First Letter of John mentions an "anointing" (*chrisma*), which seems to suggest another interpretation of baptism (1 Jn 2:20-27), perhaps with unction as a central rite signifying affiliation to Christ (cf. Lk 4:18; Act 4:27; 10:38; Heb 1:9). In Second Corinthians, Paul refers to "anointing" when he writes about baptism (2 Cor 1:21f.; cf. Eph 1:13; 4:30). Anointing reflects an old custom familiar to different Christian communities. Many interpretations since ancient times understand the "sealing" mentioned in Rev 7:2-8 as evidence for a rite in the context of baptism. In the Christian tradition, these and other symbols illustrate the meaning of baptism even though, unlike water, they are not essential for the baptismal rite.

## 1.2.2 Baptism and Catechesis

(1) *Baptism is related to catechesis.* According to Mt 28:18-20, baptizing and teaching characterize the mission of the disciples who follow the command of the Lord. Through catechesis, human beings learn the heart of the Gospel and its freedom, allowing them to enter the community of the disciples. Christian education and formation is important for communicating the truth of faith, which is God's gift to fulfil the life of believers.

(2) *Pre-baptismal catechesis is an introduction to the mystery of faith* (cf. 1 Cor 2:1-4). Jesus himself was a preacher and a teacher. His disciples learn from him in order to teach others who themselves in turn become teachers (Mt 28:16-20). Every apostle is a teacher (cf. 1 Cor 4:17; Col 1:28; 2:7). Teachers, together with apostles and prophets, are appointed by God in the church (1 Cor 12:28). They work to build up the church and help others to grow in faith (Eph 4:1-16). Teaching belongs together with preaching, motivating, admonishing, and comforting. Catechesis is a matter of heart and soul. It renews the mind (cf. 1 Cor 2:16). Peter (Acts 2:37-42 etc.), Philip (Acts 8:26-40), and Paul (Acts 13:14-49 etc.) all preached and taught the Gospel in order to awaken faith before baptizing. Catechesis before baptism is necessary because mission is not coercion but persuasion. The catechumens must know the message of the Gospel, the meaning of the sacraments, and the claims of faith. These presuppose a conversion occurring in freedom.

(3) *Postbaptismal catechesis is a deepening of faith.* It is as important as pre-baptismal catechesis. There are two aspects in postbaptismal catechesis.

First, postbaptismal catechesis guides the initiated deeper into the mystery of faith. For example, the Gospel of Luke was written in order to continue the catechesis that Theophilus had received (Lk 1:3f.).

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<sup>5</sup> *Didache* 7, 3.

For Paul, education is an essential part of the Christian liturgy (1 Cor 14:6.31). In the Pastoral Epistles, teaching is an essential part of episcopal service (1 Tim 4:12-16).

Second, baptism itself is a subject within catechesis (Heb 6:1f.) because it entails the whole grace and truth of faith that Christians are called to discover throughout their whole life. Postbaptismal catechesis is necessary to make the always-new connection between the Word of God and daily life.

### 1.3. The Trinitarian Nature of Baptism

(1) *According to the command of the Lord (Mt 28:19), baptism is Trinitarian.* Trinitarian theology is primarily an interpretation of salvation history witnessed by Holy Scripture. The promise of the Father, the communion with the Son, and the gift of the Holy Spirit are essential dimensions of a common understanding and practice of baptism rooted in Scripture.

(2) *Trinitarian faith is grounded in the New Testament.* In the history of the Jesus movement and the early church, the process of discovery of the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit starts with questions about the relationship of Jesus to God and about the significance of the person of Jesus for all human beings. The answer of faith testified in the New Testament is not a theory but a lived understanding that Jesus the Son and God the Father are one (Jn 10:30) and that Jesus is the redeemer who gives his life for the salvation of all. The Trinitarian baptismal formula expresses the Trinitarian meaning of baptism as faith orientated to the Father, conformed with Christ, and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

#### 1.3.1 The Promise of the Father

(1) *The call to baptize all nations fulfills the promise of God spoken to Abraham.* God promised that Abraham (Gen 12:3; 15:6) and his offspring (Gen 22:17) would become a blessing for all nations (Gal 3:16). According to Matthew (Mt 28:18-20) and Paul (Gal 1:13-16), the mission to all nations fulfills this promise in the name of Jesus Christ. Whoever is baptized is blessed by God and called to be a blessing for others. In 2 Corinthians, Paul proclaims that the anointing and sealing, which belong to baptism (2 Cor 1:21f.), concretize the “Yes” and “Amen” with which God responds in Christ to all of his promises (2 Cor 1:19f.). Within this wide horizon of God’s grace, the baptized are connected with Israel, the people of God.

(2) *The baptized are a new creation.* The Gospel of John presents another metaphor for baptism when Jesus teaches Nicodemus that “being born of water and Spirit” (Jn 3:5) is “being born from above”, i.e. from God. Paul addresses the baptized as a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) because baptism is a turning from a life under the shadow of sin to a new life in the light of grace and freedom. It is dying and rising with Christ in his immeasurable love (Gal 2:19f.). God the creator is the redeemer. The new life of the baptized in the grace of God anticipates eternal life, which will be fulfilled in the heavenly kingdom of God (cf. Jn 3:3-5 and 1 Thess 2:12; Rom 14:17).

(3) *Baptism is an appeal to God.* In 1 Peter, the preaching of the Gospel focuses on baptism (1 Pet 3:18-23). It proclaims Jesus’ suffering “for sins once for all” (1 Pet 3:18); it mentions his journey to death (1 Pet 3:19f.); and it presents baptism as “an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 3:21). Baptism is an “appeal to God” because it is a liturgical prayer commanded by God, a supplication which God promises to hear, and a commendation of the whole person to God, who redeems the faithful. Baptism is an appeal “for a good conscience” because, as 1 Peter emphasizes, it renews the whole life of believers in the faith that they are saved by God, which is a gift of God. This appeal is addressed to God “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” because Jesus himself embodies it and takes it up to his Father.

### 1.3.2 Communion with the Son

(1) *Baptism unites us with Jesus Christ.* Jesus is the Lord who commands baptism (Mt 28:19). Baptism is received “in (Jesus) Christ”. Moreover, all the baptized are “one in Christ” (Gal 3:28). Jesus loves all human beings with the love of God. Those who believe are aware of this love and respond to it by loving God and their neighbor. God’s love, incorporated in the Son, fills the hearts of believers (Rom 5:5-11) and brings them together as Christ’s church.

(2) *Whoever is baptized participates in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.* In Catholic and Lutheran Easter liturgies, the reading from the Letter to the Romans is central: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:3f.). The death and resurrection of Jesus realizes eschatologically God’s universal salvific will. Because Jesus gave his life “for us” and because he, exalted at the right hand of God, “indeed intercedes for us” (Rom 8:34), all believers participate in his love. They die “with” him because he identifies himself with them as atonement for their sins (Rom 3:25). They live with him because his love for them is always present and creative (Rom 8:31-39). They will be fully united with him after their resurrection (1 Thess 4:17).

A similar concept appears in Colossians as in Romans: “In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col 2:11f.). The comparison of baptism with circumcision mirrors its importance for the Jewish understanding of initiation into the people of God (Gen 17:1-27). Baptism is a spiritual transformation open to Jews and Greeks, male and female, adults and children.

(3) *Communion with Jesus is oriented to communion with the Father.* Paul explains the freedom of faith when he preaches to the Corinthians: “All belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God” (1 Cor 3:22f.). “Belonging to” means being “accepted,” “received,” and “beloved by,” but also “self-giving,” “obeying,” and “oriented to.” The communion with the Father through communion with the Son is realized by the Holy Spirit who incorporates the baptized into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13) and makes them members of the church. Baptism celebrates unification with Jesus in the community of the church. It is an initiation that anticipates full communion.

### 1.3.3 The Gift of the Holy Spirit

(1) *The Holy Spirit is given and received in baptism.* The presence of the Holy Spirit in baptism fulfils the promise of John the Baptist (Mk 1:7 f., par. Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16). Although the initial fulfilment of this promise occurs at Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:1-11), it also occurs in every baptism (cf. Acts 11:16-17; 19:1-7). Paul sees a direct connection between baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13; 2 Cor 1:21f.; cf. Tit 3:5). In Acts, the gift of the Holy Spirit is given either after baptism (Acts 8:14-17) or before baptism (Acts 10:44-47).

When Paul refers to the reception of the Spirit, he stresses baptism as a rite of passage and initiation (Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Cor 5:5; 11:4; Gal 3:1-5; 1 Thess 1:5f.). The Spirit inspires the baptized to affirm the Gospel (Gal 3:1-5; cf. 1 Cor 2:1-11), to confess the faith (cf. 1 Cor 12:3), to trust in God’s love (Rom 5:1-11), to recognize his or her personal charisms (1 Cor 12:4-12), to start a new life in the joy of God (1 Thess 1:5f.), and to look forward to the consummation of communion with Christ in eternal life (1 Thess 1:8-10).

(2) *Through the Spirit, all the baptized are recognized as children of God.* Indeed, from the perspective of a theology of creation, every human being, as *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26f.), is a child of God. However, in a specific sense, being a child of God is connected with baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul makes the point: “It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:16).

Through their faith, the baptized realize they are children of God; baptism celebrates being loved as a child of God the Father. Paul points out that “sons” of God are not slaves or children, but free persons (Gal 3:26 – 4:7). As “sons” they receive from God “the Spirit of his Son” in their “hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal 4:6). In baptism, all believers are adopted as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ (Gal 4:5; Rom 8:16f., 28-30). The First Letter of John testifies to a similar relationship between childhood and baptism: “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are” (1 Jn 3:1). And referring to the same consequence, the author writes: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments” (1 Jn 5:2). This love is at the very heart of the ecumenical movement motivated by baptism.

(3) *In the New Testament, baptism and confirmation belong together.* A traditional proof text for the distinction is Acts 8:14-17, where, after the mission of Philip in Samaria, Peter and John came and prayed for the gift of the Spirit: “They laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17). But in Acts, this story does not establish a new ritual. Nevertheless, it allows for a differentiation among the gifts of the Spirit. Bestowal of the Spirit does not occur in a single act, but is, so to say, an *inspiratio continua*. The gifts of the Spirit are always appropriate to the age and the vocation of Christians.

## 1.4 The Salvific Effect of Baptism

(1) *Catholics and Lutherans believe that the salvific effect of baptism is foundational both for every believer and for the whole church.* Baptism mediates the full grace of God, anticipating the eschatological fulfilment of all salvation. This section describes some of the most important testimonies of the New Testament that shape our common faith.

(2) *Lutherans and Catholics share a belief in the strong, biblically founded relationship between baptism and salvation.*<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, baptism is forgiveness of sins as well as incorporation into the body of the church (1 Cor 12:13-27) and unification with Christ. On the other hand, baptism replaces circumcision as the sacrament of initiation. The antithesis between faith and works of the law is directed against the obligation to circumcise in order to fully observe the law (Gal 5:3).<sup>7</sup>

### 1.4.1 Baptism and Salvation

(1) *Baptism effects salvation.* After referring to Noah and the ark, the author of 1 Peter writes, “Baptism ... now saves you” (1 Pet 3:21). Salvation does not happen magically, but as promise. It is true and to be realized eschatologically.

(2) *In the New Testament the relationship between baptism and salvation is a positive, although not an exclusive relationship.* The faithful are free and are called to respond in freedom and faith. Salvation is the promised effect of redemption: “The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, ...” (Mk 16:16). The text, without reference to baptism, continues: “..., but the one who does not believe will be condemned.” Mk 16:16 does not declare that every unbaptized person would go to hell, but rather that salvation depends upon faith. The New Testament does not exclude from salvation those who do not explicitly believe. For Jews who do not believe in Jesus Christ, Paul’s insight is valid: “All Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:26) because God’s “gifts and calling are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29). For Gentiles who do not believe in God, the Gospel is a source of hope that God’s peace on earth is “among those whom he favors” (Lk 2:14). For enemies of the Christian community, the Sermon on the Mount directs the disciples to pray for their persecutors (Mt 5:44).

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<sup>6</sup> JDDJ, §28.

<sup>7</sup> The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification (New York: Paulist, 2012), 74.

## 1.4.2 Forgiveness of Sins

(1) *The reception of baptism is connected with the confession and forgiveness of sins.* Because baptism is a *metanoia* of life and comes to expression in repentance and faith, the confession of sins is necessary. Forgiveness of sins is possible because God reconciles sinners with himself through Jesus Christ. This possibility of forgiveness is based on the promise of Jesus Christ, present in his word through the Holy Spirit. Luke mentions both elements in his first reference to baptism when he describes Peter's approach to repentance and his promise of forgiveness (Acts 2:38-41). This connection between repentance and forgiveness is evident not only in Acts (cf. Acts 5:31; cf. 10:43) but also in other writings (cf. 1 Cor 6:11; Col 2:13; Eph 4:32).

(2) *Paul clarifies not only that the trespasses against the law will be forgiven but also that baptism frees from the sin inherited from Adam.* Baptism, as participation in Jesus' death and resurrection (Rom 6:3f.; Col 2:12f.), frees from the deadly power of sin which has ruled the life of all creatures since Adam's disobedience (Rom 5:12-21). Baptism as participation in the obedience of Jesus Christ leads to a life of justice (Rom 6:1-11). The baptized are therefore freed from death – not in the sense that they will not die or that death is irrelevant, but in the sense that their earthly death will not be the definitive end but a new beginning of their history with God in communion with Christ. Believers are encouraged to hope in the resurrection and eternal life. Regarding his own conversion, Paul is a model for all believers: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:19f.). While the law is given to condemn sinners, the Gospel is proclaimed to free sinners (Gal 3:19-4:7). Just as the enemies of the Israelites were drowned in the Red Sea, so too, the sins of the Christians are drowned in baptism (1 Cor 10:1-15).

(3) *Although believers are freed from sin and death, the struggle between flesh and the Spirit continues (Gal 5:16-26).* Paul describes this struggle in Galatians after proclaiming the freedom which God bestows upon believers (Gal 5:1). Paul continues to describe the opposition between the Spirit and the flesh: "...for these are opposed to each other" (Gal 5:17). "However strong the desire of the flesh may be, the power of the Spirit is greater: 'God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father!'" (Gal 4:6). Believers should, nonetheless, be aware of the power of sin which leads to works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21). Because believers are not 'subject to the law,' but are led by the Spirit (Gal 5:18), they are able to produce 'the fruit of the Spirit' (Gal 5:22-23).<sup>8</sup> According to the Augustinian tradition (which is disputed in recent research) Romans 7 provides another perspective on the attack of sin against a baptized, whose only help comes from Jesus Christ (Rom 7:24f.).

## 1.4.3 The New Creation and the Renewal of Life in Christ

(1) *Baptism is a new creation.* Regarding the baptized, Paul proclaims: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor 5:17). Similarly in Galatians, Paul states: "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!" (Gal 6:15). God gives the believer new life. While sin is dead, the baptized person is alive. Baptism is not only a change of belief, behavior, or a new moral order, but also the foundation of a new existence. Baptism as the beginning of God's new creation calls a person to new life and a new identity.

(2) *Baptism is the wellspring of a Christian life in the newness of the grace of God.* At the beginning of the final section of the Letter to the Romans (Ch. 12ff.), Paul situates the call of new life in the mercy of God: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of

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<sup>8</sup> *The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification*, 76.

God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:1f.). The whole life of a Christian becomes an offering to God that is only possible, that is, created and received, through God’s mercy. The “renewal” of minds belongs together with the renewal of a whole life, which is related to liturgy, spirituality, virtues, and service to others in the love which fulfills the law (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10).

## 1.5. The Ecclesial Dimension of Baptism

(1) *In the New Testament the salvific effect of baptism is closely related to its ecclesial dimension.* This document identifies three aspects of this ecclesial dimension: (a) baptism is directly related to the other sacraments. This will be the focus of Chapter 2; (b) the New Testament understands baptism as incorporation into Christ. This will be the main topic of Chapter 3; and (c) the dynamic of growth rooted in baptism will be developed in Chapter 4.

### 1.5.1 Baptism as Incorporation into the Body of Christ

(1) *Baptism incorporates a believer into the body of Christ.* Paul reminds the Corinthians: “In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13). This “one body” is the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27). The body is “one” because Jesus Christ is one. It is the body “of Christ” because it belongs to Christ. According to Romans this body is “in Christ” (Rom 12:5), because it is united and lives with the risen Christ in the Spirit. This body of Christ encompasses space and time, life, and a multitude of gifts. This is a God-given reality independent of faith and baptism. Baptism incorporates a person into this body.

(2) *Every baptized person becomes a member of the body of Christ.* Paul argues that it makes no difference whether someone is “weak” or “strong” (1 Cor 4:10; 8:9-13; cf. Rom 14:1f.; 15:1). Everyone who confesses “Jesus is Lord” has received the one and same Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). Everyone has received his or her own charism in order to help others on their way of faith (1 Cor 12:4-11). It is both the diversity of gifts and the unity of the giver which guaranties the life and growth of the body. Everyone is called to acknowledge the gifts of others and to contribute from his or her own gifts for the benefit of others and of the whole body.

(3) *The body of Christ is identified with the church.* The letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians employ the metaphor of “body,” transforming the concept from 1 Corinthians and Romans to include the concept of headship within a more cosmic context: Jesus Christ is proclaimed as “head” of his body (Col 1:18; Eph 5:23), and the body is seen in its relation to the whole cosmos (Col 1:15-20; Eph 1:21f.). Here the body is identified as the church (Col 1:18-24; Eph 5:23). This church is one: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:4-6). Every human being who is baptized is a member of this one and only church of the one and only God. Their membership is independent from the time or the place where they were baptized. Baptism depends solely on God’s call and the response of faith.

### 1.5.2 Baptism in Relation to Eucharist, Penance, and Ordination

(1) *In the New Testament, baptism is in an essential relationship to Eucharist, penance and ordination.* This section will describe how they are related according to Scripture. It will not give a full New Testament theology of this relationship.

#### 1.5.2.1 Baptism and Eucharist

(1) *Baptism and the Eucharist are organically linked.* Baptism is incorporation into the body of Christ, and the Eucharist is the celebration of this communion in Christ: “We who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:17). To be baptized is a fundamental requirement for participation in

the Eucharist because nobody can share “in the body” and “in the blood” of Christ (1 Cor 10:16) who does not belong by baptism to the body of Christ.

(2) *Eucharistic fellowship is a central mark of ecclesial communion.* Partaking together in the body and the blood of Jesus Christ is the deepest expression of the unity of believers and their communities (1 Cor 10:16f.). Therefore, participation in the Eucharist requires discernment. Paul admonishes the Corinthians: “Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1 Cor 11:28). In his own pastoral service, Paul makes two crucial points. One point concerns the integration of the Eucharistic mystery within Christian life. For example, in a case of serious sin, a baptized person must be excluded – for a time – from the community of the church and hence from the Lord’s Supper (cf. 1 Cor 5-6). Paul’s other point seeks to preserve the Gospel meaning of faith. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul anathematizes Christian preachers who deny justification by faith and question Paul’s apostolicity (cf. Gal 1:8), and in 1 Corinthians Paul admonishes those who do not love the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 16:22).

(3) *An ecclesial community needs a common understanding of justification by faith and the apostolicity of the church.* For Paul, Eucharistic communion has two pillars, namely, the communion of the apostles and the consensus that justification occurs not by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. He makes both points in the controversy with his opponents in Galatia (Gal 2:1-10, 11-21).

In his relationship to Peter, Paul recalls the result of the Apostolic Council (Gal 2:9). “This shaking of hands has become the most important symbol of the ecumenical movement. It is based on a fundamental consensus about the gospel that is safeguarded, with regard to its practical significance for faith, by means of the message of justification.”<sup>9</sup>

In the conflict of Antioch, Paul criticizes Peter because of his hypocrisy, reminding him about the common understanding of justification by faith (Gal 2:11-16). For Paul, the aim of the dispute is not to bring about division, but unity. “Accordingly Paul formulates the justification thesis in the first person plural from the perspective of a Jewish Christian standpoint. He appeals to the knowledge of faith that Peter should by rights share but has ignored in this situation. From Paul’s point of view, confirmed by the canon of Scripture, the theology of justification proves itself in situations of conflict. It provides the foundation for the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians in the church. This is not a specifically Pauline teaching but a basic and shared insight of the Apostles regarding the truth of the gospel. Nonetheless, this truth must be recognized again and again, even in situations of conflict.”<sup>10</sup>

### 1.5.2.2 *Baptism and Penance*

(1) *Although baptism achieves the forgiveness of sins, Christians still sin, which means that they require additional reconciliation.* It was a matter of debate in the early Christian community whether a “second penance” was possible. The Letter to the Hebrews is of the opinion that apostates cannot be “brought back again to repentance” (Heb 6:4-8). But Paul argues for the reconciliation of a member who had been excluded from ecclesial communion by the Corinthian Church because this person had caused the Apostle pain (2 Cor 2:5-11). Paul’s strong critique of sexual abuse and social misconduct on the part of some of the Corinthian Christians is made from the perspective of repentance and reconciliation (cf. 1 Cor 5-6). One of his arguments is based on baptism and its irreversibility because of the grace of God.

(2) *Penance is a return to baptism and a renewal of baptism.* Baptism frees once and for all from Adam’s sin. Baptism is the first and decisive forgiveness of all sin. Penance is a return to baptism insofar as baptism communicated God’s immeasurable grace and promise of salvation from evil. At the same time, penance is a renewal of baptism. In their weakness, the baptized will repeatedly sin and therefore must

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<sup>9</sup> *The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification*, 82.

<sup>10</sup> *The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification*, 82f.

continually pray for the forgiveness of their sins, assured by the promise of God's grace. Penance also has an ecclesial dimension: it is a re-integration into the communion of believers.

### 1.5.2.3 Baptism and Ordination

(1) *Baptism is necessary for ordination.* Every ordained person's primary identity is found in his or her baptism, but not every baptized person is ordained. While baptism is incorporation into the body of Christ, the one church of Jesus Christ, ordination is a call to a specific ministry in the church which supports others on their way of faith into and in the church.

(2) *Ordination is for the purpose of ecclesial ministry.* In Ephesians the "evangelists", the "pastors", and the "teachers" (Eph 4:11) have a particular responsibility for the edification of the church, teaching other members so that they can grow in the truth of the faith (Eph 4:7-16). In the pastoral letters, the bishops, deacons, and presbyters have the right and call to transmit "sound teaching" (1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Tit 1:9; 2:1; cf. 1 Tim 6:3; Tit 2:10). According to Paul, bishops serve as pastors of their churches (Act 20:28).

(3) *The liturgy of ordination consists of prayer to the Holy Spirit and the laying-on of hands.* According to 2 Tim 1:6, Paul calls on Timothy to rekindle the gift of God that is within him "through the laying on of my hands." According to 1 Tim 4:14, the gift of God was given to Timothy "through prophesy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders." According to 1 Tim 5:22, Timothy should not do the laying on of hands (or "ordain" NRSV) on someone hastily. It can be concluded from these texts that ordination confers the "charism" (1 Tim 4:14; cf. 2 Tim 1:6) that a pastor needs in order to guide the church.

## 1.6 Baptism and Growth in Faith

(1) *Baptism is the entry point for Christian life in the communion of the church.* Baptism imparts the full grace of justification and gives full membership in the body of Christ, although there are different manners of participation depending on different charisms. Baptism is a call to discover the dimensions of grace and to go forward in the way of faith. Christian faith is characterized by the salvific power of the Gospel (Rom 1:16f.). Therefore, faith embodies the full dynamism of the Holy Spirit, both in its personal and in its ecclesial aspects.

(2) *Baptism is a new birth* (Jn 3:3-5; Tit 3:5). It is the beginning of new life, but it is more than just the first step; it is the origin of Christian life. The rebirth of baptism is not the mythical fate of reincarnation whereby a creature has to suffer its sin in another life. The opposite is true. Christian rebirth is the promise and experience of eternal life in the midst of an earthly life lived in faith because of the death and resurrection of Jesus himself who died and rose "for us" (cf. Rom 8:34). Baptism is participation in Jesus' death and resurrection (cf. Rom 6:3f.; Col 2:12f.).

(3) *The personal dimension of growth in baptism is life in the abundance of grace.* In Ephesians, the gifts of the Holy Spirit received in baptism (cf. Eph 4:4-16) "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph 4:12f.). This growth in faith is necessary in order to mature (Eph 4:14) and to give witness in the world. This growth in faith is an ongoing process because the Gospel does not destroy, but renews human life. Its final aim is Christ himself; the faithful grow to become the mature body of him who is the "head," that is, Christ (Eph 4:15).

(4) *The personal dimension of Baptism is related to the ecclesial dimension of baptism and the building-up of the church.* The Pauline letters develop both an inner and an outer dimension of the growth of the church (cf. 1 Cor 12-14), which belong together. Baptism is a fruit of mission, and all the baptized are missionaries, i.e., witnesses of the Gospel. The unity and the plurality of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27) is both the result of missionary service and a resource for it. The deeper the communion in faith, the

more persuasive the mission; and the more successful the mission, the more intensive the communion in faith.

(5) *The inner growth of the church depends on the use and coordination of the charisms* (cf. 1 Cor 12-14; Rom 12:1-8). They are gifts of God “for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7). Their foundation is baptism (cf. 1 Cor 12:1-13). Their effect builds up the church (1 Cor 14:4f.,12). The charisms are in service to others “for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation” (1 Cor 14:3). Therefore, it is important to speak understandably to others, with others, and for others (1 Cor 14:2-19). The whole liturgy which the community of the baptized celebrates is service to God and therefore an important aspect of growth: “Let all things be done for building up” (1 Cor 14:26). In his instruction about the Lord’s Supper, Paul underlines solidarity with the poor as an essential consequence of Jesus’ self-sacrifice (1 Cor 11:17-34). The inner building up of the church is growth in faith in communion with other believers both in the local church and together with “all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1 Cor 1:2). The very motive and building block of this construction is love, *agape* (1 Cor 12:31-14:1) – the love of God, “poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:5).

(6) *The external growth of the church is God’s grace, which works through the missionary activity of believers.* The most important component of mission is the attractive presence of the church in the world. For Paul, one criterion is the quality of liturgy that not only draws in believers but also unbelievers and outsiders who may be present in the worship service, so that they too can thereby recognize that “God is really among you” (1 Cor 14:25). In the same way, the faithful are called and challenged to live their lives in such a way that non-Christians can experience the moral integrity and spiritual intensity of their ecclesial communion (cf. Rom 12:9-21; Phil 1:27-2:4; 1 Thess 4:1-12). In 1 Peter, the relation between a lived faith and mission to unbelievers and outsiders is described as the relation between the participation of the faithful in the priesthood of God’s kingly people (1 Pet 2:7-10) and their concord on the one hand (1 Pet 3:8-12), and their opportunity to defend the faith and to convince enemies on the other hand (1 Pet 3:13-4:11). Faith initiates mission. Baptism integrates individuals into the missionary people of God.

(7) *The New Testament witness of baptism is both a foundation of our ecclesial communion and a promise of growing in faith and deepening our relationship as communions of baptized faithful.* Together we read the Scripture and receive the New Testament witness. It is one baptism because there is one Father, one Lord and one Spirit, and it is one Church over the whole world from generation to generation (Eph 4:4-6). The New Testament witness of baptism calls for a reception which affirms and actualizes the promise and the effect of salvation and communion in every time and every place. As Lutherans and Catholics we celebrate baptism and pray to God that we are able to recognize the unity in Christ we already have and to deepen the unity which is the promise for our future.

# Chapter 2: Reception of the Biblical Witness on Baptism

## 2.1 Introduction

(1) *The Catholic Church and Lutheran churches both consider themselves bound to the commandment of the Lord and the promise it shares.* This commandment is central in both of Martin Luther's catechisms: "Observe, first, that these words contain God's commandment and institution, so that no one may doubt that baptism is of divine origin, not something devised or invented by human beings. (...) But no matter how external it may be, here stand God's Word and command that have instituted, established, and confirmed baptism."<sup>1</sup> The Second Vatican Council likewise states, "in explicit terms He [Jesus Christ] Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism."<sup>2</sup> In a common remembrance of this obligation, the ecumenical document *Apostolicity* reaffirms: "We agree, as we accept the New Testament testimony, that Jesus Christ sent his apostles as authorized witnesses of his resurrection and to make disciples in the whole world and impart baptism for the forgiveness of sins."<sup>3</sup>

(2) *Christian life is lived together in this obedience through practice and teaching.* To clarify this obedience and teaching, the following sections present the liturgical rite with attention to its implications for a common faith as well as for ecclesial convictions.

## 2.2 The Liturgical Rite of Baptism

(1) *Christ's commandment is obeyed not only by a common practice of baptism but also by the effort to understand the meaning of baptism through Lutheran and Catholic teaching.* Catholics and Lutherans share many centuries of a common reception of the biblical witness. For this reason, they share many of the same convictions concerning the significance of baptism for the life of individuals as well as for the church. And they acknowledge one journey of faith towards the Eucharistic table.

(2) *The relationship between biblical witness and practice invites both Lutherans and Catholics into an exploration of their baptismal traditions and the implications of these traditions for their understanding of salvation and church.* In the early church, the benefits received from baptism were described as forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), a sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:3-4), regeneration from above (Jn 3:5), clothing with Christ (Gal 3:27), deliverance from Satan's bondage to freedom in Christ (Col 1:13), and enlightenment (Heb 6:4).<sup>4</sup> Because of baptism's association with the redemptive work of Christ, it is not surprising that the soteriological rather than the ecclesial meaning of the sacrament has been uppermost in the theology of baptism.

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<sup>1</sup> The Large Catechism, IV, *Book of Concord*, 457. The Lutheran Confessions are cited by document, section, and page numbers contained in *The Book of Concord* as edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). Hereafter cited as *Book of Concord*. See also WA 30/1:212.22-24; 213.2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (1964), §14. All references to the Second Vatican Council are taken from the Vatican website. See also Council of Trent, *Decree on the Sacraments* (1547), in Peter Hünermann, Helmut Hoping, Robert L. Fastiggi, Anne Englund Nash, and Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43<sup>rd</sup> edition (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012), 1618. Hereafter DH.

<sup>3</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §147; cf. §§13, 70.

<sup>4</sup> Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 854.

The intimate connection between theology and practice, grounded in Scripture, was emphasized by Basil of Caesarea who insisted on safeguarding the confession of faith in the baptismal rite.<sup>5</sup> It was further emphasized in the 5<sup>th</sup> century when Prosper of Aquitaine refuted the semi-Pelagians, arguing for the necessity of grace as witnessed in the practice of supplication, prayer, and intercessions. The law of prayer grounds or establishes the law of belief (*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*).

### 2.2.1 A Shared Rite

(1) *Catholics and Lutherans, in a common obedience to the Lord's commandment and promise, share the essential aspects of the rite of baptism and also a common understanding of it.* They use similar ritual actions, symbols, and liturgical formulas. They share an understanding of the connection between baptism and Eucharist, which render present the Paschal mystery. The following presentation of the liturgical rite of baptism reveals the depth of consensus in practice. The commonality of the rite that Catholics and Lutherans share highlights the fundamental agreement not only in practice but also in theology.

(2) *Every human being needs God's saving act in Jesus Christ.* This need is expressed as desire for baptism (pre-baptismal preparation / catechesis) and as prayer and action (post-baptismal practice of vocation). In turn, the rite of baptism also shapes this human need, placing it in the context of God's saving act within the community. For both Lutheran and Catholic traditions, it is important that the rite of baptism includes the proclamation of the Word of God even if baptism is not celebrated as part of a Eucharistic liturgy.

### 2.2.2 Catechumenate and Baptism

(1) *In both traditions, baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life.* Yet baptism is always associated with catechesis. Formation and baptism have always belonged together. Already in the *Didache*, the description of baptism is preceded by six chapters of catechetical instruction. As infant baptism became the predominate practice, teaching moved from pre-baptismal preparation to post-baptismal instruction. The current rite still echoes the unity of baptism – confirmation – Eucharist accompanied by catechesis. The rites of the catechumenate have been revived in many Catholic and Lutheran parishes (*The Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults*, RCIA, in the Catholic Church and *Welcome to Christ* in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America are two key examples).

(2) *At the heart of the catechumenate is the understanding that the sacrament of baptism as immersion in God's Word shapes the entire life of the believer.* “The catechumenate is not a mere expounding of doctrines and precepts, but a training period in the whole Christian life, and an apprenticeship duty drawn out, during which disciples are joined to Christ their Teacher.”<sup>6</sup>

Luther writes in the *Large Catechism*, “In baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and practice all his or her life. Christians always have enough to do to believe firmly what baptism promises and brings—victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts.”<sup>7</sup> The catechism gives shape to the practice of baptism. It is like a roadmap of a city directing the believer. “Nothing is so powerfully effective against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts as to occupy one's self with God's Word, to speak about it and meditate upon it, in the way that Psalm 1[:2] calls those blessed who ‘meditate on God's law day and night.’ (...) For this reason

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<sup>5</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 10, 26.

<sup>6</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes* (1965), §14.

<sup>7</sup> The Large Catechism, IV, *Book of Concord*, 461.

alone you should gladly read, recite, ponder, and practice the catechism, even if the only advantage and benefit you obtain from it is to drive away the devil and evil thoughts.”<sup>8</sup>

(3) *Lutherans and Catholics practice infant baptism.* This practice clearly acknowledges that God is the one who Acts in baptism, claiming the individual and creating faith. The faith of the individual, however, is sustained and nurtured by the faith of the community. An infant, who is unaware of the gift being bestowed in baptism, is baptized nonetheless in the faith of the community. Individual faith is never in isolation or dissociated from ecclesial faith. Infant baptism necessitates teaching, requiring an on-going catechesis.

The faith given in baptism is for Luther not primarily a subjective personal property, but a Christological reality, union with Christ, the Word of God. According to Luther, a child therefore receives in baptism a personal faith and is able to believe in his or her own way.<sup>9</sup> Catholics also teach that in baptism the child “receives in the very act of justification, together with the remission of sins ... the gifts of faith, hope, and charity, all infused at the same time.”<sup>10</sup>

### 2.2.3 Presentation of Candidates

(1) *Both traditions understand baptism as an act that is individual (one person is baptized at a time) and communal (no one baptizes him or herself).* The beginning of the rite already expresses this dual characteristic as sponsors (and also parents if the candidate is an infant) bring the candidate(s) to the font and promise to support and sustain them. The whole community of the baptized commits itself to nurture the faith of the newly baptized.

(2) *Faith is not only an individual or private affair but is also communal.* When the baptized are infants, they are baptized in the faith of the parents, sponsors, congregation, and the church. On the journey of faith that baptism initiates, the baptized are sustained by the faith of others, and in times of doubt and peril, that faith is always present in the communion of saints.

### 2.2.4 Renunciation of Evil and Profession of Faith

(1) *Part of the rite of baptism includes the renunciation of evil and sometimes exorcism.* Besides clearly acknowledging the human condition, the renunciation of evil also reminds the individual and the community that they never inhabit a neutral space. Many forms of evil, individual and systemic, compete and define the contours of life in this world. These forces assail the adult as well as the infant, and of course, the community of believers. The renunciation of evil takes these forces seriously and recognizes that in baptism the person is initiated into a life-long struggle against them.

(2) *In Martin Luther’s simplified baptismal rite (1526),<sup>11</sup> one exorcism is preserved in the phrase: “Depart you unclean Spirit and let the Holy Spirit in!”* The Catholic rite today includes a “Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing Before Baptism” before the anamnestic prayer.<sup>12</sup> Any rite of exorcism corresponds to the renunciation of evil and the confession of faith in the Apostles’ Creed.

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<sup>8</sup> The Large Catechism, preface, *Book of Concord*, 381.

<sup>9</sup> *Justification in the Life of the Church: A Report from the Roman Catholic – Lutheran Dialogue Group for Sweden and Finland* (Uppsala, Stockholm and Helsinki: Ekotryckredners, 2010), 187. See also Eero Huovinen, *Fides infantium: Martin Luthers Lehre vom Kinderglauben* (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1997). Eero Huovinen, “Der infusion-Gedanke als Problem der Lutherforschung,” in *Baptism, Church and Ecumenism: Collected Essays = Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 2009), 110-123.

<sup>10</sup> The Council of Trent, *The Decree on Justification* (1547), DH 1530.

<sup>11</sup> The Small Catechism, Baptismal Booklet, *Book of Concord*, 372-375.

<sup>12</sup> *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Council* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 1:380-381.

(3) *The candidates for baptism along with the whole assembly confess the faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed.* By doing this they proclaim that they share the faith of the church. The confession of faith belongs to baptism because it is the starting point of new life in trust and obedience to God. The candidates and the assembly confess the object of their faith: the Triune God, origin and sustainer of this new beginning. Candidates for baptism and the assembly are oriented towards the One who alone gives life, forgives sin, and reconciles the world to himself. In some ancient rites, the profession of faith clearly expressed this change of orientation: candidates faced west to renounce Satan and then turned to face east to profess the faith. The profession of faith is to be understood not only as a statement of belief but as an affirmation of new allegiance. Those who are baptized become part of a new people, the people of God, although this new creation exists nonetheless in the midst of an old world.

### 2.2.5 Thanksgiving / Blessing of the Water

(1) *The Thanksgiving or Blessing (in the Catholic rite: "Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water") is spoken over the waters of baptism.* This thanksgiving acknowledges the material element of the sacrament to which God's Word is added. The thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) envelops the water in God's salvific action for all humanity. The entire thanksgiving or blessing recalls (*anamnesis*) God's intent and purpose of baptism. The thanksgiving over the water invokes the presence of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*).

### 2.2.6 Baptism with Water

(1) *Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the threefold immersion in water, incorporates the baptized into the body of Christ, that is, into the triune reality of God.* The baptismal formula: "I baptize you in the name of the Father... and the Son... and the Holy Spirit" names and actualizes what is being done because it is pronounced according to the will of God in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

(2) *The early church practiced a comprehensive rite of initiation consisting of baptism, an anointing after the immersion in water, and Eucharist.* This rite is already witnessed by the Didache (ca. 96),<sup>13</sup> Justin Martyr (ca. 150-155),<sup>14</sup> Tertullian (ca. 198-200),<sup>15</sup> and The Apostolic Tradition (ca. 3<sup>rd</sup> century).<sup>16</sup> These witnesses are especially important, as they give the oldest descriptions of baptism. The ones who will be baptized, Justin says, "are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and the Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, 'Unless you be born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Jn 3:5)'."

(3) *The Apostolic Tradition gives a full description of the baptismal rite.* According to this text, the one who was to receive baptism had to renounce Satan, he was anointed with the oil of exorcism, and when he had gone down into the water he was called to answer to the threefold question: "Do you believe in the Father...? In the Son...? In the Holy Spirit...?"; each time he answered, he was immersed in the

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<sup>13</sup> Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 7.1-7.4.

<sup>14</sup> Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 65.

<sup>15</sup> Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 36. SC 46:138-139.

<sup>16</sup> Attributed to Hippolytus (3<sup>rd</sup> c), but recent scholarship questions (1) whether it has more affinity with Alexandria and Egypt than with Rome, (2) whether it is an aggregate of materials dating from mid-second century to mid-fourth century, and (3) whether it was written by Hippolytus. See Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Philips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).

water. Immediately after drying off, the newly baptized dressed and entered the church to join the faithful in prayer and exchange the kiss of peace, thereby enacting the ecclesial meaning of baptism.<sup>17</sup>

(4) *Both the Lutheran and Catholic traditions suffered from some pauperization of the rite when the experiences of the rite were no longer as important for the baptism of children and when emergency baptism required a simplified rite.* Nevertheless, a complete and full enactment of the sign (immersion) underlines the performative character of the rite. The Roman Catholic post-conciliar rite for baptism states that immersion is “more suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ: even though pouring may lawfully be used.”<sup>18</sup>

This position is familiar to Lutherans. Martin Luther also encouraged the practice of full immersion, stating that the ample use of water corresponds to the significance of baptism. “It would be proper, according to the meaning of the word *Taufe*, that the infant, or whoever is to be baptized, should be put in and sunk completely into the water and then drawn out again. (...) For baptism, as we shall hear, signifies that the old man and the sinful birth of flesh and blood are to be wholly drowned by the grace of God. We should therefore do justice to its meaning and make baptism a true and complete sign of the thing it signifies.”<sup>19</sup>

(5) *In remembering John’s baptism, the Didache speaks about “living water”.*<sup>20</sup> Whether or not immersion or sprinkling with water was the original form or if both forms were used remains an open question. The history of the liturgy acknowledges both forms: immersion in and rising from water symbolize death and resurrection (cf. Rom 6:3ff.; Col 2:12f.), whereas washing symbolizes the purification from sins (cf. 1 Cor 6:11). The three-fold immersion in water embodies the rupture between the old world and the new creation.

### 2.2.7 Baptism and Additional Ritual Signs

(1) *Being clothed in a white baptismal alb signifies this new creation.* The believer is clothed in Jesus Christ. In baptism, the believer becomes part of the community of believers, itself already inserted into the new order of creation.

(2) *Baptism marks what the cross has already accomplished, for new creation begins with Christ’s victory at the cross.* The entirety of God’s plan is accomplished in baptism. In baptism, believers are inserted into that rupture between old and new. They are marked by the cross of Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit forever. The oil of anointing, tracing the sign of the cross on the believer’s forehead, indicates what is already true: God’s act of reconciling the world to God’s self. The scented oil serves as a continual reminder through life of this reconciling act.

(3) *At the end of the baptismal rite, for both Lutherans and Catholics, the newly baptized is given a lighted candle symbolizing the light of Christ.* The light of Christ recalls for the baptized the vigil candles lit during the Easter Vigil from the Paschal Candle after which the ancient Easter *Exsultet* is sung: “the light of Christ banishes the ancient darkness of the world.” This light shines in the darkness.

### 2.2.8 Baptism and Eucharist

(1) *The new creation and faith that baptism initiates for an individual is sustained by the Eucharist, which continually reconstitutes the communion of saints.* This is why the Catholic rite of baptism concludes with a procession to the altar. Baptism that excludes Eucharist is a promise without sustenance. The body of

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<sup>17</sup> Justin Martyr, *Apology*, 61. *Apostolic Tradition*, 21.20; 21.25-26.

<sup>18</sup> General Introduction, *Christian Initiation, The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Council*, 1:22.

<sup>19</sup> Luther, *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* (1519), LW 35:29.

<sup>20</sup> *Didache* 7, 3.

Christ into which the baptized is incorporated, in death and in new life, is the body that feeds the community, affirms them in love, unites them, and sends them out as that body into the world.

(2) *Baptism is a realized participation, a communion, in the sufferings, death and resurrection of Christ.* The Eucharistic meal is a continual deepening of that communion or participation and a continual rendering present of the communion of saints.

## 2.3 A Common Reception in the Teaching of the Churches

(1) *Catholics and Lutherans share many centuries of a common reception of the biblical witness in their theology of baptism.* While the eastern tradition mostly underlined the meaning of baptism as the gift of the Holy Spirit in connection with the call to deification, the Latin tradition of baptismal theology, in line with Augustinian theology, strongly emphasized the forgiveness of sins, especially the removal of original sin. Baptism has been considered the sacrament of salvation and therefore necessary for eternal beatitude.<sup>21</sup> This section will first address the topics of salvation, forgiveness and justification, before coming to the meaning of baptism as gift of the Holy Spirit, conformity to Christ, and incorporation into the body of Christ.

### 2.3.1 Salvation

(1) *In obedience to the biblical witness, the common faith of Catholics and Lutherans affirms that baptism serves salvation.* Baptism represents and recapitulates the history of God's redemptive power as it was experienced in the history of Israel and in the encounter with the living, dying, and resurrected Jesus of Nazareth. God's everlasting promise, received in baptism, liberates human beings from all forms of slavery and oppression.

(2) *The New Testament as well as patristic typologies have nourished a common tradition with strong images of this saving and freeing power.* Baptism is, for example, compared to Noah's ark<sup>22</sup> and to the crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>23</sup> These traditions are present in the liturgical texts and have been highlighted, for example, in Luther's Flood Prayer.<sup>24</sup> They are mentioned in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>25</sup> as well as in the blessing of the baptismal water.

(3) *Lutheran and Catholic traditions clearly state that baptism is necessary for salvation.* Nevertheless, they also recognize that God's saving power may be bestowed on human beings in other ways, allowing them to participate in the mystery of salvation.<sup>26</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments."<sup>27</sup> In *Gaudium et Spes*, we read "For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is

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<sup>21</sup> The traditional exception was martyrdom. Cf. Cyprian, *Letters* 73; *To Fortunatus*, pref. 4. Later theologies of baptism have interpreted a "baptism of desire" in various ways to account for the possibility of the salvation of non-Christians. See also the Council of Trent, *The Decree on Justification*, DH 1524, 1543.

<sup>22</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 138, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 14, 31.

<sup>24</sup> Luther, *The Order of Baptism* (1523), LW 53:95ff. WA 19:539.18-25.

<sup>25</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. in accordance with the official Latin text promulgated by Pope John Paul II (Vatican City, Washington, D.C.: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 1219; 1221. Hereafter CCC.

<sup>26</sup> cf. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), §22; *Lumen Gentium*, §16.

<sup>27</sup> CCC, 1257.

in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.”<sup>28</sup>

In the *Large Catechism*, Luther states that the Holy Spirit continues to work throughout all of creation “without ceasing until the Last Day.” This work is not always recognized or visible (“we wait in faith”) as the Holy Spirit works to gather all into the community of believers.<sup>29</sup> God is continually active in creation, working through what Luther calls irregular grace. God speaks and Acts in different ways, including ways that appear to have been excluded. “The descendants of Ishmael also joined the church of Abraham and became heirs of the promise, not by reason of right but because of irregular grace.”<sup>30</sup>

### 2.3.2 Forgiveness of Sin and Original Sin

(1) *In obedience to the biblical witness, the common faith of Lutherans and Catholics affirms that baptism bestows forgiveness of sins and marks a new birth for the baptized.* Together we “acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins” (Nicene Creed). The baptized are liberated from slavery in order to live in a new freedom, God’s new creation. This conviction has been central to baptismal theology throughout the centuries. Martin Luther makes use of the language in Romans when he writes: “The significance of baptism is a blessed dying unto sin and a resurrection in the grace of God, so that the old man, conceived and born in sin, is there drowned, and a new [person], born in grace, comes forth and rises.”<sup>31</sup> The Council of Florence declared the effect of baptism “is the remission of all guilt, original and actual, and also of all punishment due to the guilt itself”.<sup>32</sup> The General Introduction to the *Rite of Christian Initiation* teaches: “Baptism, the cleansing with water by the power of the living word, washes away every stain of sin, original and personal, makes us sharers in God’s own life and his adopted children.”<sup>33</sup> Moreover, in the Catholic rite of baptism, the anointing with chrism is accompanied by the words: “God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people”.<sup>34</sup>

(2) *Baptizing and making disciples of all nations opens the door for all to the heavenly Kingdom and therefore to the church.* This presupposes that all people must be freed from the universal bondage of sin. Paul proclaims the love of God who overcomes “in Christ” Adam’s sin present in every trespass (Rom 5). Paul’s witness has been developed in a specific way by the Augustinian theology of original sin that was received by the Fifteenth Synod of Carthage (418) and Synod of Orange (529).<sup>35</sup> This Augustinian interpretation has shaped both Catholic and Lutheran traditions and was affirmed by the Council of Trent in its *Decree on Original Sin*.

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<sup>28</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, §22.

<sup>29</sup> The Large Catechism, II, *Book of Concord*, 439.

<sup>30</sup> “...ita non dubito, quin Ismael et multi ex posteris ad veram Abrahami Ecclesiam conversi sint: non enim hoc agitur, ut simpliciter excludatur a regno Dei, sed ut sciat naturali iure regnum Dei sibi non deberi, sed ex mera gratia contingere.” Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, WA 43:165.36-39. LW 4:42-44.

<sup>31</sup> Luther, *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* (1519), LW 35:30. WA 2:727.30-33.

<sup>32</sup> The Council of Florence, *The Decree for the Armenians* (1439), DH 1316.

<sup>33</sup> *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Council*, 1:5.

<sup>34</sup> *Rituale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Œcumenici Concilii Vatican II instauratum auctoritate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum. Ordo baptismi parvulorum, editio typica altera* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1973), §62: “Unctio post Baptismum,” 32. English Translation: International Commission on English in the Liturgy [ICEL], *Rite of Baptism for Children* (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing, 2004); “Anointing after Baptism,” 49.

<sup>35</sup> Fifteenth Synod of Carthage (418), DH 222-230. Second Council of Orange (529), DH 370-397.

(3) *Together, Catholics and Lutherans identify sin as a “deadly power that, since Adam’s fall (Rom 5:21), encumbers human life.”*<sup>36</sup> Baptism frees from the bondage to sin. It is God’s means of inaugurating the new creation offered to all humanity.

(4) *In the Reformation era a conflict arose concerning the question whether baptism removes original sin completely.* Martin Luther interpreted the remaining traces of sinfulness as evidence for original sin. Original sin is, however, no longer imputed to the baptized but is nonetheless an ongoing reality unfolding its disastrous power. The Lutheran tradition is deeply marked by the conviction that hereditary sin is a deep and horrible corruption of nature.<sup>37</sup> That is why the status of the faithful is that of *simul iustus et peccator*. The Council of Trent, however, declared, “that, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted” and that the “true and proper nature of sin” is taken away so that the justified is “innocent, unstained, pure, and guiltless.”<sup>38</sup> The Council of Trent teaches that baptism, in conferring justification, frees one from “the captivity” of the devil, and makes one “a friend of God.”<sup>39</sup>

(5) *The Lutheran – Catholic dialogue has jointly affirmed both God’s salvific power of forgiveness and the remaining inclination to sin.* Therefore, the JDDJ declares: “We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin’s enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ. When persons come by faith to share in Christ, God no longer imputes to them their sin.”<sup>40</sup> At the same time, Catholics and Lutherans share the conviction that the faithful – after being justified by baptism – “are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (cf. Rom 6:12-14) and are not exempt from a lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God within the selfish desires of the old Adam (cf. Gal 5:16; Rom 7:7-10). The justified also must ask God daily for forgiveness as in the Lord’s Prayer (Mt. 6:12; 1 Jn 1:9), are ever again called to conversion and penance, and are ever again granted forgiveness.”<sup>41</sup>

(6) *The Annex to the Official Common Statement recognizes different meanings of the concept of concupiscence in Catholic and Lutheran theology.* “The reality of salvation in baptism and the peril from the power of sin can be expressed in such a way that, on the one hand, the forgiveness of sins and renewal of humanity in Christ by baptism is emphasized and, on the other hand, it can be seen that the justified also ‘are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (cf. Rom 6:12-14) and are not exempt from a lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God’ (JDDJ 28).”<sup>42</sup> The power of sin attacks not only from within but also through social structures that oppress and enslave.

### 2.3.3 Justification and Sanctification

(1) *Catholics and Lutherans praise God that the controversies concerning the relationship between justification and sanctification, between faith and good works, could be settled.* In obedience to the biblical witness, “we confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the

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<sup>36</sup> *The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Smalcald Articles, III, *Book of Concord*, 310-311.

<sup>38</sup> The Council of Trent, *Decree on Original Sin* (1546), DH 1515.

<sup>39</sup> The Council of Trent, *Decree on Original Sin*, DH 1511-1513.

<sup>40</sup> JDDJ, §22.

<sup>41</sup> JDDJ, §28.

<sup>42</sup> JDDJ, Annex B.

whole Christian life. [...] We confess together that in baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person.”<sup>43</sup>

(2) *Lutherans and Catholics can apply this consensus on justification and sanctification to baptism.* Luther understands baptism in the light of God’s promise that is received by faith and is lived out through new obedience or good works. “...the Holy Spirit is received through faith, consequently hearts are renewed and endowed with new affections so as to be able to do good works.”<sup>44</sup> Baptism is the means for God’s salvific action that justifies the sinner. It is what the Council of Trent calls the “instrumental cause” of justification.<sup>45</sup> The Council of Trent clearly understands baptism as “the sacrament of faith”.<sup>46</sup> The General Introduction to the *Rite of Christian Initiation* reiterates this conviction: “Baptism is therefore, above all, the sacrament of that faith by which, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we respond to the Gospel of Christ.”<sup>47</sup> Both traditions recognize the obligation of the baptized to live out their baptism in a renewed life.

### 2.3.4 Conformed to Christ

(1) *In obedience to the biblical witness, the common faith of Catholics and Lutherans affirms that in baptism the faithful are joined to Christ and formed in Christ’s likeness.* This is one of the themes in patristic theology. The Church Fathers understand baptism as a “mimesis” and “antitype” of Christ’s death and resurrection so that the baptized can participate in his mystery.<sup>48</sup> In medieval theology, configuration with Christ is also one of the central aims of baptism.<sup>49</sup>

(2) *Martin Luther maintains continuity with the practice of baptism in apostolic teaching while at the same time employing other metaphors.* One such metaphor is the happy exchange found in Bernard of Clairvaux, “Is not this a beautiful, glorious exchange, by which Christ, who is wholly innocent and holy, not only takes upon himself another’s sin, that is, my sin and guilt, but also clothes and adorns me, who am nothing but sin, with his own innocence and purity? And then besides dies the shameful death of the Cross for the sake of my sins, through which I have deserved death and condemnation, and grants to me his righteousness, in order that I may live with him eternally in glorious and unspeakable joy. Through this blessed exchange, in which Christ changes places with us (something the heart can grasp only in faith), and through nothing else, are we freed from sin and death and given his righteousness and life as our own.”<sup>50</sup>

(3) *In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the liturgical movement in the Catholic Church retrieved the theme of the paschal mystery at the heart of the Triduum.* Current Catholic theology, using the theme of the paschal mystery, emphasizes Romans 6 to explain this conformity with Christ: “By baptism men are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ: they die with Him, are buried with Him, and rise with Him;

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<sup>43</sup> JDDJ, §§25, 28.

<sup>44</sup> The Augsburg Confession, XX, *Book of Concord*, 57.

<sup>45</sup> The Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification*, DH 1529.

<sup>46</sup> The Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification*, DH 1529.

<sup>47</sup> *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Council*, 1:4.

<sup>48</sup> cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogicae catecheses* 2, 5–7; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Homiliae Catecheticae*. 14, 5; Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, 2, 23.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III q. 66, a. 2; q. 69, a. 9 ad 1.

<sup>50</sup> Luther, *Sermon at the Baptism of Bernhard*, LW 51:316. WA 49:124-135. See also “Solt deine Tauffe von der Tauffe Christi nicht absondern, du must mit deiner Tauffe inn die Tauff Christi komen, Also das Christi Tauff dein Tauff und deine Tauff Christi Tauff und aller ding eine Tauffe sey.“ Predigt 1546: WA 51:111.27-30. “Christus sua morta, passione, sanguine et meritis in baptism.” Predigt 1538: WA 46:175.15f.

they receive the spirit of adoption as sons 'in which we cry: Abba, Father' (Rom. 8:15), and thus become true adorers whom the Father seeks."<sup>51</sup> For Lutherans, the Baptismal Booklet at the end of the Small Catechism describes this conformity to the paschal mystery in Christ: "[Christ] himself calls it a 'new birth,' through which we, being freed from the devil's tyranny and loosed from sin, death, and hell, become children of life, heirs of all God's possessions, God's own children, and brothers and sisters of Christ."<sup>52</sup>

(4) *Conformity to Christ is both a soteriological reality and an ecclesial reality.* Together Lutherans and Catholics affirm: "Through baptism all are bound together with Christ (cf. Rom 6:3ff) and form the one 'body of Christ' (1 Cor 12:27)."<sup>53</sup>

### 2.3.5 The Gift of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's Gifts

(1) *In obedience to the biblical witness, the common faith of Lutherans and Catholics affirms that by baptism the faithful receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, are incorporated into the Body of Christ, and participate in the Spirit's gifts.* The Holy Spirit seals the baptized.<sup>54</sup> Basil of Cesarea emphasizes that it is the Spirit who gives life.<sup>55</sup> In baptism Christians receive "The first fruits of the Spirit."<sup>56</sup> The above analysis of the baptismal rite demonstrates this conviction.

(2) *Luther's Large Catechism affirms that baptism promises and brings "victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts."*<sup>57</sup> The Council of Trent insisted on the gifts of the Holy Spirit for those who are justified in baptism.<sup>58</sup> However, the theological unfolding of this pneumatic reality did not always match its significance. In the JDDJ, Catholics and Lutherans confess: "By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they [the sinners] are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life."<sup>59</sup> The JDDJ proclaims: "It [justification] occurs in the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism and incorporation into the one body (Rom 8:1ff., 9ff.; 1 Cor 12:12ff.). All this is from God alone, for Christ's sake, by grace, through faith in 'the gospel of God's Son' (Rom 1:1-3)."<sup>60</sup>

### 2.3.6 Baptism and Faith

(1) *Catholics and Lutherans agree that baptism is a sacrament of faith.* For Lutherans, faith must have something to believe, something to which it may cling and upon which it may stand. Faith clings to the water, "enclosed in God's command and connected with God's Word."<sup>61</sup> Baptism does not rest on faith, but on the Word of God, who instituted it.<sup>62</sup> Faith is communicated to the baptized as the effective promise of the Triune God. This bodily promise calls for being received in faith, so that baptism without faith

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<sup>51</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), §6. See also Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §7.

<sup>52</sup> The Small Catechism, Baptismal Booklet, *Book of Concord*, 372.

<sup>53</sup> Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission, *Church and Justification: Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of Justification* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1994), §35.

<sup>54</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogicae catecheses*, 3, 14.

<sup>55</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 15, 35; see also Ambrose, *De mysteriis*, 20; *De Spiritu Sancto*, 1, 6, 76-79.

<sup>56</sup> Theodor of Mopsuestia, *Homiliae Catecheticae*, 16, 30. Romans 8:23.

<sup>57</sup> The Large Catechism, Fourth Part: Concerning Baptism, *Book of Concord*, 461.

<sup>58</sup> The Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification*, DH 1529.

<sup>59</sup> JDDJ, §25.

<sup>60</sup> JDDJ, §11.

<sup>61</sup> The Small Catechism, The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, *The Book of Concord*, 359.

<sup>62</sup> Luther, Ten Sermons on the Catechism (1528), LW 51:186.

contributes nothing toward salvation and receives nothing. Baptism is God's work grasped in faith. Where faith is lacking, baptism remains an unfruitful sign.

(2) *For Catholics, baptism presupposes faith and also nourishes, strengthens, and expresses it.*<sup>63</sup> The church does not require a perfect and mature faith for baptism, but "a beginning that is called to develop."<sup>64</sup> The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens asks of a candidate: "What do you ask of God's Church?" The response is "faith!"<sup>65</sup> The presupposition is that the church's faith precedes that of the catechumen who is invited to adhere to it.<sup>66</sup>

(3) *Lutherans and Catholics hold that the mission to baptize is implied in the mission to evangelize since the purpose of the preaching of the word is to elicit faith.* The dominical command is: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20).

(4) *Lutherans consider faith to be necessary even in the case of infant baptism.* Baptism is an act of the Triune God in which God gives himself to a human person, receiving that person into communion with God. It is not based on faith while it calls for faith in order to live this communion with God. In the case of infant baptism, God's effective baptismal promise will create faith in the baptized that needs to be nourished throughout life by the proclamation of the Word of God and the sacraments. Luther held that infants do believe because faith itself is a gift given in baptism and as such is a work of God. As the once-and-for-all act of God for a human person, baptism is the constant anchor of a person's faith in God. The baptized continually return to their baptism, receiving it and its benefits always anew throughout their life.

(5) *For Catholics, children "are baptized in the faith of the Church, a faith proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents who represent both the local Church and the whole society of saints and believers."*<sup>67</sup> The Roman Catholic Church has always baptized infants as well as adults, understanding the words, "unless a man is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" to mean that children should not be deprived of baptism. There is nothing automatic or magical in this, for if baptism is not responded to in faith it remains incomplete and not active in the life of the individual. Thus, there must be assurance that a baptized child is to be raised in an environment of faith. Nevertheless, even though more infants may be baptized than adults, adult baptism is normative for the Roman Catholic understanding of the sacrament because of the faith engaged and also because the rite involves a conversion of life not experienced by an infant.

(6) *Baptism is an act of the Triune God, but performed through human beings and on the request of human beings.* It is an act of faith. The very gesture of presenting oneself or a child for baptism manifests the desire to be associated with Christ and his church and is thus an act of faith. The rite of baptism includes a profession of faith in the Triune God.

### 2.3.7 The Ecclesial Dimension: Incorporation into the Body of Christ

(1) *In obedience to the biblical witness, Lutherans and Catholics affirm that the salvific effect of baptism includes incorporation into the body of Christ.* This means not only that the baptized are incorporated into Jesus Christ by participating in his death and resurrection, but also that they become full members of the body of Christ that is the church.

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<sup>63</sup> CCC, 1123.

<sup>64</sup> CCC, 1253.

<sup>65</sup> *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Council*, 1:55.

<sup>66</sup> CCC, 1124.

<sup>67</sup> *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Council*, 1:366. *Rite of Baptism for Children*, 2.

(2) *Following the Latin tradition since Augustine, medieval theology strongly emphasized the individual soteriological dimension of baptism.* For example, Thomas Aquinas identified grace as the chief effect of the sacraments, including baptism. The Council of Florence, which largely adopted the sacramental theology of Thomas Aquinas, declares that baptism as well as most of the other sacraments “are directed to the spiritual perfection of each person in himself.”<sup>68</sup>

(3) *Nevertheless, the ecclesial dimension of baptism also figured in medieval theology, particularly in the theology of the sacramental character as a deputation to perform Acts appropriate to the church in worship.* To have a place in the church’s liturgical assembly is to have a place in the church. The Decree for the Armenians also states, “Holy baptism holds the first place among all the sacraments, for it is the gate of the spiritual life; through it we become members of Christ and of the body of the church.”<sup>69</sup>

(4) *With this background, the Reformers, although inheritors of the traditional focus on the individual effects of baptism, also addressed its ecclesial effects.* In the Small Catechism, Luther connects baptism and the communion of saints, saying that baptism is “a ‘new birth,’ through which we, being freed from the devil’s tyranny and loosed from sin, death, and hell, become children of life, heirs of all God’s possessions, God’s own children, and brothers and sisters of Christ.”<sup>70</sup> The Catholic tradition has put a new emphasis on the ecclesial dimension. The baptismal theology of *Lumen Gentium* 7 reflects how through baptism the baptized are formed in the likeness of Christ and become partakers of his Spirit. At the same time, it stresses that Christ makes those called together from all nations “mystically the components of His own Body.”

### 2.3.8 The Ecclesial Dimension: the Common Priesthood

(1) *The ecclesial dimension of baptism includes a theology of the common priesthood to which all the baptized are called.* Martin Luther highlighted the common priesthood: “This is a spiritual priesthood, held in common by all Christians, through which we are all priests with Christ. That is, we are children of Christ, the high priest (...).”<sup>71</sup> Vatican II rediscovered the common priesthood, proclaiming that “the baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.”<sup>72</sup>

(2) *Lutherans and Catholics today share a theology of the common priesthood received in baptism as is reflected in ecumenical dialogues.* “Through baptism all constitute the one priestly people of God (1 Pet 2:5.9; Rev 1:6; 5:10).”<sup>73</sup> The document *Apostolicity* deals in detail with this common priesthood in relationship to ministerial priesthood.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The Council of Florence *The Decree for the Armenians*, DH 1311.

<sup>69</sup> The Council of Florence *The Decree for the Armenians*, DH 1314.

<sup>70</sup> The Small Catechism, Baptismal Booklet, *Book of Concord*, 373.

<sup>71</sup> Luther, *The Misuse of the Mass* (1521), LW 36:138.

<sup>72</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §10; cf. *Lumen Gentium*, §31 without pneumatological reference, but see also *Lumen Gentium*, §34.

<sup>73</sup> Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission, *The Ministry in the Church: Models, Forms and Phases of Catholic-Lutheran Church Fellowship* (1981) (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1982), §13; cf. Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission on the Gospel and the Church, *Church and Justification: Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of Justification* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1994), §261.

<sup>74</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §§196-199; 253f; 236-238.

### 2.3.9 Baptism is an Irrevocable Gift that Shapes All of Life

(1) *In obedience to the biblical witness, Lutherans and Catholics affirm that baptism is an “eternal gift” that marks the whole life of the baptized.* The Faith and Order Consultation rightly says: “By means of God's continuing grace and presence baptism is process and once-for-all eschatological event and pattern for all of life.”<sup>75</sup> Baptism initiates a process of adapting, exercising, and growing into a new identity. God will never deny God's promise in baptism through which God grants full communion with God's self and regenerates the sinner to new life in Christ.

(2) *The faithfulness of God – sealed by the Holy Spirit as pledge of eternal life – allows the baptized to expect the accomplishment of communion with Christ in eternal life.* Catholic teaching expresses this idea through a theology of the sacramental character or seal,<sup>76</sup> which refers to the indelible disposition for grace. This theology also means that regardless of any deficiency of faith or disposition when receiving baptism and regardless of whatever happens in the life of a baptized, God's promise will not be revoked. For the same reason, in the Lutheran tradition baptism cannot be repeated. Although baptism requires faith, its validity does not depend on it (as if a certain lack of faith would necessitate a repetition of the rite). God's promise in baptism is eternal and will never be rescinded. In this way, Luther can speak of an indelible character that belongs to the promise in baptism: “It is an eternal gift, character indelebilis. God's Word never fails, even if I fail and do not believe.”<sup>77</sup>

(3) *Both traditions practice a remembrance (or thanksgiving) of baptism through the renewal of baptismal promises as well as by an affirmation of baptism.* These practices are a reminder both to the individual and to the community that the beginning of the journey of faith is in baptism, in God's act of regeneration and renewal. The affirmation of baptism highlights God's faithfulness. For example, those who return to faith are not rebaptized but re-affirm their baptism ritually because even though they had once abandoned the faith, God's promise has not abandoned them.

(4) *Christian life is living out baptism in many and various ways.* One of the most important is prayer. Ambrose reminds the Christians that in baptism they were received by God the Father so that they may pray and call upon God their Father.<sup>78</sup> For Luther, prayer is “almost like baptism”<sup>79</sup> in that prayer is a continual exercise of dying and rising.

(5) *For Luther, all of Christian life is a “spiritual baptism”<sup>80</sup> because it is practiced daily.* “It signifies that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”<sup>81</sup> While baptism is a sacrament that occurs at a particular time and place, the Christian life can be understood as a living out or expression of what was already given in baptism. For both Catholics and Lutherans, believers live out the implications of baptism as they enter more and more explicitly and intensely, not without temptation, into communion with God and with each other through, among other means of grace, the Eucharist, penance, confirmation, ordination, and other means of grace.

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<sup>75</sup> *Becoming a Christian: The Ecumenical Implications of our Common Baptism*, ed. By Thomas F. Best & Dagmar Heller, Faith and Order Paper No. 184 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999), 22.

<sup>76</sup> CCC, 1121.

<sup>77</sup> Predigt 1531: WA 34/1:97.12f.25-27; English translation by Dirk G. Lange.

<sup>78</sup> Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, 5, 19.

<sup>79</sup> Luther, A Meditation on Christ's Passion (1519), LW 42:10.

<sup>80</sup> Luther, The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism, LW 35:30. WA 2:728.13f.

<sup>81</sup> The Small Catechism, The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, *Book of Concord*, 360.

## 2.4 Baptism, Eucharist, Penance, and Ordination

(1) *Baptism is the foundation of a sacramental and spiritual life.* It is the “basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments”.<sup>82</sup> The baptized are freed from sin, reborn as children of God, made members of the body of Christ, incorporated into the church, and made sharers in its mission.

### 2.4.1 Baptism in Relation to the Eucharist

(1) *In Lutheran and Catholic communities, the Eucharist is seen both as a “food for the soul” and as a means whereby the baptized are strengthened to meet the trials and tribulations of the Christian life.* Thus, Catholics teach that the Eucharist helps to keep the baptized “safe from the assaults of temptation,” and “it also restrains and represses the lusts of the flesh, for while it inflames the soul more ardently with the fire of charity, it of necessity extinguishes the ardor of concupiscence”.<sup>83</sup> Lutherans similarly hold that although “by Baptism we are born anew; there still remains concupiscence, and so the Eucharist was given as our daily pasture and sustenance, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself so as not to fall back in such a battle, but become ever stronger and stronger.”<sup>84</sup>

(2) *Catholics teach that baptism does not represent the fullness of sacramental communion in Christ.* “Baptism is only a beginning, an inauguration wholly directed toward the fullness of life in Christ. Baptism, therefore, envisages a complete profession of faith, complete incorporation in the system of salvation such as Christ willed it to be, and finally complete ingrafting in eucharistic communion.”<sup>85</sup>

(3) *For Lutherans, baptism is God’s act of justification, and yet the baptized are on a journey.* Lutherans “emphasize that righteousness as acceptance by God and sharing in the righteousness of Christ is always complete. At the same time, they state that there can be growth in its effects in Christian living.”<sup>86</sup> Luther describes this journey of faith: “For we perceive that a [person] who is justified is not yet a righteous [person], but is in the very movement or journey toward righteousness. Therefore, whoever is justified is still a sinner; and yet [that person] is considered fully and perfectly righteous by God who pardons and is merciful.”<sup>87</sup> While Lutherans understand baptism to be God’s full and complete act of justification, the effect of baptism is on-going. On this journey through life, the Eucharist is comfort and strength. Luther writes, “The Lord’s Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may be refreshed and strengthened and that it may not succumb in the struggle but become stronger and stronger.”<sup>88</sup>

### 2.4.2 Baptism in Relation to Penance

(1) *Baptism precedes the reception of other sacraments in the Catholic Church such as penance and ordination.* Catholics teach that “Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers

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<sup>82</sup> CCC, 1217.

<sup>83</sup> *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, translated into English with notes by John A. McHugh and Charles J. Callan (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1982), 244.

<sup>84</sup> The Large Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar, *Book of Concord*, 469.

<sup>85</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964), §22.

<sup>86</sup> JDDJ, §39.

<sup>87</sup> Luther, The Disputation Concerning Justification, LW 34:152-153.

<sup>88</sup> The Large Catechism, Fourth Part: Concerning Baptism, *Book of Concord*, 459.

a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as ‘the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace.’<sup>89</sup>

(2) *Luther held penance in high esteem although he rejected the idea that the gift (or promise) given by God in baptism could be lost.* For him, confession was not a second plank that would save the baptized from shipwreck, because baptism will ever again unfold its gift of forgiveness. “The ship does not break up because, as we said, it is God’s ordinance and not something that is ours. But it does happen that we slip and fall out of the ship. However, those who do fall out should immediately see to it that they swim to the ship and hold fast to it, until they can climb aboard again and sail on in it as before.”<sup>90</sup> For Lutherans, penance is a continual return to baptism. “If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in baptism, which not only announces this new life but also produces, begins, and exercises it.”<sup>91</sup> God is always faithful to God’s promise in baptism.

(3) *It must be noted that when Catholics speak of the loss of baptismal grace as a result of mortal sin, they want to emphasize that even after mortal sin the baptized continues to have an on-going but altered relationship with God, who remains faithful.* This is seen most clearly in the permanent “character” that God impresses on the soul at baptism, claiming the baptized once and for all.

(4) *The document Ways to Community (1980) attempts to show how Lutheran and Catholic perspectives on penance do not contradict each other:*

According to Catholic conviction, there are, together with the chief basic sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, five further sacraments: confirmation, penance, extreme unction, ordination and marriage. In each of these, the Catholic faith sees the Lord at work bestowing grace and creating unity. In each, not only the individual recipient but the whole church is involved, which sees itself as a “sacrament of unity”, as a sign and instrument “of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind”.

The Lutheran conviction also is that the Lord does not bestow His grace exclusively through the preached word and the administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Confession and pastoral care, as well as ordination, confirmation, and marriage between believers are understood as actions in which human beings are promised and granted grace, even though it is generally held that these Acts should not be seen as sacraments in the full sense.<sup>92</sup>

### 2.4.3 Baptism in Relation to Ordination

(1) *The Apostolicity of the Church discusses the elements “which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, contribute to building up the church ‘upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone’ (Eph. 2:20).”*<sup>93</sup> Communication of God’s Word in preaching and sacramental Acts is a key element through which the apostolic gospel becomes present for human beings. “With respect to human beings as co-workers with God in the communication of the gospel, all who have been baptized and believe are called to collaborate in the transmission of the gospel, by virtue of their sharing in the priesthood of Christ. At the same time, the church also has its ordained ministry to which some individuals are specially called.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> CCC, 1446.

<sup>90</sup> The Large Catechism, Fourth Part: Concerning Baptism, *Book of Concord*, 466.

<sup>91</sup> The Large Catechism, Fourth Part: Concerning Baptism, *Book of Concord*, 466.

<sup>92</sup> Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission, *Ways to Community* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1981), §18f.

<sup>93</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §165.

<sup>94</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §165.

(2) *Baptism is the condition for every ordination.* Ordination, like baptism, cannot be repeated. This is why Catholics can speak about an indelible character imparted by ordination. Ontological language is used to emphasize the unique character of ordination as unrepeatable. The theological foundation of unrepeatability is God's faithfulness. The gift and grace of ordination once given is never taken back by God. This anti-donatist decision is also affirmed by the *Augsburg Confession*.<sup>95</sup>

(3) *In Catholic theology, the grace received in ordination (which is nothing less than the Holy Spirit) is understood differently than the grace received in baptism.* Baptism confers *gratia gratum faciens* (justifying grace). Ordination confers *gratia gratis data* (that is, grace directed to service, grace for the other, like a charism). The grace conferred by ordination does not make the recipient holy in an unmediated or direct fashion but is a grace that makes the recipient capable of fulfilling his office and in that way also makes the recipient holy.

(4) *For the Lutheran confessions, ordination is also directed to service, service of God and neighbor.* In fact, when it is considered in this perspective there is no objection to considering ordination a sacrament. "But if ordination is understood with reference to the ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament. For the ministry of the Word has the command of God and has magnificent promises like Romans 1: the gospel 'is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.'<sup>96</sup>

## **2.5 Conclusion: Mutual Recognition of Baptism in our Common Reception**

(1) *On the basis of a common practice and a common understanding of baptism, Lutherans and Catholics can affirm the mutual recognition of baptism which already has been expressed in previous dialogues as well as in bi- and multilateral declarations.* The first international Roman Catholic/Lutheran Dialogue already referred to a "common baptism." The dialogue already saw baptism as the "starting point" for further communion and even Eucharistic fellowship.<sup>97</sup> This insight is critical for the churches today as they face similar pastoral tasks concerning their understanding of baptism and how it is expressed and lived out in baptismal practice, in the particular pieties of congregations and the faithful, and eventually in Eucharistic sharing.

(2) *With thankfulness, Lutherans and Catholics acknowledge a common faith concerning the salvific action of God in baptism.* They wish to go further in their reflections on incorporation into the body of Christ and the ecclesial dimensions of growth in communion.

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<sup>95</sup> The Augsburg Confession, VIII, *Book of Concord*, 42.

<sup>96</sup> Preface to the Book of Concord, *Book of Concord*, 11.

<sup>97</sup> Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission, *Das Evangelium und die Kirche / The Gospel and the Church, Bericht der evangelisch-lutherisch/ römisch-katholischen Studienkommission* (Verlag Otto Lembeck, 1975), §70.

# Chapter 3: Incorporation into the Body of Christ: Ecclesial Dimensions

## 3.1 Structure of the Argument

(1) As the first and second chapters have shown, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches believe that the sacrament of baptism was instituted by Christ. They celebrate baptism according to Christ's intention when they administer it with water in the name of the Triune God with the understanding that through baptism the baptized participate in Christ and are in communion with all other baptized. This allows for the mutual recognition of their baptisms as incorporation into the body of Christ. However, the ecclesial consequences of this insight have yet to be fully identified.

(2) In the sixteenth century, despite acknowledging each other's baptism, Catholics and Lutherans refused to acknowledge each other as either churches or parts of the church. Indeed, in the *Smalcald Articles* Luther refused to "concede to them [the Roman church] that they are the church."<sup>1</sup> Catholics in turn rejected the Lutheran claim to be the true church, arguing that they simply did not have the marks of the one true church. Thus, Cajetan accused Luther of building "a new Church" and Robert Bellarmine concluded that Lutheran churches were "false" churches.<sup>2</sup> This mutual refusal has not been totally overcome despite the mutual recognition of baptism. This present chapter argues that as a result of the mutual recognition of baptism and the identification of a shared ecclesial reality through the discernment of the fruit of the Spirit, not only individuals, but also faith communities, are to be seen as members of the body of Christ. This provides the foundation for a mutual recognition of churches.

(3) If Lutherans and Catholics have been incorporated into the one body of Christ by baptism, they have become brothers and sisters to one another in the body of Christ. But they live their lives as baptized people in either the Lutheran churches or in the Catholic Church. These communities are not in full communion with one another. Since by baptism Lutherans and Catholics are members of the body of Christ, the communities in which they live are also members of the body of Christ. The ecclesial implications of the mutual recognition of baptism will be developed in five steps:

3.1 Since baptism is an incorporation into the body of Christ, it is not just the beginning of a new individual relation with God but in itself is a communal event that leads to a new life in communion with others. This fact has ecclesiological consequences that need to be explored.

3.2 Since this communal dimension of baptism is explained in the New Testament as incorporation into the body of Christ, the understanding of "body of Christ" in the New Testament writings will be examined.

3.3 The New Testament witness of the body of Christ is held in common. However, the history of the concept and its ecclesial implications has been problematic. The Second Vatican Council clarified this concept in a way that today is useful in ecumenical dialogue.

3.4 Even though both Catholics and Lutherans perceive baptism as incorporation into the body of Christ, their concepts of church differ. This section describes the shared ecclesial reality of Catholics and Lutherans by focusing on the many common elements of sanctification and truth

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<sup>1</sup> Smalcald Articles, XII, *The Book of Concord*, 324.

<sup>2</sup> Tommaso de Vio, *Cajetan Responds: A Reader in Reformation Controversy*, edited and translated by Jared Wicks, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1978), 55. Robert Bellarmine, S.J., *Disputationes Roberti Bellarmini Politiani Societatis Jesu, de Controversiis Christianae Fidei, adversus hujus temporis Haereticos* (Paris: Triadelporum, 1613), 2:164.

with the perspective that the Holy Spirit uses them as instruments for his work of bringing people into communion with the Triune God and with each other as baptized brothers and sisters. Because of the mutual recognition of baptism, this shared ecclesial reality calls for a mutual recognition of Lutheran and Catholic communities as members of the body of Christ.

3.5 Since Lutherans and Catholics recognize each other as members of the body of Christ, the body of Christ is therefore always greater than any one ecclesial community. The body of Christ is not confined to any one ecclesial community. At the same time, Catholics and Lutherans believe that the body of Christ – the universal church – is present in their communities through the elements of sanctification and truth.

This analysis proposes that Catholics should use the term “church” inclusively rather than restrictively, referring it to the body of Christ. Then the theology of the body of Christ leads Catholics and Lutherans to a shared view and common statement: With regard to the belonging of both communities to the body of Christ they are able to consider each other as being in communion within the one body of Christ and in this sense as churches.

### **3.2 Baptism as Incorporation into the Body of Christ – a Communal Reality**

(1) *The communal character of baptism and the mutual recognition of baptism call for an exploration of the ecumenical implications for the relationship among baptizing communities.* Chapter 1 has shown that baptism is an ecclesial reality with clear implications for deepening the communion of faith. Chapter 2 has shown that even though both traditions are aware of the communal dimension of baptism, this is not always spelled out in their teaching. In the last decades, however, the awareness of the communal dimension of baptism has grown. Baptism unites the baptized with Jesus Christ, grants them the gift of the Holy Spirit, and shapes their relation to God, Creator and Father. In belonging to the Triune God, the baptized person lives in communion with all the baptized.

(2) *The New Testament describes the communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the community of faithful as belonging to the body of Christ.* Each member receives special charisms from the Holy Spirit that he or she uses for the edification of the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit grants a multitude of charisms and at the same time creates the unity of the body. Thus, the members of the body of Christ are mutually dependent on each other and are called to serve one another with their respective charisms. In the body of Christ, the traditional cultural, religious, social, and gender differences lose their dividing character.

(3) *Several ecumenical documents have hinted at the urgency of exploring what is implied by our mutual recognition of baptism.* The Second Vatican Council already stated: “Baptism ... establishes a sacramental bond of unity which links all who have been reborn by it”<sup>3</sup>. This expression has been received by BEM in asserting baptism as a “basic bond of unity”.<sup>4</sup> In the encyclical *Ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul II emphasized that a mutual and official recognition of baptism “is something much more than an act of ecumenical courtesy; it constitutes a basic ecclesiological statement.”<sup>5</sup> Since then, several ecumenical documents have hinted at the urgency of exploring what is implied by our mutual recognition of baptism. In 1997 the Faith and Order Commission asked: “How far have we drawn the implications of that recognition, that common awareness of being claimed by Christ and belonging to Christ’s one body?”

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<sup>3</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §22.

<sup>4</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, Baptism §6. in Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, Ecumenical Documents 2 (New York, Geneva: Paulist Press; World Council of Churches, 1984), 471.

<sup>5</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint* (1995), §42.

What does that recognition mean for our life together? How can it draw us to common confession, worship and witness?”<sup>6</sup> In 2004 the Joint Working Group between WCC and the Roman Catholic Church formulated a compelling challenge: “If there is one Church of Jesus Christ and if baptism is entrance into it, then all those who are baptized are bound to one another in Christ and should be in full communion with one another. There should not be a division among ecclesial communities; baptism should impel Christians to work for the elimination of division.”<sup>7</sup>

(4) *In line with these ecumenical declarations, this document draws ecclesial consequences from the mutual recognition of baptism as incorporation into the one body of Christ. Normally, the sacrament of baptism is received in a local church, Lutheran or Catholic. This Lutheran or Catholic local church is a worshipping community in which the Gospel is proclaimed and the sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. The local church is not only responsible for the right administering of baptism in accordance with the command of Jesus Christ but has an essential role in introducing the baptized person into the communal life in faith of the one church of Jesus Christ. The local church takes responsibility in supporting the baptized person to grow in faith, hope, and love, and to experience the specific character of Christian communal life. This communal life is shaped by the twofold commandment to love both God and neighbor and by the readiness to forgive one another as God has forgiven them. In this way, local churches become spiritual homes to the baptized. Since baptism is not an isolated event, but takes place in communities, the mutual recognition of baptisms calls for exploring the shared ecclesial reality of these baptizing communities and for their mutual recognition.*

(5) *The shared ecclesial reality of Catholic and Lutheran communities expands and grows from baptism. Baptisms are performed in a congregation that professes its faith in the Triune God with the Apostles’ or the Nicene Creed, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Usually the baptizer is an ordained pastor. At the beginning of Christian life (*initium* and *principium*), baptism calls for the nurturing of faith through the ongoing proclamation of the Word of God, the Eucharist, forgiveness of sins, mutual admonition and comfort, living with Scripture, and leading a life of prayer, thanksgiving, and service to others within and outside of the Christian community. Since baptism extends over the whole life of the believer and the baptized always depend on God’s continual self-giving to them, while this takes place in their respective baptizing communities, it is not enough to recognize baptisms as isolated events or baptism as the bond that individual believers have with one another. Rather, the mutual recognition of baptism implies an awareness of the other baptizing community and an acknowledgement of the means of grace that that community offers in nourishing, sustaining, and guiding the baptized so that they are enabled to lead a spiritual life in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

### **3.3 The Body of Christ in the New Testament – a Promising Image of the Church**

(1) *The biblical concept of the body of Christ enables Lutherans and Catholics to better express theologically both what they share in common and how they should grow in communion on the basis of the one baptism they celebrate in each of their communities.* The following section will not give a detailed exegetical overview but a short identification of some of the most important aspects of ecumenical theology.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Faith and Order Commission, *Becoming a Christian*, Faith and Order Paper No. 184 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), §69.

<sup>7</sup> The Joint Working Group Between the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church, *Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism*, §31 in Jeffrey Gros, Thomas F. Best, and Lorelei F. Fuchs, *Growth in Agreement III : International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005*, ed. Jeffrey Gros, Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, Faith and Order Paper No. 204 (Geneva, Switzerland, Grand Rapids, Mich.: WCC Publications; Williams Eerdmans Pub., 2007), 566.

(2) *The term “body of Christ” in the New Testament expresses theologically a reality of the church.* Chapter 1 has already shown that in the New Testament baptism is incorporation into the body of Christ. The “body of Christ” is more than a mere symbol, for as a metaphor in the full sense of biblical metaphors, it expresses the essential relation and differentiation between Jesus Christ and the church. Within the horizon of biblical anthropology which underlies the metaphor, “body” is not the opposite of “spirit” and “soul,” but constitutes with “spirit” and “soul” the human being. Paul’s understanding of the “body” focuses on the historical and social relations of creatures, their living and dying, suffering and acting. In 1 Cor 12 the genitive “of” presents Jesus as the Lord (1 Cor 12:3) of the church. In Romans, Paul formulates “one body *in* Christ” (Rom 12:5), thereby locating the community within the realm of God’s grace. Colossians and Ephesians transform the metaphor, proclaiming that Christ is the “head of the body, the church” (Col 1:18; cf. Eph 1:22; 4:15; Col 2:10,19). In so doing, they make clear the true “hierarchy,” namely, the sovereignty of the risen Lord over and within the church.

(3) *The body of Christ is essentially related to baptism and Eucharist.* The body of Christ is related to baptism because in baptism all are clothed with Christ. Baptism’s relationship to the body of Christ ensures that baptism is not just a rite or a personal experience, but is also an ecclesial event. In this ecclesial event the faithful receive the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 3:1-5), who guides them into a life of faith and who brings forth the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22).

Nevertheless, not only baptism, but also the Eucharist is essentially connected with the body of Christ. Arguing against the participation of the faithful in pagan sacrifices (1 Cor 8-10), Paul asks the Corinthians: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:16-17). In verse 16 Paul refers to the Eucharistic body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 11:23-26). In verse 17, however, he refers to the ecclesial body of Christ. References to the actions of sharing and partaking constitute the link between the two references. By celebrating the Eucharist, drinking the blood of Christ, and eating the body of Christ, communion with Christ within the ecclesial body lives and grows.

(4) *Paul speaks about the body of Christ in order to deepen not only the spiritual, but also the social relationship between the different members.* Thus, “body of Christ” is an image of the living organism of the church in which a plurality of members cooperate in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul took the body metaphor from the political theory of his time that would have affirmed the unity of society while at the same time highlighting the social inequality of its different members. Paul revolutionized this tradition, characterizing the church as a communion of faith in the dynamic of the Holy Spirit. There is not more or less grace in the gifts of the Spirit. It is the same grace in different gifts. Everyone, even those who are weak, have their specific charism which should be recognized as a gift of God by the other members (1 Cor 12:4-11). Whoever is great serves, and whoever serves is great. No one can isolate themselves from other members of the body. “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor 12:26).

(5) *The body of Christ grows in the power of the Holy Spirit.* First Corinthians and Romans mention the different members of the church as members of the one body of Christ. They are called to discover their potential to work for the edification of the church and its growth in communion. In the same way, they are called to recognize the charisms of others even if a particular charism may not seem to be very important. In Ephesians, the growth of the church is attributed to God’s grace (*charis*), which in turn is connected to the personal gifts and different services of individual members (Eph 4:7-16).

(6) *Speaking of the body of Christ, Paul refers to the local communities of Corinth and Rome.* At the same time he opens the horizon of the whole church, which is described in the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians. The metaphor of the body calls the addressees to find better ways for their communities to grow. At the same time, Paul relates the Corinthian and Roman communities to other local churches (1 Cor 1:2; 15:1-11; Rom 1:11-17). Thus, the Pauline concept of the “body of Christ” or “the body in

Christ” refers to both the local community and to the one church, which can be seen especially in his comment that “God has appointed in the church first apostles” (1 Cor 12:28), who serve at different places in the one church. Paul brings together the local and universal aspect of the body of Christ in a missionary perspective and engages local communities for his universal mission. Moreover, Colossians and Ephesians, while not losing the local dimension, further develop the concept of the one body by envisioning the church within a cosmic horizon as one body under the headship of the one Lord: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:4-6). Thus, both dimensions—the local and the universal—are present and interrelated.

(7) *Insofar as “body of Christ” ecclesiology refers not only to local communities but also to the whole church, it describes the relationship between different Christian communities and traditions in the same dialectic of unity and diversity (cf. 1 Cor 12:4-6).* Indeed, there is a vivid communion in the early church between Christians with Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, Greek and Roman cultures, and insider and outsider experiences. The Apostolic Council unified the Jewish and the Gentile mission of the church (Act 15; Gal 2:1-10). Referring to baptism (cf. Col 3:11), the letter to the Colossians proclaims: “In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!” (Col 3:12). There is a communion of “giving and receiving” (cf. Phil 4:15) between the local churches in Greece and Asia Minor and the communities in Judea and Jerusalem (1 Thess 2:14; 2 Cor 8-9; Gal 2:10).

(8) *The communion of the body of Christ consists of those who are justified by faith in the promise of Christ (Gal 2:16) and who confess: “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor 12:3).* This reality defines the contours of this communion. In Galatians, Paul excludes those who exclude the uncircumcised members (Gal 1:6-9). In the same letter, he identifies two crucial criteria for full ecclesial communion within a community which otherwise encompasses a variety of pieties, traditions, and practices, both religious and cultural. The criterion is the common understanding of justification by faith. Paul introduces it as he remembers his conflict with Peter, Barnabas, and other Jewish Christians when they broke table fellowship with their Christian brothers and sisters with non-Jewish backgrounds and who did not therefore follow the purity laws (Gal 2:11-16). Paul affirms the criterion of justification by faith in referring to the Apostolic Council. He emphasizes that in their spiritual decision the “pillars” of Jerusalem, James, Peter, and John, had recognized the “grace” obviously given to Paul (Gal 2:9). The joint apostolic witness, as the norm for the proclamation of the Gospel, became decisive for the identity of the body of Christ.

Since faith and love belong together, this communion also requires social behavior that does not destroy communion. In First Corinthians, Paul excludes those who committed (in his eyes) sexual abuses (1 Cor 5-6), and he criticizes very sharply those rich people who excluded the poor during the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:17-34).

(9) *As a metaphor for the church, the “body of Christ” emphasizes the twofold relationship of its members with Christ and with one other.* For Paul, the “body of Christ” is the church. First Corinthians is addressed “to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” (1 Cor 1:2). In Colossians, the terms “body” and “church” are explicitly identified (Col 1:24). According to Eph 5:23, “Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior.” “Body of Christ” is not the only image of the church in the Pauline corpus, but it is the one that highlights both relationships: the Christocentrism of faith and the cooperation and compassion of the different members. Since the body of Christ is identified with the church, this means that both relationships define the church.

### **3.4 The Complex History of the Concept of the Body of Christ**

(1) *The history of ecclesiology shows a complex relationship between the body of Christ and the reality of the church within history.* A review of this complex history makes evident two interacting tendencies.

On the one hand, Christians understand their respective communities – their life and visible structures – as manifestations of the body of Christ. This is a necessary claim for people who have been baptized and are in faith united with Christ and with each other in these communities. On the other hand, also in Catholic ecclesiology, there have always been contradictory aspects that resisted exclusive identifications. Catholic theology is aware of dimensions of the church that transcend its visible structures. Since this tension shapes especially Catholic ecclesiology, the following section focuses on this confessional tradition. The intention is to show how the identification of the body of Christ with the church, understood in institutional terms, came into being. At the same time Roman Catholic ecclesiology had to admit phenomena that undermine a strict and exclusive identification of the visible entity of the Catholic Church with the church of Christ.

(2) *Some branches of scholastic theology tended to identify the church very closely with the body of Christ.* Here it is important to note some historical shifts concerning the use of this terminology. It was common to enumerate the three *corpora* of Christ: the human flesh and body of Jesus born of the Virgin, the sacramental body of the Eucharist, and the ecclesial body rooted in the Eucharist. Originally, the term *corpus mysticum* was used for the Eucharist and *corpus Christi* for the church. Due to the Eucharistic conflicts of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, theologians started to call the Eucharist the *corpus verum*, while from the 13<sup>th</sup> century the term *corpus mysticum* was applied to the church. At the same time, this ecclesiology of the mystical body of Christ was separated from the treatises on the Eucharist. A sacramental view of the Church was replaced by the juridical meaning of the term “body”. Henri de Lubac’s research on the term *Corpus mysticum* narrates this tendency to identify the church as a juridical and social entity with the mystical body and deplores the “complicity in splitting the church”: “One attempted an exaggerated identification of the ‘mystical body’ and the ‘visible body.’”<sup>8</sup>

(3) *In reaction to the Reformation, the concept of the corpus Christi was often seen as Protestant and therefore was avoided.* Based on the work of theologians like Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), Matthias Scheeben (1835-1888), and Émile Mersch (1890-1940), several theologians tried to retrieve the concept of the mystical body of Christ in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some of these theologians focused on the individual person rather than on the communion of the church; others had in mind the romantic concept of a mystical organism permeated by the grace of God.

(4) *The encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* of Pius XII (1943) had the intention of broadening the narrow understanding of the church as a perfect society, and, at the same time, of moderating the somewhat exuberant theology of the mystical body of Christ.* As a corrective to a theology that focused on the institutional character of the church, the encyclical identifies the “holy, catholic, apostolic, Roman Church” with the mystical body of Christ.<sup>9</sup> The encyclical did not reflect the long history of the concept of the body of Christ and its different dimensions. It is eye-opening to see Joseph Ratzinger’s commentary on this encyclical where he distinguishes between a sacramental concept of the body of Christ that connects the ecclesial body to the Eucharist, a juridical concept of the institutional body, and the romantic concept of the mystical organism of grace:

The identification of “body of Christ” with the Catholic Church has to be assessed differently depending on the meaning of the respective concepts of the body of Christ. The weakness of the encyclical of Pius XII might consist in the fact that it did not reflect the difference between the three conceptions so that they all flow into one another [...] A complete identification of both sides is possible on the basis of the corporate, medieval concept, but this remains on the mostly pre-theological level as “church” is grasped only in its juridical aspect. On the other hand, the identification is totally impossible if one presupposes the romantic concept of the body of Christ for the “mystical organism” of the grace of Christ cannot be

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<sup>8</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Corpus mysticum: L'Eucharistie et L'Église au Moyen Age*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Aubier, 1949), 132.

<sup>9</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (1943), §13. See also Pius XII, *Humani generis* (1950), §27.

limited to the realm of the visible unity of the Roman Catholic Church. The identification may have a certain, but not unqualified, right in the case of a sacramental understanding, as it can be found in Patristic theology. Apart from the additional problem that the sharpening of *catholica* to *catholica Romana* raises, already the Patristic Fathers had to admit that something else remained to be accounted for, namely that there were baptized people outside of Catholic Church unity who nevertheless were true “Christians”. Here especially on the sacramental level is given the first limitation of the equation [of the body of Christ with the Catholic Church]. It is not only found in the romantic theology of grace of the body of Christ concept. Since the Roman understanding of the validity of baptisms by heretics was accepted in the rebaptism controversy, the “heretics” were also recognized as Christians with the result that a simple identification of *ecclesia catholica* and the body of Christ was no longer possible.<sup>10</sup>

Although Catholic theology often tried to define “church” in juridical categories, there was an awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit and the reality of the body of Christ beyond juridically defined borders. Questions concerning membership in the visible church point to the possibility that juridical definitions cannot be determinative for salvation and membership in the body of Christ. In times of schism, Catholic theology had to admit phenomena that undermine a strict and exclusive identification of the visible entity of the Catholic Church with the church of Christ. The fact of separated churches disrupts any ecclesiology.

(5) *The Second Vatican Council opened a wider horizon. Lumen Gentium* 8 shows the importance of the way in which Vatican II addressed the problem of identity and difference between the church on earth and the body of Christ, especially in light of this history of “body of Christ.” The Council placed this problem within a new context. It retrieved a comprehensive view of the church by describing its pilgrimage “from the beginning of the world” and waiting for the end of time when “all the just from Adam onward, ‘from Abel the just right to the last of the elect’, will be gathered in the universal church in the Father’s presence”.<sup>11</sup> Being aware that institutional models of church, and therefore palpable criteria for church membership, cannot be exhaustive, Vatican II entitled the first chapter of the Constitution of the Church “The Mystery of the Church.” The concept of the people of God also served as a new perspective that allows for relocating the church within the history of salvation and in the midst of humanity. Even the concept of the body of Christ is used in a different manner. As has been shown, it often had been interpreted in juridical terms as a sociologically determined corporation. In *Lumen Gentium* 8, the concept is reinterpreted pneumatologically in such a way that “the visible social structure of the Church” is not itself the body of Christ but serves “the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it in the building up of the body”.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Die Gleichsetzung von ‚Leib Christi‘ und katholischer Kirche ist anders zu beurteilen, je nachdem welcher Leib-Christi-Begriff dabei gemeint ist. Die Schwäche der Kirchenenzyklika Pius’ XII. dürfte darin bestehen, dass sie den Unterschied der drei Konzeptionen nicht reflektiert hat, so dass alle drei ineinandergehen. [...] Eine vollständige Gleichsetzung beider Seiten ist auf der Basis des körperschaftlichen, mittelalterlichen Begriffs möglich, aber hier bleibt man auch auf einer weitgehend vortheologischen Ebene, Kirche wird nur nach ihrer rechtlichen Seite erfasst. Ganz unmöglich ist umgekehrt die Gleichung, wenn man den romantischen Leib-Christi-Gedanken unterstellt. Denn der ‚geheimnisvolle Organismus‘ der Gnade Christi ist nicht eingrenzbar auf den Bereich der sichtbaren Einheit der römisch-katholischen Kirche. Ein gewisses, aber nicht vorbehaltloses Recht kommt der Gleichung endlich im Fall eines sakramentalen Begriffs zu, wie er in der Patristik vorliegt. Abgesehen von dem zusätzlichen Problem, das die Zuspitzung von ‚catholica‘ auf ‚catholica Romana‘ aufwirft, musste schon die Patristik einen nicht aufgehenden Rest anerkennen, indem auch sie schon vor der Tatsache stand, dass es Getaufte außerhalb der katholischen Kircheneinheit gibt, die dennoch wirkliche ‚Christen‘ sind.

Damit ist eine erste Einschränkung der Gleichsetzung, auch und gerade auf der Ebene des sakramentalen, nicht romantisch-gnaden theologischen Leib-Christi-Begriffs, gegeben. Seitdem sich im Ketzertaufstreit die – römische – Ansicht von der Gültigkeit der Ketzertaufe durchgesetzt hat, ist damit auch das Christsein der ‚Häretiker‘ anerkannt, so dass eine pure Identifikation von *ecclesia catholica* und Leib Christi nicht mehr möglich ist.” Joseph Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes: Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie*, 2nd ed. (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1970), 235.

<sup>11</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §2.

<sup>12</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §8.

(6) *While it has not been difficult for the Roman Catholic Church to recognize that individuals can be saved and gifted with grace outside the borders of its own structures, it has been difficult to recognize the communities of these individuals as churches.* Vatican II opened the way to a new insight concerning the communal structures of separated Christians. It is based on the observation and reflection that is expressed in an explanation given with respect to the terminology of *Unitatis Redintegratio*.

One cannot pass the fact that the communities originating from the split of the Western church are not only a sum or a mass of individual believers, rather they are constituted in societal-ecclesial elements that they preserve from the common heritage and that bestow on them a truly ecclesial character. The one Church of Christ is present in them so to speak as in particular churches, even though unfinished, and active through ecclesial elements in a certain way.<sup>13</sup>

Although the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* had contributed to a great emphasis on the body of Christ, Vatican II structured its thoughts around the theme of the people of God. In this context, the Council chose a new approach for dealing with the topic of *membership* in the church. The Council replaced categories of strict boundaries of the church with terms that allow for a gradual belonging to the people of God (being “related in various ways to the people of God”;<sup>14</sup> “*plene ... incorporantur* instead of *reapse et simpliciter ... incorporantur*”;<sup>15</sup> Insofar as the church is the *communio sanctorum*, one cannot know who, by remaining in charity, is fully incorporated into the church.<sup>16</sup> The Council not only allowed for degrees of belonging to the people of God or to the society of the church but was also aware of an ecclesial reality beyond the borders of the Catholic Church.

(7) *Lumen Gentium 8 reformulated the identification of the Catholic Church with the body of Christ by confessing that the “Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.”* At the same time *Lumen Gentium 8* acknowledges that “elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure.” *Unitatis Redintegratio 3* clarifies that these are “significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself.” When the commission responsible for the text explained *Lumen Gentium 8*, it declared that the former *est* was replaced by *subsistit in* in order to correspond to the affirmation of the “elements” outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church.<sup>17</sup> Other suggestions had been to use the verbs *invenire* or *adesse*. Furthermore, the proposal of some Council fathers to state that the church confessed in the creed *subsistit integro modo in Ecclesia catholica*<sup>18</sup> was rejected.

### 3.5 Shared Ecclesial Reality within the Body of Christ

(1) *Because of the mutual recognition of baptisms, the baptizing communities are called to recognize each other as members of the Body of Christ, even though there are differences in the understandings*

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<sup>13</sup> “Ad b) Praetereundum non est Coetus ex divisione occidentali ortos non esse tantum summam seu congeriem Christifidelium individuorum, sed constitui elementis socialibus ecclesiasticis, quae ipsi ex communi patrimonio conservant et quae ipsis characterem vere ecclesialium conferunt. In his Coetibus unica Christi Ecclesia, quasi tamquam in Ecclesiis particularibus, quamvis imperfecte, praesens et mediantibus elementis ecclesiasticis aliquo modo actiosa est.” *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1974), 3/2, 335. Hereafter AS. English translation by Eva-Maria Faber.

<sup>14</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §16.

<sup>15</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §14.

<sup>16</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §8.

<sup>17</sup> “Quaedam verba mutantur: loco ‚est‘ ... dicitur ‚subsistit in‘, ut expressio melius concordet cum affirmatione de elementis ecclesialibus quae alibi adsunt.” AS 3/1, 177.

<sup>18</sup> AS 3/6, 81.

*of Church in our Lutheran and Catholic traditions.* As 3.1 has shown, baptism has an essential ecclesial dimension and is a common ecclesial reality. As 3.2 has explained, the concept of the Body of Christ correlates the visibility and invisibility of the Church in a way that directs the understanding of the interconnectedness of unity and plurality not only on the level of individual believers but on the level of ecclesial communities as well. Section 3.3 has shown that the history of ecclesiology offers different understandings of the concept of the body of Christ. Even though we do not deny the differences in the concepts of Church, in this section we will mainly describe the coherences in order to underline the argument that we are able to recognize the other baptizing community as a member of the Body of Christ, paying special attention to the fruit of the Spirit present in the other ecclesial community.

### 3.5.1 Lutheran and Catholic Concepts of Church: Differences and Similarities

(1) *Although there are differences in the concept of Church, the basic theological understanding is the same.* Together, Lutherans and Catholics affirm that an essential characteristic of church is the proclamation of the Gospel by those who are sent by Christ (Rom 10:14). Together, Catholics and Lutherans agree that an essential characteristic of church is the profession of one faith received from the apostles. This faith is to ever deepen, and therefore the communion of the faithful is also to grow. Together, Catholics and Lutherans agree that the proclamation of the Word of God and the celebration of baptism and Eucharist build up the church. Together, Lutherans and Catholics are convinced that ordination is necessary in order to preach at the Eucharist/Lord's Supper and to celebrate most sacraments. Together, Catholics and Lutherans teach and live the reality that the church grows in faith and communion by expressing its faith and living a life of communion. The church is a living, dynamic body that is continually called to intensify its practice of the means of grace and prayer through which it also might receive the charisms found in the other community.

(2) *Despite the basic consensus in the understanding of the Church, differences remain.* Some of these differences became church dividing, as the *Smalcald Articles* witness or the canons of the Council of Trent demonstrate.<sup>19</sup> For a long time, differences over church doctrines meant that no consequences could be drawn for church communion from those common elements and practices. Ecumenical dialogue of the last several decades, however, set aside many of the obstacles, so that now consequences can be drawn from those common elements, especially from the mutual recognition of baptism.

(3) *Because Catholics and Lutherans have different concepts of church, what a mutual recognition of their communities as churches should mean must be clarified.* The will of our Lord that his followers should be one calls for such a clarification. If Lutheran churches recognize the Roman Catholic Church as church, they presuppose their Lutheran understanding of the church and ask whether the Roman Catholic Church meets its criteria. If the Roman Catholic Church recognizes the Lutheran churches as church, it presupposes its Roman Catholic understanding of the church and asks whether the Lutheran church meets its criteria. Because the Roman Catholic understanding of the church and the Lutheran understanding of the church differ from each other, the content of a recognition as church differs in both cases. Despite these differences, our common understanding of baptism as incorporation into the Body of Christ allows for recognizing each other as members of the Body of Christ. In order to substantiate this claim, we describe convergences in understanding the church, paying attention to the fruit of the Spirit in both communities.

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<sup>19</sup> Smalcald Articles, XII, *The Book of Concord*, 324. The Council of Trent, *Doctrine and Canons on the Sacrament of Orders* (1563), DH 1771-1778.

### 3.5.2 Patterns of Lutheran Ecclesiology

(1) *The Augsburg Confession identifies the church as the community in which the gospel is purely preached and the sacraments rightly administered.*<sup>20</sup> In the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Melancthon writes, “The church is not only an association of external ties and notes like other civic organizations, but it is principally an association of faith and the Holy Spirit in the hearts of persons. It nevertheless has its external marks so that it can be recognized, namely, the pure teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the gospel of Christ. Moreover, this Church alone is called the body of Christ, which Christ renews, sanctifies, and governs by his Spirit, as Paul testifies in Ephesians 1[:22-23]”.<sup>21</sup> Luther identifies the marks of the church as continuity in the same message as the apostles, preaching, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the office of the keys, the call to ministry, public gathering for worship in praise and confession of faith, and the bearing of the cross as Christ's disciples.<sup>22</sup> These are the means by which the Holy Spirit creates faith and the church and by which one can recognize the church. Among these marks the gospel message, however, is the decisive criterion of continuity in practice with the apostolic church.<sup>23</sup> Melancthon is convinced that this teaching on the church is not new but in line with the Creed and Catholic teaching. The *Apology* notes that faithfulness to the apostolic tradition is through faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles and not in the uniformity of rites.<sup>24</sup>

(2) *For Lutherans, the local congregation, where the Gospel is purely preached and the sacraments rightly administered according to the Gospel, is church in the full sense.*<sup>25</sup> Lutherans hold that the local congregation is in unity with the one church of Christ through the Word of God preached according to Holy Scripture, and the sacraments of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the keys administered according to the gospel, through the creeds of the early church, the common prayers, the Ten Commandments and the double commandment of love, and ordination to ministry in the one church. The church is not limited to local parishes even though Lutherans understand the congregation assembled around pulpit, altar, and font as the primary place where the communion of the faithful is always created anew. Luther renders the Greek word *ekklesia* in his translation of the New Testament always by *Gemeine*. But this German word does not only refer to a parish; thus, the Lutheran understanding of church comprises at the same time the one church of Christ, as can easily be seen in Augsburg Confession VII: “It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church” as well as in Luther's explanation of the third article of the Creed in his Small Catechism: “I believe that ... the Holy Spirit ... makes holy the whole Christian church [*Christenheit*] on earth and keeps it with Christ in the one common, true faith.” For Lutheran understanding, the local church is church not in itself but in its relation to the universal church that “must exist and remain at all times”.<sup>26</sup>

(3) *Basic Lutheran doctrine teaches that the Holy Spirit communicates God's self-giving to human beings through external means of grace.* The Holy Spirit comes to them in the external word of proclamation and the bodily word of the sacraments.<sup>27</sup> Lutherans believe that baptism, the forgiveness of sins, and the Lord's Supper are commanded and instituted by Christ. Sacraments are defined “as rites, which have

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<sup>20</sup> The Augsburg Confession, VII, *The Book of Concord*, 42.

<sup>21</sup> *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, VII and VIII, *The Book of Concord*, 174.

<sup>22</sup> Luther, *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), LW 41:148-165.

<sup>23</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §95.

<sup>24</sup> *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, VII and VIII, *The Book of Concord*, 179, 181.

<sup>25</sup> The Augsburg Confession, VII, *The Book of Concord*, 42.

<sup>26</sup> The Augsburg Confession, VII, *The Book of Concord*, 42.

<sup>27</sup> The Augsburg Confession, V, *Book of Concord*, 40f.

the command of God and to which the promise of grace has been added.”<sup>28</sup> According to the Lutheran understanding, the proclamation of the word is performative and in this sense sacramental, while the sacraments are word-like and shaped by the performative divine promise. “So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted.”<sup>29</sup> An ordained minister presides at these events. In Lutheran theology, ordination can be understood as a sacrament because it is perceived as ministry of the Word. The Apology states, “We have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament. For the Ministry of the Word has the command of God and has magnificent promises like Romans 1 [:16] ... Likewise, Isaiah 55 [:11] ... If ordination is understood in this way, we will not object to calling the laying on of hands a sacrament. For the church has the mandate to appoint ministers, which ought to please us greatly because we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it.”<sup>30</sup>

(4) *According to Lutherans, the external, audible or visible means of grace are defining elements of the church.* The church as the assembly of believers is both created by these means and performs them. External and spiritual dimensions are intimately interwoven. Through these instruments “the Holy Spirit is given, who effects faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear the gospel”.<sup>31</sup> According to Luther, one should not make the following distinction: “Men preach, the Spirit works; the pastor baptizes, absolves, but God cleanses and forgives. Not in the least! Rather we conclude: God preaches, baptizes, absolves.”<sup>32</sup> There is an analogy of this structure to the way in which *Lumen Gentium* 8 understands the church as “one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element.”

### 3.5.3 Patterns of Catholic Ecclesiology

(1) *Catholic theology identifies the marks of the church with those named in the Nicene Creed: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, although it groups the sacraments under the holiness of the church and apostolic ministry under the church’s apostolicity.*<sup>33</sup> Post-Tridentine apologetic theology argued for the existence of the true church of Christ from numerous external “marks” or “notes”, including especially papal and episcopal succession in office from Peter and the other apostles.<sup>34</sup> These marks of the church are close to the visible bonds of unity since unity itself is a mark of the church. Acknowledging that charity “binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Eph 4:3), the Catechism of the Catholic Church lists the visible bonds of communion as: “profession of one faith received from the Apostles; common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments; and apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God’s family”.<sup>35</sup> For Catholics, the particular church is “any community of the altar, under the sacred ministry of the bishop,” which would be a diocese.<sup>36</sup> Catholics affirm, “This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which,

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<sup>28</sup> Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XIII, *Book of Concord*, 219.

<sup>29</sup> The Augsburg Confession, V, *Book of Concord*, 41.

<sup>30</sup> Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XIII, *Book of Concord*, 220.

<sup>31</sup> The Augsburg Confession, V, *Book of Concord*, 41.

<sup>32</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §210. Cf. WA TR 3:671.10f. (no. 3868).

<sup>33</sup> CCC, 861, 862. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, for example, states regarding the holiness of the church, “United with Christ, the Church is sanctified by him; through him and with him she becomes sanctifying. ‘All the activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, to the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God.’ It is in the Church that ‘the fullness of the means of salvation’ has been deposited. It is in her that ‘by the grace of God we acquire holiness’” (CCC, 824). With regard to apostolicity, it speaks of apostolic ministry in 860-862.

<sup>34</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §104

<sup>35</sup> CCC, 815.

<sup>36</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §26.

united with their pastors, are themselves called churches in the New Testament For in their locality these are the new People called by God, in the Holy Spirit and in much fullness. In them the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated".<sup>37</sup>

(2) *The Roman Catholic Church does not exclusively identify itself with the Church of Christ.* In a footnote, *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3 justifies the use of the term "church" for Eastern churches. The Council addresses the other Christian communities in the West as "Separated Churches and Ecclesial Communities in the West".<sup>38</sup> The term *communitates ecclesiales* replaces the former expression *communitates*, but the Council did not clarify which of the communities in the West may be called "church."

(3) *The understanding of the church in Lumen Gentium 8 highlights the essential role of the proclamation of the Word of God and the faith of the believers.* The church "serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the visible social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it, in the building up of the body" (with reference to Eph 4:16).

### 3.5.4 Ecumenical Convergences and Tasks

(1) *While the Lutheran churches recognize the Catholic Church as church according to their understanding of church despite objections against the present shape and understanding of the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church and especially the papacy, the Catholic Church affirms the ecclesial character of the communities of the Reformation without recognizing them as churches in a Catholic sense insofar it identifies a sacramenti Ordinis defectus in them.* Therefore, the ecumenical task is not a symmetric one. Catholic theology needs to explain in which sense it understands the ecclesiality of the Lutheran churches. The common understanding of belonging to the body of Christ is the bridge that enables both communions to go further in the direction of full ecclesial communion. The basis of this bridge is strong. In what follows, convergences between both understandings of church are summarized.

(2) *The living Word of God present in proclamation and sacrament within a community is constitutive for the body of Christ.* "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). The Apostolicity of the Church recognizes that "the church lives by the specific word coming to it from the risen Christ through the apostles and the witnesses who follow. 'Where the word is, there is the church.' ... Thus, 'where two or three are assembled, if only they hold to God's word in the same faith and trust, there you certainly have the authentic, original, and true apostolic church'"<sup>39</sup>

(3) *Since the Apostle Paul identifies justification by faith as the criterion for belonging to the communion of the body of Christ, a common understanding of justification and grace is necessary for the shared ecclesial reality of the two communities.* This common understanding is witnessed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification officially signed by The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church in 1999. This joint declaration achieved not only a differentiating consensus on the doctrine of justification itself but also an agreement on its significance for "all the teaching and practice of our churches,"<sup>40</sup> by orienting them to Christ. "The doctrine of justification is that measure or touchstone for the Christian faith. No teaching may contradict this criterion."<sup>41</sup>

(4) *The body of Christ is essentially related to baptism and Eucharist.* In 1 Cor 10:16f., Paul connects the Eucharistic body of Christ and the ecclesial body of Christ in such a way that the latter always originates

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<sup>37</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §26.

<sup>38</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §§19-23.

<sup>39</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §93.

<sup>40</sup> JDDJ, §18.

<sup>41</sup> JDDJ, Annex, no. 3.

anew from the Eucharistic body of Christ. Even though there were centuries-long controversies about the Lord's Supper, the Catholic/Lutheran dialogue has identified a basic agreement on this sacrament: "Lutherans and Catholics can together affirm the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper: 'In the Lord's Supper Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is present wholly and entirely, in his Body and Blood, under the signs of bread and wine' (*Eucharist* 16). This common statement affirms all the essential elements of faith in the Eucharistic presence of Jesus Christ without adopting the conceptual terminology of transubstantiation."<sup>42</sup> And: "The decisive achievement was to overcome the separation of *sacrifice* (the sacrifice of Jesus Christ) from *sacramentum* (the sacrament). If Jesus Christ is really present in the Lord's Supper, then his life, suffering, death, and resurrection are also truly present together with his body, so that the Lord's Supper is 'the true making present of the event on the cross.' Not only the effect of the event of the cross but also the event itself is present in the Lord's Supper without the meal being a repetition or completion of the cross event. The one event is present in a sacramental modality."<sup>43</sup>

(5) *The Word of God does not preach itself, and the sacraments do not administer themselves; they need someone to do this.* Every baptized believer is in charge of communicating God's Word to others in everyday life, while they also have the task to bring the concerns of other human beings before God in prayer. Ordained pastors or priests have the special task of publicly proclaiming the gospel and administering the sacraments. What Catholics and Lutherans share concerning ordination to the ministry can be expressed in this way: "Induction into this ministry takes place by ordination, in which a Christian is called and commissioned, by prayer and the laying-on of hands, for the ministry of public preaching of the gospel in word and sacrament. That prayer is a plea for the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's gifts, made in the certainty that it will be heard."<sup>44</sup>

(6) *Regarding the question of the Catholic acknowledgement of Lutheran ministry, the document From Conflict to Communion<sup>45</sup> states that since the Reformation era, the Lutheran ministerial office has fulfilled its task of keeping the church in the truth.* In this way it was possible for Catholics and Lutherans to declare a consensus on the basic truths of the doctrine of justification in the JDDJ. This is a new basis to overcome the difficulties in the mutual Catholic / Lutheran recognition of sacraments and ministries. Vatican II observes that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are also found in what it calls "ecclesial communities" and therefore concludes that the Holy Spirit uses these communities as means of salvation.<sup>46</sup> Since the ordained ministers have preached the Word of God and celebrated the sacraments in the Lutheran churches for centuries, this means that the Holy Spirit has used Lutheran ministry for the proclamation and preservation of the divine Word. Therefore, even though the doctrinal understanding and the institutional structure of the Catholic ministry is in some sense different from the Lutheran ministry, nevertheless Catholics acknowledge that the Holy Spirit uses Lutheran ministry as an effective instrument for communicating grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>47</sup>

(7) *Concerning the relation between the local churches and the one church of Christ that Catholics and Lutherans have conceived differently, convergences can be identified.* Lutherans presume that the local church stands in an essential relationship to the one church of Christ because, while wholly church, the

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<sup>42</sup> Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran – Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), §154.

<sup>43</sup> *From Conflict to Communion*, §164, quoting Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, eds., *Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?*, tr. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 88.

<sup>44</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §277.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *From Conflict to Communion*, §§176-194.

<sup>46</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §3.

<sup>47</sup> This calls for a new evaluation of the statement in Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §22 about the *defectus sacramenti ordinis* with regard to the ministry in the Lutheran churches.

congregation assembled for worship is not the whole church.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, the liturgically based definition of church also fits the Catholic conception of the church as a “community of the altar.” Furthermore, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 41 affirms that “the preeminent manifestation of the Church consists in the full active participation of all God’s holy people in these liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in a single prayer, at one altar, at which there presides the bishop surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers.” These liturgical celebrations consist of both proclamation and preaching of Word and celebration of sacrament. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* directs that there should be more reading from Scripture and that the sermon should be part of the liturgical service.<sup>49</sup> Having this in mind, Apostolicity explained: “Catholics and Lutherans affirm together that congregations and parishes cannot exist in isolation, but rather must be in communion with one another within larger regional communities in order to realize *koinonia* and carry out mission.” Thus, “in both churches, the diocese/synod is understood to be church in the full sense” and “is the primary location of the congregation’s or parish’s connection with the wider church.”<sup>50</sup> In both churches the interdependence between congregations/parishes, synods/dioceses, and church-wide organizations is essential to their self-understanding.

(8) *This recognition of the visible elements of the Church and the fruit of the Spirit implies acknowledging the sacramental character of these communities in which they are present, thus witnessing to a broadly shared ecclesial reality.* Mutual recognition of baptism takes into account the role of baptizing communities and thereby recognizes the communities themselves. This includes denominational communities as well as the many local communities within these denominations. Thus, on the basis of the explanation given by Lutherans regarding their understanding of ordained ministry, and in light of the spiritual gifts imparted to the church through the exercise of this ministry, Catholics are enabled to acknowledge it as performing essential functions of church ministry.

### 3.5.5 The New Perspective: The Fruit of the Spirit as Identifier of Belonging to the Body of Christ

(1) *Vatican II does not only evaluate the ecclesial character of a community by looking at its sacraments, ministry, or institutions but also recognizes the fruit of the Spirit in other communities outside its borders from the perspective that the Holy Spirit uses these elements not only to create faith, love, and hope in human beings, but also at the same time to create church.* “Moreover, some and even very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, and visible elements too. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to Christ, belong by right to the one Church of Christ. The brethren divided from us also use many liturgical actions of the Christian religion. These most certainly can truly engender a life of grace in ways that vary according to the condition of each Church or Community. These liturgical actions must be regarded as capable of giving access to the community of salvation. It follows that the separated Churches and Communities as such, though we believe them to be deficient in some respects, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church”.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §285.

<sup>49</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §35.

<sup>50</sup> *The Apostolicity of the Church*, §24.

<sup>51</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §3.

(2) Also Vatican II's Constitution on the Church describes several of the elements of the Church found among those who are "baptized and so honored with the Christian name," even though they "do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve the unity of communion under the successor of Peter".<sup>52</sup> Many "hold the sacred scripture in honor as the norm for believing and living, and display a sincere religious zeal. They lovingly believe in God the almighty Father and in Christ, the Son of God and savior. They are marked by baptism by which they are joined to Christ; and indeed there are other sacraments that they recognize and accept in their own churches or ecclesiastical communities [...] In addition to this, there is a true bond in the Holy Spirit, since it is he who is also at work in these persons with his sanctifying power through gifts and graces, and he has strengthened some of them to the point of the shedding of their blood".<sup>53</sup> The Council's list of these elements comprises external as well as internal or spiritual elements. The Council identifies visible elements as well as the fruit of the Spirit so that it becomes obvious that the Spirit uses these elements for salvation and sanctification. The Council is open to recognizing the fruit of the Spirit outside the structure of the Catholic Church and to recognize it as such.

(3) In the encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995), Pope John Paul II reflects on the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and is even more explicit: "The elements of sanctification and truth present in the other Christian Communities, in a degree which varies from one to the other, constitute the objective basis of the communion, albeit imperfect, which exists between them and the Catholic Church. To the extent that these elements are found in other Christian Communities, the one Church of Christ is effectively present in them. For this reason the Second Vatican Council speaks of a certain, though imperfect communion. The Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* stresses that the Catholic Church 'recognizes that in many ways she is linked' with these Communities by a true union in the Holy Spirit".<sup>54</sup> The same encyclical states: "By God's grace, however, neither what belongs to the structure of the Church of Christ nor that communion which still exists with the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities has been destroyed." The encyclical uses the term "church," applying it to "Churches and Ecclesial Communities of the Reform".<sup>55</sup>

(4) According to the New Testament, focusing on the fruit of the Spirit has the power to overcome conflicts, to build bridges, and to strengthen mission. In Acts 10, this awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit helped Peter to change his attitude toward non-Jews when he was called to come to the Roman centurion Cornelius. Returning to Jerusalem, Peter was sharply criticized: "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" (Acts 11: 3). Peter explained his experience of the Holy Spirit, concluding: "If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" (Acts 11: 17).

(5) The fruit of the Spirit is God's gift to ecclesial communities and to every believer in order to make present the Gospel and to mediate God's grace. Paul employs a concept to explain the message of justification by faith (Gal 2:15f.), which is used here. Elaborating that faith is "working through love" (Gal 5:6), Paul identifies the criteria that strengthen Christian life: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22f.). Paul uses the singular "fruit" to identify the effect of the Holy Spirit upon every member of the church and in every action of faith. Paul first mentions the love of God in the heart of every believer and in the midst of every faith community. This love is one. It is expressed in many ways that witness and support faith.

(6) Discerning the fruit of the Spirit requires criteria. Lutherans and Catholics utilize basically the same ones. They agree that every prayer, teaching, and action which creates and expresses faith, hope, and

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<sup>52</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §15.

<sup>53</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §15.

<sup>54</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §11.

<sup>55</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §65.

love, which opens the ears and hearts for the Word of God, which builds up the church, and which deepens communion with Christ and communion between believers and communities is a true fruit of the Spirit. Each gift is given by God in order to build up others and the whole church (1 Cor 12:4-7). This “building up” of others and the church is the main criterion Catholics and Lutherans need to identify and actualize at this time.

(7) *The work of the Holy Spirit is recognized not only in one’s own community, but in the other church communities as well.* An indispensable task is to identify common elements in doctrines and institutional endowments of different churches, as shown previously. However, even if the Holy Spirit communicates God’s saving Word through differing doctrine and practices of another community, these differences in doctrines and institutional forms can be seen in a new light if one also takes into consideration that they are means to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit that we can observe in the other community.

(8) *Discerning the fruit of the Spirit in the other community is not meant to establish the legitimacy of one church vis-à-vis another but to help in mutually recognizing communities led by the Holy Spirit within the one body of Christ.* This discernment is part of accountability to one another and of the continual conversion of individuals and churches. Consequently, a discernment of the presence of church will extend beyond the traditional confessional understandings to include all the *elementa* and to be aware and affirm the fruit of the Spirit who uses the respective *elementa* in order to continually create this fruit that serves to build up the church today

(9) *As discernment of the fruit of the Spirit in the other community increases, growth in communion occurs through a conversion from self-centeredness to openness to the gifts that the other community has received from God.* In his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Pope John Paul II stated: “A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who received it directly, but also as a ‘gift for me’.”<sup>56</sup> Such encounters advance ecumenism as a necessary consequence of this spirituality of communion.

(10) *Lutherans and Catholics agree: A community is a member of the body of Christ insofar as the basic characteristics of the body of Christ are present in it.* Having identified the shared ecclesial reality of the Lutheran and Catholic communities within the body of Christ leads to the following conclusion: if it is true that the Holy Spirit does not refrain from using certain ecclesial communities as means of grace, this discernment should then lead these communities to recognize each other as members of the body of Christ.

### **3.6 Conclusion: Corpus Christi semper maius – Mutual Recognition**

(1) *In his one body, Jesus Christ embraces and assembles all baptized Christians from all times and places in history.* Their communion is grounded in their participation in Jesus Christ. In this way the body of Christ is truly catholic, transcending human boundaries of denomination, nation, race, and ethnicity. It also transcends visible local worshipping communities, transregional churches, as well as a worldwide church as a socially structured reality.

(2) *The body of Christ is not a reality aside or apart from the visible assembly and structured society of ecclesial communities.* Transcendence includes immanence because participation in Christ is mediated through the sacramental word, both audible and visible. Thus the body of Christ is at the same time immanent in this world and in history. According to Lutheran teaching, the church of Jesus Christ is not an invisible reality but a reality that is real and accessible in and through the pure preaching of the Gospel and right administration of the sacraments. According to Catholic teaching, the church as a visible society

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<sup>56</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), §43.

and a spiritual community are not to be considered two realities but one complex reality comprising a human and a divine element.<sup>57</sup>

(3) *Individuals normally are baptized in a local church.* They become members of a denominational church with a specific profile and tradition, and at the same time members of the body of Christ. Christian life is shaped by the liturgical assembly in which baptism happens. Nevertheless, “baptism is the presence of the one church, and it can only come from her – from the Jerusalem above, the new mother [...] in baptism, the universal church always precedes the local church.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, the one body of Christ is always greater than each denominational community (*Corpus Christi semper maius*).

(4) *While it is an ecclesiological necessity that the Church of Jesus Christ in its catholicity exists in local churches spread over time and in many places, the division into denominational churches results from historical developments and also from division among the baptized who have not followed the prayer of their Lord Jesus Christ, that all may be one (Jn 17).* The ecumenical problem arises from the fact that baptism incorporates the baptized into the one body of Christ even while these baptisms take place in denominational, local churches that are, in many cases, divided from each other.

(5) *Since the body of Christ is a reality that transcends denominational divisions, participation in the body of Christ transcends the separation of the churches.* The reality of the one body of Christ precedes the churches' efforts to re-establish unity among themselves. Thus, a shared understanding of the ecclesial dimension of baptism compels Lutherans and Catholics to strive to overcome the paradoxical situation that, on the one hand, the baptized are members of the body of Christ and the communities of the baptized are also members of the body of Christ and therefore in communion with each other, while, on the other hand, these communities are nevertheless also separated from each other. This painful situation of the one body of Christ, wounded by the lack of full communion of its members, calls for ways to strengthen its growth in communion. In The Common Prayer in the Lund Cathedral in 2016, Pope Francis prayed, “We bring before you the burdens of the guilt of the past when our forbearers did not follow your will that all be one in the truth of the Gospel.”

(6) *The body of Christ is not the result of bringing together different ecclesial communities; rather they can only be such communities if the one body of Christ is present and active in them.* As *Ut unum sint* states: “To that degree in which these elements [of sanctification and truth] exist in the other Christian communities, the one church of Christ is actively present in them”.<sup>59</sup> Lutherans agree with this Catholic statement, also applying it to the Catholic Church. The recognition of other ecclesial communities as members of the body of Christ does not make them members of this body but affirms the fact that they are already members of this one body. This recognition calls for new ways of encountering and cooperating with one another.

(7) *Catholics and Lutherans agree that the body of Christ is inseparable from its embodiment in particular ecclesial communities.* Thus, the body of Christ is not only the communion of baptized individuals but also a communion of these embodiments that form together the one body of Christ.

(8) *This commission proposes a paradigm shift that grounds the recognition of the other community as church in the recognition of the fruit of the Spirit active in the other community through the elements of sanctification and truth.* The elements have not fallen from heaven like meteors but rather are connected with each other and embedded in the communities they shape. Through these elements of sanctification and truth, the body of Christ exists and is present in these communities.

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<sup>57</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §8.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*”, in Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, ed. Stephan Otto Horn, Vinzenz Pfnür (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2005), 141.

<sup>59</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §11.

*(9) Since the body of Christ cannot be identified with an institutional definition of church, and since Vatican II acknowledged ecclesiality also outside its borders, the Commission proposes that the Catholic Church implement the openness of Vatican II by using the term “church” as expressing membership in the one body of Christ. Lutheran churches and the Catholic Church are able to recognize mutually one another’s communities as members of this body of Christ and therefore in this sense as churches.*

# Chapter 4: Growth in the Communion of Churches

## 4.1 Introduction

(1) *Growth in communion between Lutheran churches and the Catholic Church is a consequence of their mutual recognition of baptism and their mutual recognition as members of the body of Christ. Nevertheless, since these communities are not in full communion with each other, they are called to growth in communion. This growth in communion expresses the dynamic of baptism created by the Holy Spirit.*

(2) *Growth in communion is a dynamic life in Christ. The Holy Spirit received in baptism not only guides individual believers to deepen their personal communion with Christ but also leads the community of believers to deepen the communion among themselves and among their ecclesial communities. Growth in communion is directly linked to a deepening of faith and to the recognition of that same faith in others. Just as an individual grows in communion with God and in sanctification through use of the means of grace under the impetus of the Holy Spirit, so too do the churches grow in communion when they share the means of grace and acknowledge the Holy Spirit's gifts in each other's teaching and practices. This growth in communion is both an intensification of those means of grace within their own community and an intensification of communion between each other as churches.*

(3) *This growth in the communion of churches will be described in two steps.*

Section 4.2 presents the biblical understanding of growth. It emphasizes the biblical concept of communion that is characterized by partaking in Christ. Therefore, the biblical witness helps to develop further the concept of communion described in Chapter 3, referring to the membership in the body of Christ not only of individuals but also of their faith communities.

Section 4.3 describes two crucial aspects of the relationship between church, Eucharist, and ministry in order to show the interconnections between them. The main points of theological consensus provide possibilities to go further in deepening communion.

Throughout the whole chapter the Commission wishes to demonstrate that ecumenical dialogue, which deepens our ecclesial communion, gives power to the witness of faith in the world.

(4) *The church is not a static entity but a body for which growth in communion is an essential element. This chapter argues that prayer, discernment of the fruit of the Spirit in one another's communities, and shared sacramental life make possible the process of growth in ecclesial communion and the acknowledgement of the ministry that serves them. Sharing in the work of the Spirit enables Lutheran and Catholic churches to grow in communion with each other. The mutual recognition of each other's baptism and the mutual recognition that we are members of the body of Christ is not the end of a process but is the starting point for growth on the way to full communion.*

## 4.2. The Biblical Witness of Growth in Communion

(1) *The communion of churches is grounded in their communion with God. "Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love" (Eph 4: 15f). Growth of the body of Christ is only possible if the members of the body grow in their communion with Christ. Christ offers himself to us in the preaching of the Word of God, in the celebration of the sacraments, and in service to the neighbor. Thus,*

deepening the sacramental life of each church will contribute to the growth of communion among the churches.

(2) *Baptism plays a special role in this process.* Through baptism human beings are incorporated into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26ff.) and participate in the universal priesthood of all believers. This membership is communion, call, and mission. It is a call that all individual believers grow in faith. It is also the mission of the whole church to live out what has begun in baptism and to deepen and make more visible the communion initiated in baptism.

(3) *The church of the New Testament is a growing community.* In the New Testament era, many new communities were founded all over the world where the Gospel was proclaimed (Mt 28:16-20; Act 1:8). Each of these local communities had the mission to witness to the faith and to be welcoming in order to attract new members (1 Cor 14:23ff.). Christians were called to live their faith in such a way that non-Christians were able to recognize the promise of the Gospel and the virtue of faith (1 Thess 4:9-12; Rom 12:9-21; 1 Pet 3:15f; 4:12-19).

(4) *Holy Scripture witnesses to an experience of growth in communion that is of fundamental importance for both Catholics and Lutherans today.* In the New Testament, the theological concept of “communion” (*koinonia*) is present and correlates with the dynamics of growth. Spiritual growth and ecclesial growth belong together. The New Testament witnesses to the experience and desire for growth in faith through daily conversion and renewal by the power of the Holy Spirit. The dynamic of growth deepens the communion in faith. This growth, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has both a personal and an ecclesial dimension that come together in a dynamic process. An identification of the personal and ecclesial dimensions and dynamics of growth in communion in the biblical texts shows that there is an ecclesial communion to which the churches are called in this present time. In the New Testament, faith in Jesus Christ strengthens both the missionary witness and the communion between all the local churches. This testimony of faith provides the model and stimulus for the churches today.

#### 4.2.1 The Concept of Communion

(1) *Participation in Christ creates a communion between Christ and believers and a communion among all those who participate in Christ.* The Greek word *koinonia* denotes a specific kind of communion, which does not result from a human decision or a social contract, but which Christ himself creates (cf. 1 Cor 1:9). It is enlivened by the Holy Spirit, who breathes life into it (Phil 1:5; 2:1). This Christological understanding and practice of communion is a shared tradition in the New Testament. Not only Paul, but also the author of 1 John expresses a theological concept of *koinonia*, which brings together the love of God, received through Jesus Christ, and the love of the brothers and sisters for one another in the church, made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. The author, as a member of an ecclesial communion (1 Jn 1:1-2), confesses: “We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship (*koinonia*) with us; and truly our fellowship (*koinonia*) is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 1:3). This declaration reflects the source and the essential content of preaching the Gospel. The consequence of that participation is a Christian life which unites love of God and love of other members of the community: “If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship (*koinonia*) with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn 1:7; cf. 1:6).

(2) *Communion (*koinonia*) is an essential ecclesial reality.* Acts describes how on Pentecost the first Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit received through their baptism, came together in communion: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship (*koinonia*), to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). This description of the community combines theological and doctrinal elements, fellowship in community, spiritual and Eucharistic liturgical dimensions, and diaconal service, which all belong together because of the unity of faith of the Christian community.

(3) *Both baptism and the Eucharist are sacramental foundations of ecclesial communion.* Baptism, administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, creates ecclesial communion

because it incorporates the baptized into the body of Christ and into the universal priesthood of all believers. In 1 Corinthians Paul affirms the unity of the body of Christ by recalling the effects of baptism: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free” (1 Cor 12:13; cf. Gal 3:26-28).

The Eucharist celebrates and effects living communion with Christ. Paul identifies communion with Christ in the Eucharist as a source of Church unity: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:16-17).

(4) *The communion of the church leads to a life of mutual service, shared gifts, and active solidarity among individual believers, which strengthen ecclesial communion.* Paul reminds the church of Corinth that the common celebration of the Eucharist requires mutual responsibility of each person for the other, first and foremost by respect for the poor in solidarity with them (1 Cor 11:17-34). Philemon is prompted by Paul to receive his slave Onesimus as his Christian brother because of their communion in faith (Phlm 6). The final prayer of 2 Corinthians, which later becomes the initial prayer of the Eucharist, connects a Trinitarian formula with the deepening of the reconciled relationship between Paul and the Corinthians after a harsh conflict: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you” (2 Cor 13:13).

#### 4.2.2 Aspects of Growth

(1) *Growth is a key word in New Testament theology* (1 Cor 3:6f.; Eph 4:15f.; Col 1:6, 10; 2:19; 2 Thess 1:3). It belongs to a wide field of words like building up (1 Cor 14; Eph 2:22; 4:16), increasing (2 Cor 4:15; 2 Pet 1:8), bearing fruit (Col 1:6-10), etc. These terms all express the dynamic of Christian life in faith, hope, and love as well as the dynamic of mission which advances the growth of the church, even though in New Testament times there were only a few small communities.

(2) *Growth has both a personal and a social or ecclesial dimension.* Both dimensions belong together because every baptized believer is a member of the church, and the church is the community of the faithful. Inner-ecclesial friction or the lack of missionary activity in a local church may weaken personal faith, while the sustainable progress of the church as a whole depends on the missionary activity of each member (Eph 4:7-24).

(3) *Personal growth in faith is an effect of the Holy Spirit's fruit of love* (Gal 5:22) *and the result of following and imitating Jesus.* Whoever grows in faith is more attentive to the Gospel, deeply understands its truth, and is more ready to suffer together with those who suffer and to rejoice together with those who are honored (1 Cor 12:26). According to Ephesians, personal and ecclesial growth is related to “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Everyone who grows in faith grows in freedom (Gal 5:1-13), in the certainty of faith against all temptations of false teaching (Eph 4:14), and in the love of Jesus Christ. The grace of baptism develops its salvific power in that growth. Personal growth in faith requires good education and catechesis as well as good models and examples; it requires good will, strengthening of weaknesses, the correction of failures, and the presence of a community of faith. Growth in faith never remains isolated in individuals but is correlative with being in and building a faith community.

(4) *Ecclesial growth is an essential dimension of the mission of the church, both in the sense of expansion and in the sense of the intensification of inner-ecclesial relations.* In the early church, many new communities were founded all over the world where the Gospel was proclaimed (Mt 28:16-20; Act 1:8). Each of these local communities has the mission to witness to faith and to be welcoming in order to attract new members (1 Cor 14:23ff.). If church members experience conflict, they must overcome their antipathy. Christians are called to live their faith in such a way that non-Christians are able to recognize the promise of the Gospel and the virtues of faith (1 Thess 4:9-12; Rom 12:9-21; 1 Pet 3:15f; 4:12-19).

(5) *The intensification of inner-ecclesial relations occurs both within local communities and among them.* The metaphor of the body of Christ in 1 Cor 12:12-27 and Rom 12:3-8 is intended to deepen the relationships of the members of the body of Christ in each house, village, or town. Paul argues against a tendency at Corinth to value only a few “strong” Christians and to look on the so-called “weak” ones as more or less useless. He affirms the equal dignity in the body of Christ of each member who is called to support others with his or her gifts so that each may find faith in the freedom of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:7). In the letter to the Philippians, the joy of faith is directly related to the unity of the church (Phil 1:27 – 2:4).

(6) *The process of growth is more qualitative than quantitative.* Even though the number of Christian communities and church members increased significantly, the New Testament writings focus on the spiritual and moral quality of a relationship with God and with those within the same family of God. Growth is not a matter of technique or programs but results from the gifts of grace that open the hearts of believers. Paul emphasizes charisms as the means by which grace becomes effective in the hearts and lives of believers. This growth is best intensified through the celebrations of baptism and the Eucharist (1 Cor 12:13) and in hearing the Word of God (1 Cor 14).

(7) *Discernment of the work of the Spirit is necessary to build up the church and each of its members.* The basis is the common faith that is inspired by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). In 1 Corinthians 12:10, Paul mentions the “discernment of spirits” as a charism given by the Holy Spirit that distinguishes between those gifts that are only important for an individual believer from those that build up communion and strengthen the brothers and sisters in faith. The criterion of discernment is service rendered “for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7; cf. 14:3-12). Charisms enrich the church with the gifts of the Spirit. Shared charisms characterized by service one to another contribute to a dynamic ecclesial communion. This criterion of service is grounded in the gift of love that must inspire the reception, understanding, and use of every charism (1 Cor 12:31 – 13:13): “Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts” (1 Cor 14:1). Similarly, in 1 John both the confession of Jesus as Son of God and the practice of love are the essential identification markers of true expressions of Christian faith (1 Jn 4:1-6).

### 4.2.3 The Dynamics of Growth in Communion

(1) *Growth in faith is growth in communion, and growth in communion is growth in faith.* No one believes alone, but everyone believes within the fellowship of the saints who also believe in Jesus Christ who gives his life for all (Rom 14:7-10). Nothing other than shared faith brings the members of the church together: neither success nor health, neither money nor education, neither nation nor gender. It is Jesus Christ alone, the Good Shepherd, who calls all his disciples into his flock (John 10).

(2) *The church is the house of faith which must be built up in every place and time by all members of the church on the foundation of Jesus Christ.* In 1 Corinthians, Paul describes the dynamic process of building up the church (1 Cor 3:6-17). The one and only foundation is Jesus Christ. God gives the growth to the church, inspiring and motivating the faithful to assist in building up the house of God on this foundation.

(3) *Faith is the dynamic of growth of ecclesial communion in the one church throughout the world.* Ephesians transformed the image of the church insofar as it shows the apostles and prophets as the foundation of the church, while Jesus Christ is the cornerstone (Eph 2:20f.). On this foundation the “evangelists,” “pastors,” and “teachers” (Eph 4:11) serve to “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). Therefore, growth in faith is stewarded by the ministry of the evangelists, pastors, and teachers who succeed the apostles and prophets. This growth in faith unifies all believers and all church communities who belong to one body because there is one God, one baptism, and one call (Eph 4:4f.).

(4) *Growth in communion is not only a process within a local community but also a process uniting different local churches and theological traditions.* The dynamic of growth in communion among those united in faith is evident in many aspects of ecclesial life. The apostles and their churches share the same Gospel (1 Cor 15:1-11). Early Christianity witnessed many actions of social solidarity (Act 11:27-30;

2 Cor 8-9; Gal 2:10), which expressed and deepened communion (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13). The different local churches are called by Paul to care for each other, to learn from each other, and to be accountable to each other (cf. 1 Thess 1:3-10; 2:13f.; Rom 1:8-17; 15:26; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 8-9). Paul refers to a mutual exchange of gifts between himself and local communities in prayer (Phil 1:3ff.; 1 Thess 5:25; Rom 15:30-33) and encouragement (Rom 1:12f.).

(5) *The New Testament witnesses that, in situations of conflict, the recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit is the decisive criterion for solving problems, for overcoming divisions (cf. Acts 11:23; 14:27; 15:4, 6-18), for deepening communion in faith, and for promoting an understanding of the church as a communion of service in and to the world.*

- (a) The Apostolic Council ensures communion among the “pillars” of Jerusalem, who serve in the mission to the circumcised, and among representatives of the church of Antioch, who serve in the mission to the Gentiles (Gal 2:6-9). According to Acts, Peter supported Paul and the other missionaries to the unbelievers by recounting his new insight received from his experience with Cornelius and his house (Acts 15:7-11). “And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us” (Acts 15:8). James’ recognition of the validity of a mission which differs from his own practice (Acts 15:13-21) reflects an ecclesial development within the witness of Scripture.
- (b) The Apostolic decree (Acts 15:20, 28f.) exemplifies the deep communion between Christians with Jewish roots and those with a Gentile background.
- (c) The conflict regarding table fellowship (Gal 2:11-14) leads Paul to re-formulate the message of justification by faith as a theological explanation of the common faith supporting the unity of the church (Gal 2:15-16).

(6) *Because of the willingness of the early Christian communities to discern, and recognize the power of the Spirit in each other, the churches grew both in communion with Christ and in communion with a diversity of traditions and a plurality of local churches.* This provides a powerful example and direction to the ecumenical movement’s efforts to deepen ecclesial communion.

#### 4.2.4 The Theological Horizon for Transformation

(1) *The New Testament witness can inform present ecumenical efforts to grow in communion.* Indeed, the New Testament does not deal with different Christian denominations. However, the tensions between Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian communities were much deeper than the controversies between Lutherans and Catholics. Nevertheless, the early communities were able to overcome traditional, cultural, and theological controversies because of their common orientation to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Lutherans and Catholics today can do the same by common prayer, discernment of the fruit of the Spirit, and a shared sacramental life.

(2) *As the Holy Spirit inspires individual believers to deepen their personal communion with Christ, the Holy Spirit also deepens communion among believers and among ecclesial communities.* Churches who are in communion are in solidarity with each other, support each other, are accountable to each other, and share each other’s suffering and joys: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor 12:26).

(3) *The New Testament witnesses to ecclesial unity within a variety of communities, charisms, and traditions on the basis of the one Lord who lets us share in his communion with his heavenly Father through the power of the Spirit.* The New Testament enumerates several identifiers of the true church.

According to Paul some of the most important criteria are:

- the binding confession of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 Cor 8:6; 12:3);

- the common mission of proclaiming the one Gospel through a variety of ways (Gal 2:8ff.);
- the celebration of the one baptism for all who believe in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:26-28);
- the shared Eucharist which represents the Last Supper of Jesus (1 Cor 11:23-26);
- the teaching of justification by faith in Jesus Christ rather than justification by works of the Law (Gal 2:11-16).

According to Acts (2:44) four *notae ecclesiae* are mentioned:

- the apostles' teaching,
- fellowship,
- the breaking of bread
- and the prayers.

These two lists of criteria are not in opposition to each other but strengthen each other. Both are important in orienting a common understanding of growth in communion as an essential ecclesial reality.

(4) *In the ecumenical movement the "communion of churches" is a model that can overcome old conflicts and encourage the churches on the way to full communion.* This ecumenical concept transforms the New Testament theology of communion (koinonia) into the relations between different churches and ecclesial communities. They partake as communions in the body of Christ and also in the growth that is caused by the Holy Spirit. They are called to discover the ecclesial character of the other by recognizing them as members of the body of Christ who use and pass on the means of grace. Consequently, they acknowledge them in their ecclesial status and mission in order to discover anew the unity which is given to them by Jesus Christ.

(5) *Inspired by the New Testament, the ecumenical movement recognizes various sources of communion experienced by the churches.* Their foundations, presuppositions, and principles were developed in the course of ecumenical dialogue. Four criteria analogous to the New Testament witness can be identified:

- (i) The declaration and realization of the communion of churches include the common witness of apostolic faith. Lutherans and Catholics agree that a common understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ grounds their communion in faith. They believe that in Jesus Christ salvation is revealed. The *JDDJ* concretizes this common understanding of justifying faith in Jesus Christ.
- (ii) The communion of churches has its foundation in the coherence between Word and Sacrament. Catholics and Lutherans confess together that Jesus Christ is present in the proclamation of the Gospel, baptism, and the Eucharist. Where this understanding is shared, the basis for communion in Word and Sacrament is given.
- (iii) The communion of churches in Word and Sacrament implies communion in ordained ministry, which serves this communion in Word and Sacrament. Lutherans and Catholics agree that ordained ministry belongs to the nature of the Church. In communion with all the faithful who share the common priesthood, the ordained minister proclaims the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. This consensus calls for a shared agreement in the understanding and the practice of the *magisterium* of the church.
- (iv) The communion of churches requires forms of communion in which the Gospel is alive and active through Word and sacrament. Catholics and Lutherans agree that common witness and common service call for common forms and expressions of living in communion.

Based on these four foundational agreements arising from the New Testament witness, it is possible to develop concepts of the communion among churches which offer a more stable and dynamic relationship and communion between Lutheran churches and the Catholic Church.

(6) *Discussion of degrees of communion and growth in communion presupposes a concept of full communion.* For the baptized, full communion with God is an eschatological concept, even though there may be full participation in the means of grace. Full communion with God cannot be reached here on earth. Nevertheless, it is a call not only for individual believers but for ecclesial communities as well to deepen their communion through mutual recognition, shared mission, and practiced faith.

(7) *The church is visible through the means of grace that God provides to deepen ecclesial communion.* Since the means of grace are instituted by God to sustain and make the communion of the faithful grow, it contradicts the will of Jesus (cf. Jn 17) if the understanding and practices of these means divide communities. Rather there is an imperative to grow both in the visible and in the spiritual aspects of these means. Furthermore, it is important that the faithful experience this growth. If growth in visible communion through a shared practice of the means of grace is not experienced in the lives of the faithful, efforts for a deeper communion are endangered.

### 4.3 The Dynamics of Growth in the Communion of Churches

(1) *Growth in the communion of churches is an experience, a challenge, and a hope.* Lutherans and Catholics rejoice in decades of ecumenical exchange, especially between parishes and among the faithful all around the world. They are aware of the call of the Lord to be “one” in him (Jn 17:21). They are full of joy that they are on the way from “one baptism” in “one body” (Eph 4:4f.) to one Eucharist in one church, and to one witness in many voices.

(2) *Growth in communion needs visible signs of unity on the way.* This section describes some of the experiences, challenges, and hopes shared on this journey of faith. Initiatives are recognized and strengthened, thus deepening ecumenical relations by witnessing to faith, hope, and love. The paradigm shift from the older, often oppositional, constructions of confessional identity to the recognition of the ecclesial identity of the other community by identifying the work of the Spirit within it will help to overcome traditional controversies.

#### 4.3.1 Growth in Experienced Communion

(1) *By the grace of God, to whom all thanks for this is due, this living communion is already experienced now.* One gift of the last decades of the ecumenical movement is the awareness of the gifts, challenges, and difficulties of the other community and the ability to see one’s own community through the eyes of the other.

(2) *All shared experiences of communion have the dynamic of growth in the power of the Holy Spirit.* In many local communities there are deeply rooted common experiences of liturgy, catechesis, and service in the world. Many ecumenical Bible study groups and, in some regions, catechetical projects ecumenically deepen faith. Worship celebrations for peace, justice and integrity of creation are celebrated together. There are common activities against exploitation and oppression. All of these initiatives belong together and create opportunities to encounter the faith of the other. These experiences create a context in which differences in some matters of ecclesiology can be seen in a new light.

(3) *The faithful deepen communion when they live out their baptismal vocation in their common priesthood.* This communion is rooted in baptism as the foundation of the common priesthood of all the faithful: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people that you may proclaim the mighty Acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). Ordained ministers strengthen the common priesthood by faithfully preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments.

### 4.3.2 Growth in Shared Proclamation

(1) *The communion of churches is grounded in their communion with God (Eph 4:15f.).* Growth within and of the body of Christ is possible by the way in which members live with the Word of God and share in sacramental life, thus deepening and widening their communion with Christ. The preaching of the Gospel and sacramental life within each church contribute to the growth of communion among the churches.

(2) *Preaching of the Word of God is essential both for a person's communion with God and for the communion of the churches.* "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17).

(3) *Both Lutherans and Catholics face the challenge of identifying how to proclaim the Word of God for today.* What is Gospel today? This is the question of how the biblical message becomes God's Word here and now in this context at the present moment. One's favorite ideas, presuppositions, or prejudices are not to shape the proclamation of the Word of God. The biblical message should frame a contemporary understanding of God's Word and how it is to be proclaimed in a binding or authoritative way.

(4) *The JDDJ ensures a differentiating consensus in an understanding of the Gospel by Lutherans and Catholics.* They both agree that faith justifies sinners by the grace of God. They are aware of the differences in the status, the explanation, and the consequences of their shared understanding of the basic truths of the Gospel. They are able to affirm that these differences are no longer church-dividing. They are able to recognize the authenticity of each other's teaching of the doctrine of justification and this doctrine as the basis for receiving the spiritual witness of each other. This deepens the unity already shared.

(5) *In an ecumenical meeting at World Youth Day in Cologne in 2005, Pope Benedict XVI said that the real issue today is "the presence of the Word in the world".*<sup>1</sup> He said that many think that ministry remains the main obstacle between the churches after the consensus regarding the doctrine of justification. Pope Benedict claims that this narrows the problem too much to a mainly institutional one. He is referring to the early church that in the second century made a threefold decision: 1) to establish the canon, thereby stressing the sovereignty of the Word; 2) to establish "the episcopal ministry, in the awareness that the Word and witness go together; that is, the Word is alive and present only thanks to the witness, so to speak, and receives from the witness its interpretation. But the witness is only such if the one witnessing witnesses to the Word"; 3) to use the *regula fidei* (rule of faith) as a key for interpretation. Pope Benedict thinks that these three elements interpenetrate each other and that the unresolved difference between the churches lies in the shape and configuration of these elements.

(6) *Lutherans and Catholics should find ways to share practices and mutual responsibility in preaching and teaching the Word of God.* A few steps that would allow for deepening communion would be if the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church would take into consideration basic Lutheran confessional documents, while the persons and institutions on the Lutheran side who are officially responsible for the teaching of their churches, constantly and seriously take into consideration the doctrinal documents of the Catholic Church. For example, Lutheran churches, at different levels, could engage in study and discussions of papal encyclicals or other texts published at the highest level at the Vatican. At the Second Vatican Council, the observers from non-Catholic churches played a certain role in the coming into being of the Council's doctrinal statements. It would be helpful if theologians from both sides could engage in the doctrinal discussions of the other church. The ways of discerning doctrine may be different on both sides, but the respective processes should in certain ways interact with each other so that the results would not be too different. What is needed here can, at best, be prepared by the dialogues, but the task

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *God's Revolution: World Youth Day and Other Cologne Talks* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 84.

belongs to the magisterial institutions and persons in the churches. Taking steps in this direction will take time, but such steps will be very important for growth in communion between the churches.

### 4.3.3 Growth in Confessing the Common Faith

(1) *More and more, Lutherans and Catholics read the same Scripture with similar methods, face the same challenges in interpreting it, and confess the same faith.* They pray the same Lord's Prayer and confess the same Creed in their liturgies as well as in ecumenical celebrations. Many songs and hymns, originating in particular confessional contexts, are now received and sung gratefully by all. Today, the catechisms of the Reformation era, both by Luther and from Catholic reformers like St. Peter Canisius, are appreciated as important and inspiring witnesses of faith. The *JDDJ* helps to overcome former condemnations and to understand the truth of the Gospel even when expressed differently. Catholics and Lutherans rejoice that the World Methodist Council, the World Community of Reformed Churches, and the Anglican communion have officially accepted the *JDDJ*, receiving it through their own confessional perspectives.

(2) *Because the faith Lutherans and Catholics share has the potential of growing with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, they find themselves called to growth in confessing the common faith.* They are inspired by the example of Taizé and other ecumenical communities whose members, coming from different confessions, live and pray together and thereby find new expressions of a common faith. They are important witnesses for all parishes and for the whole church.

(3) *Called to grow in faith, Catholics and Lutherans do not overlook their weakness in faith.* It is not by their own merit that they are strong in faith, as Paul reminds the Church of Corinth (1 Cor 16:13). It is the Lord in our midst who strengthens all, and it is the Holy Spirit who builds up one body of Christ with many members.

### 4.3.4 Growth in the Celebration of Baptism

(1) *The mutual recognition of baptism is rooted in the common, salvific faith of the whole church in the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.* In this document the Commission asserts that the mutual recognition of baptism is not an act of diplomacy and politeness, but it is a consequence of a common confession of faith. Moreover, it is the same Holy Spirit who is active both in Lutheran churches and in the Catholic Church and who renders them faithful "listeners" to the word of God and active preachers of the word of God in deeds and works so that faith may grow.

(2) *The mutual recognition of baptism calls for joint celebrations of baptism.* Baptism effects incorporation into the one body of Christ so that Catholics and Lutherans are able to recognize the body of Christ not only in their own church but also in the other church. Various possibilities for joint celebrations of baptism include: a) Baptism might be celebrated in a Lutheran parish with a Lutheran pastor and a Catholic priest present or vice versa; b) Baptism of a member of a Catholic or Lutheran family might be celebrated in the same rite with both a Lutheran pastor and/or a Catholic priest present; c) Baptism might be celebrated in a Catholic parish with a Catholic priest remembering the Lutheran brothers and sisters and *vice versa*. Very often the celebration of baptism is an important family event, and many families include both Lutheran and Catholic members. Liturgical texts could be written in which prayers and signs refer to both confessions.

(3) *Joint celebrations of baptism deepen the communion of our churches.* The old wisdom of the church stands true: *lex orandi – lex credendi*. Joint celebrations of baptism are important signs of common discipleship. The use of one font for both Catholics and Protestants could become a real sign of unity, especially those fonts that predate the Reformation. These celebrations present the sacramental salvific power of baptism for the growth of the communion of churches.

### 4.3.5 Growth in Communal Prayer

(1) *For ecclesial communion, a communion of prayer has first place.* In his encyclical *Ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul II stated: “In this journey which we are undertaking with other Christians towards the new millennium, prayer must occupy the first place”.<sup>2</sup> Catholics and Lutherans pray together, trusting in the promise God has given.

(2) *In prayer, Lutherans and Catholics respond to the Word of God as they listen to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, following the call of the Holy Spirit and searching for the will of God, the merciful Father.* Meditation on God’s Word together, molded by the Holy Spirit, is the most effective way to overcome the tendencies to build walls of division. Through this meditation and prayer on God’s Word, God’s act of justification shapes individuals and communities. The theological understanding of prayer is held in common; prayer is to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

(3) *The baptized are opened by the Holy Spirit to the richness of grace.* The Holy Spirit inspires common praying to aid both individuals and communities to overcome their self-centeredness and egoisms that impede communion. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray with confidence in God’s righteousness and mercy as a means of combating the temptation of hypocrisy and of seeking guidance in the ways of discipleship.

(4) *Lutherans and Catholics pray for each other in their worship services.* It is a good praxis in many parishes to commemorate Catholic or Lutheran neighbors in the prayers of intercession. Lutherans and Catholics wish to emphasize, support, and extend this practice of ecumenical prayer both in their congregations and in ecumenical worship services.

(5) *Prayers for increasing the communion between Lutheran and Catholic churches are to be accompanied by discernment of what the Spirit says to the churches and by conversion.* Conversion rooted in baptism is a fundamental characteristic of prayer. Conversion, turning around, means being prepared to correct and eliminate barriers to communion. Conversion may imply a sacrifice for unity, as Pope John Paul II states, referring to Cyprian’s commentary on the Lord’s Prayer: “To God, the better offering is peace, brotherly concord, and a people made one in the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.’ At the dawn of the new millennium, how can we not implore from the Lord, with renewed enthusiasm and a deeper awareness, the grace to prepare ourselves, together, to offer this sacrifice of unity?”<sup>3</sup>

(6) *The fruits of spiritual ecumenism are linked with the building up of ecclesial communion as well as with service for the sake of the world.* In prayer, Lutherans and Catholics share the life of the triune God: “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 1:3). In a shared faith, they know: “Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen” (1 Jn 4:20). Hate takes on many forms such as indifference to the neighbor. In common prayer Christians encounter each other in and through Christ. Deepening ecclesial communion through prayer, they become aware of their mission and service in the world and find the words of prayers. This prayer unifies them in love of God and neighbor.

### 4.3.6 Growth in Shared Practice of the Eucharist

(1) *Shared practice of the Eucharist is a deep wish of all who are engaged in ecumenism.* Baptism and Eucharist belong together and are related to the Body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16f.; 12:12-27). For Lutherans

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<sup>2</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §102.

<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §102.

and Catholics, the Eucharist celebrates the mystery of faith which is the deepest connection between them.

(2) *Shared practice of the Eucharist requires a common understanding.* From Conflict to Communion summarizes our common ecumenical understanding of the Eucharist.<sup>4</sup>

(3) *On the way to visible unity, Eucharistic sharing is possible in specific circumstances even though full communion between Lutherans and Catholics is not yet a reality.* Both Catholics and Lutherans respect the tradition, doctrine, and the ecclesiastical laws of their partner. Nevertheless, Lutherans are convinced that they are able to welcome Catholics as guests of the Lord at their Eucharistic tables. Catholics emphasize that Eucharistic communion belongs together with ecclesial communion. Under specific circumstances, such as in life-threatening danger, the Code of Canon Law permits ministers to give Lutherans the Eucharist if they share Eucharistic faith.<sup>5</sup> For pastoral reasons, canon law describes specific situations in which Catholic ministers may, by way of exception, offer communion to individuals.<sup>6</sup> Bishops in many countries announce that if everyone who is baptized shares the Catholic Eucharistic faith and are able to say “Amen” to the Eucharistic prayer, then they may licitly receive Holy Communion.<sup>7</sup> Any faithful Christian who approaches the altar properly disposed will not be refused communion.

(4) *Growth in a shared Eucharistic faith opens new paths toward Eucharistic fellowship.* Ecumenical dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics has uncovered a great deal of common understanding on the sacramental character of the Eucharist, the real presence of the Lord, and the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The more Eucharistic faith is shared in common, the more Eucharist fellowship becomes a reality. Yet, this dialogue has not come to an end. The dimension that remains to be tackled now that many of the issues of the sacrament as such have been largely resolved is the ecclesiological dimension of the Eucharist, its ecclesial significance and weight.

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<sup>4</sup> From Conflict to Communion, §§140-161.

<sup>5</sup> Code of Canon Law, can. 844, §4.

<sup>6</sup> Code of Canon Law, can. 844. See also Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993), §§129-136.

<sup>7</sup> Secretariat ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam, *Instructio de peculiaribus casibus admittendi alios Christianos ad communionem eucharisticam in Ecclesia Catholica* (1 June 1972), §6, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 64 (1972), 518-525. Archdiocese of Brisbane, *Blessed and Broken. Pastoral Guidelines for Eucharistic Hospitality* (1995) (<https://liturgybrisbane.net.au/doctypes/eucharistic-hospitality>) (16 July 2018). Ecumenical Commission of the German Episcopal Conference, “Zur Frage der eucharistischen Gastfreundschaft bei konfessionsverschiedenen Ehen und Familien. Schreiben an die Arbeitsgemeinschaft christlicher Kirchen in Nürnberg” (11 February 1997) in *Arbeitsgemeinschaft christlicher Kirchen in Nürnberg, Zur Frage der eucharistischen Gastfreundschaft bei konfessionsverschiedenen Ehen und Familien. Eine Problemanzeige – Text und Dokumentation*, 4 Aufl. (Nürnberg, 2003), 29-32. Episcopal Conference of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, *One Bread, One Body. A Teaching Document on the Eucharist in the Life of the Church, and the Establishment of General Norms on Sacramental Sharing* (London/Dublin 1998). Bishop von Rockville-Centre, *Diocesan Norms* (28 November 1999) (<https://www.drvc.org/other-christians-and-the-eucharist/>) (22 July 2018). Episcopal Conference of South Africa, *Directory on Ecumenism for Southern Africa* (January 2003). Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg, *Conditions Permitting Non-Catholics to Receive Sacraments from a Catholic Minister. Notes for those Who May Benefit from the Policy* (2006) ([http://archeparchy.ca/wcm-docs/docs/Condition\\_Permitting\\_Non-Catholics\\_Pamphlet.pdf](http://archeparchy.ca/wcm-docs/docs/Condition_Permitting_Non-Catholics_Pamphlet.pdf)) (22 July 2018). Diocese of Saskatoon, *Sacramental Sharing. Pastoral Directives for Sacramental Sharing in Particular Circumstances between Catholics and Baptized Christians of other Denominations* (13 February 2007) ([https://rcdos.ca/sites/default/files/groupfiles/Media%20browser/p.d\\_brochure\\_english\\_revised\\_sept\\_22\\_08.pdf](https://rcdos.ca/sites/default/files/groupfiles/Media%20browser/p.d_brochure_english_revised_sept_22_08.pdf)) (20 July 2018). *Orientierungshilfe: Mit Christus gehen – Der Einheit auf der Spur Konfessionsverbindende Ehen und gemeinsame Teilnahme an der Eucharistie* (20 February 2018) ([https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse\\_downloads/dossiers\\_2018/08-Orientierungshilfe-Kommunion.pdf](https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/dossiers_2018/08-Orientierungshilfe-Kommunion.pdf)); English translation: *Walking with Christ – Tracing Unity* ([https://dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse\\_downloads/dossiers\\_2018/Walking-with-Christ-Tracing-Unity-Arbeitsuebersetzung-der-Orientierungshilfe-ENG.pdf](https://dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/dossiers_2018/Walking-with-Christ-Tracing-Unity-Arbeitsuebersetzung-der-Orientierungshilfe-ENG.pdf))

### 4.3.7 Growth in Acknowledging Ordained Ministry

(1) *The mutual recognition of baptism calls for a differentiating consensus about ordained ministry.* Although mutual recognition of baptism does not entail the mutual recognition of ordained ministry, it is inconsistent to mutually recognize baptism, share the same belief in the justifying and ecclesial effects of baptism, celebrate baptisms jointly, and yet not search for an ecumenical theology of ordained ministry that allows for the mutual recognition of one another's ministry.

(2) *Discerning the fruit of the Spirit, Lutherans and Catholics perceive the other community's ordained ministry as an instrument of sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit.* Chapter 3 outlines the argument for this statement: According to the Augsburg Confession, the ministry of the Word, the sacraments, and the keys belong to the church as church and are exercised by the ordained ministry.<sup>8</sup> Today, the churches of The Lutheran World Federation acknowledge the service of ordained ministers in the Catholic Church. According to the Second Vatican Council "the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using" other churches "as means of salvation"<sup>9</sup> The Council fathers extended that teaching to both the "Eastern Churches"<sup>10</sup> and the "Separated Churches and Ecclesial Communities in the West".<sup>11</sup> This identification includes an acknowledgment of ordained ministry in these churches and ecclesial communities. With the reception of the JDDJ, both traditions recognize that the ministry of the other tradition has kept their communion in the apostolic faith regarding justification. This Commission calls the churches to receive this reflection and implement it in pastoral practice through an increased recognition of Lutheran ministry by Catholics and growth in the recognition of each other as churches.

### 4.3.8 Growth in Sacramental Life

(1) *For both Lutherans and Catholics, baptism and Eucharist are foundational sacraments.* Although there is not full consensus on the number of sacraments, both Catholics and Lutherans agree with the Augustinian definition that sacraments are means of grace as visible signs with invisible effects. That is, they participate in the grace of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. They unite human beings with God and with each other.

(2) *Our mutual recognition of baptism is the sacramental basis and stimulus of growth in communion.* Baptism is the beginning of this communion in Christ and with the church. Christian life develops through an extended process that can be described as a sacramental growth in faith and communion. This life-long process reflects the living and dynamic character of the body of Christ which grows when the communion of its members is intensified, when they invite others to participate in their communion of faith, and when they strengthen the bonds among local churches.

(3) *The intensification of sacramental faith within and between Lutherans and Catholics should be nurtured.* This requires that Lutherans and Catholics deepen their knowledge of their own tradition and that of the other. The *Augsburg Confession* and its *Apology* as well as Luther's Large and Small Catechisms are excellent tools for Lutherans, as are the Catechism of the Catholic Church and *Unitatis Redintegratio* for Catholics. As the two traditions grow in communion, they also serve as tools for the teaching of the other church.

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<sup>8</sup> The Augsburg Confession, VII.1, *Book of Concord*, 43. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XII.4, *Book of Concord*, 219. The Augsburg Confession, XIV, *Book of Concord*, 47.

<sup>9</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §3. Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §8.

<sup>10</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §15.

<sup>11</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §19.

(4) *Lutherans and Catholics experience a spiritual conversion by celebrating, teaching, and practicing their common faith.* They are invited to develop their sacramental celebrations, their teaching, and their connection with mission and service.

a) For Lutherans, this awareness of their own confessional tradition might mean living into the call of regular, weekly Eucharistic celebration.<sup>12</sup> It should include nurturing a Eucharistic piety rooted in the real presence of Jesus Christ and manifesting itself in a deep respect for the elements of bread and wine. Such respect could include reviving practices such as the sending of Eucharistic ministers from the Sunday assembly to those unable to attend the community's Eucharistic celebration.

b) For Catholics, it is a call to explain the difference and coherence between the foundational sacraments of baptism and Eucharist and the other five sacraments. They need to better communicate their teaching about the sacrificial character of the Eucharist as not being a repetition of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, the meaning of transubstantiation, and the meaning and practice of Eucharistic adoration. Catholics are called to offer communion more frequently under both forms, a practice that is currently implemented unevenly worldwide. They should avoid using pre-consecrated hosts from the tabernacle as a usual practice.

c) For Catholics and Lutherans on the path of deepening ecclesial communion by a shared sacramental life, a first step could be to commemorate each other regularly in the intercessions. The exchange of preachers is a good ecumenical practice in many parishes, which could be developed and extended. The inclusion of ecumenical agreements in catechesis is another means of deepening the common faith in each church.

(5) *Eucharistic fellowship is a concrete, important, and necessary means to the goal of our ecumenical journey, namely, full, visible unity.* The Joint Statement signed at the Lutheran cathedral of Lund, Sweden, states: "Many members of our communities yearn to receive the Eucharist at one table, as the concrete expression of full unity. We experience the pain of those who share their whole lives, but cannot share God's redeeming presence at the Eucharistic table. We acknowledge our joint pastoral responsibility to respond to the spiritual thirst and hunger of our people to be one in Christ. We long for this wound in the Body of Christ to be healed. This is the goal of our ecumenical endeavors, which we wish to advance, also by renewing our commitment to theological dialogue."

(6) *Baptism and Eucharist belong together with other effective signs of ecclesial life, such as confirmation, penance, marriage, and especially ordination.* The insights of earlier ecumenical dialogues about ordained ministry should be received by both churches. The fruit of the Spirit in ordained ministry is discerned and welcomed by both sides.

(7) *Lutherans and Catholics need more common practices in sacramental life.* There are many opportunities in the spiritual life of both communities, ranging from common prayer, to healing services, to singing the faith together, to increasing joint baptismal practices, to mutual presence at each others' liturgical celebrations.

#### 4.3.9 Growth in Mutual and Common Service to the World

(1) *Growth in the communion of churches is not a self-serving purpose; it is for the glory of God and for the good of the neighbor and the churches.* Lutherans and Catholics know that ecumenical consensus on baptism, Eucharist, ordination, and other sacraments and the church has a cornerstone: this consensus strengthens the witness to the Word of God in the world, which is God's creation intended for redemption. Common activities of Lutherans and Catholics in a more vibrant, engaged, and common

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<sup>12</sup> Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XXIV, *Book of Concord*, 259.

service to the world deepens their unity, inspires their ecclesial relations, and proclaims God's merciful presence for the cosmos and all humanity.

(2) *Lutherans and Catholics experience divisive injustices between north and south, east and west in their own churches and in society.* Ecumenical solidarity cannot be reduced to the members of their own church but is a recognition of humanity's fundamental identity as God's child and therefore as sisters and brothers independent of belief. A common approach to the needs and cry of humanity is needed. It is not possible to share the grace of baptism and not to share the goods of life and participate in God's good intention for all creation.

(3) *Growth in the communion of churches implies a growth in justice for all creation.* God's salvific work is intended not only for human beings but for all creation. Creation groans in waiting (Rom 8). At the coming of the Lord, all the earth cries out for joy (Ps 98). Care for creation and the integrity of the environment fosters a healthy and just life for all people. Catholics and Lutherans stand in solidarity with those already suffering the effects of climate change and raise the importance of the care of creation for intergenerational justice. No one is left behind or ravished by the uncontrollable impact of climate change. Service to creation is service to the neighbor, as is well explained in Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'*.<sup>13</sup>

(4) *Catholics and Lutherans engage in a common service to the neighbor and creation and in that service are themselves transformed into living witnesses of God's redemptive love and mercy.* In the early church, diaconal ministers went to the margins of society to visit and care for the poor and through that service witnessed to the incarnational love of God; so also today Lutherans and Catholics commit themselves to the radical implications of justification by faith, which is always for the good of the neighbor.

(5) *Working together in service to the world and human beings in need, Catholics and Lutherans also encounter each other as fellow Christians.* Together their proclamation in words and deeds is more convincing than when they are separated. They witness to their fundamental unity in baptism not only to one another but to a world of neighbors, both familiar and unfamiliar. In Lund, Sweden, at the occasion of the Commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> Year of Reformation, Lutheran World Service and the Catholic agency Caritas Internationalis joined together in a Declaration of Intent "Together in Hope". The Declaration states, "We believe that faith communities and the organizations with which they engage are uniquely placed to fight extreme poverty in all its dimensions. Not only because these communities are present around the world, but also because when trained, organized and accompanied, they are the best responders to disasters, the best promoters of integral sustainable human development, and the best advocates for their lives. What animates us is our faith and, in a secularized world, this makes a huge difference: courage, commitment, perseverance, taking risks, the belief that God is with us to confront evil and rebuild lives." In this Declaration, Lutherans and Catholics engage the Fifth Imperative (From Conflict to Communion): "Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world"<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (2015).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *From Conflict to Communion*, §243.

# Chapter 5: Living Out Our Baptismal Communion

## *Six Ecumenical Commitments*

### *5.1. Introduction*

This study has shown a notable degree of Lutheran-Catholic agreement on the theology of baptism and its ecclesiological implications. In Chapter One, we showed that Lutherans and Catholics share a common understanding of the biblical witness on baptism, and in Chapter Two we demonstrated that Catholics and Lutherans have a common reception of the biblical witness in the liturgical rite of baptism and baptism's relationship to ministry and the Eucharist. In Chapter Three, we saw that not only individuals but also faith communities are members of the body of Christ, and we concluded that mutual recognition of each other's communities follows upon discernment of the ecclesial elements and the fruit of the Spirit in the other community. Chapter Four described how growth in communion occurs through an intensification of sacramental life and service to the world. Based on this substantial agreement, the present chapter proposes six commitments for expressing growth in communion between our churches arising from a shared baptism. This chapter will then offer theological and ecumenical reflections on each of the six commitments in order to help our two churches reflect on how to grow toward the goal of full and visible communion.

### *5.2 The Six Common Commitments*

- (1) Lutherans and Catholics share one and the same baptism as incorporation into the body of Christ and commit themselves to strengthening not only the individual consequences of baptism for growth in faith but also the ecclesial consequences of baptism for growth in communion.
- (2) Catholics and Lutherans recognize each other's communities as members of the body of Christ and commit themselves to growth in the recognition of each other as churches.
- (3) Lutheran and Catholic communities share a basic understanding of the Eucharist and commit themselves to increase opportunities for Eucharistic sharing.
- (4) Catholic and Lutheran communities mutually acknowledge that the Holy Spirit uses the other's ordained ministry in preserving the community in faith, hope, and love and commit themselves to make progress in the recognition of the other's ordained ministry.
- (5) Lutheran and Catholic communities have mandated ecumenical commissions that have identified a common understanding of traditionally controversial topics and commit themselves to receive and implement them.
- (6) Lutherans and Catholics have received the grace of God and commit themselves to proclaim the Gospel together and to promote human dignity, solidarity, justice, and care for creation.

### *5.3 Reflections on the Six Common Commitments*

1. Lutherans and Catholics share one and the same baptism as incorporation into the body of Christ and commit themselves to strengthening not only the individual consequences of baptism for growth in faith but the ecclesial consequences of baptism for growth in communion as well.

Both Lutheran and Catholic communities baptize with water in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit in obedience to the biblical commandment in Matthew 28:19. Both traditions affirm baptism as a sacrament associated with God's promise of grace received by faith. In this sacrament Christians are joined with Christ in his paschal mystery and experience the grace of salvation, even though God's grace is not limited to the sacrament of baptism. The sacrament of baptism frees from original sin, effects forgiveness of sins, and, as a fruit of the new creation, bestows a new birth in Christ for the baptized.

Both Lutherans and Catholics affirm that the salvific effect of baptism includes incorporation into the body of Christ, an incorporation that is at one and the same time soteriological and ecclesial, that is, an incorporation in grace and in community. They become members of the body of Christ.

Baptism inaugurates life within the Christian community, a life nourished by the Eucharist, the repeatable sacrament of the paschal mystery that strengthens faith and intensifies communion in Christ in union with other members of the Christian community. While both Lutherans and Catholics affirm that justification is complete in baptism, the effect of baptism is on-going as Christians live out the implications of baptism through the other rites of baptismal confirmation, penance, and vocation as well as through moral witness and Christian service. Baptism inaugurates a pattern of life in imitation of Jesus Christ to whom the baptized are conformed.

2. Catholics and Lutherans recognize each other's communities as members of the body of Christ and commit themselves to growth in the recognition of each other as churches.

As the Joint Statement from Lund affirms, "Aware that the way we relate to one another shapes our witness to the Gospel, we commit ourselves to further growth in communion rooted in baptism, as we seek to remove the remaining obstacles that hinder us from attaining full unity."

Lutherans and Catholics recognize each other as individual members of the body of Christ since "all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ's body".<sup>1</sup> The mutual recognition of baptism and the discernment of the fruits of the Spirit in one another's communities provide the basis for the recognition of these communities as being members of the body of Christ. This recognition provides the basis for the recognition of these communities as churches.

The argument begins by recalling that baptism is a communal event that has ecclesiological consequences insofar as it leads to new life in communion with others. This communal dimension consists also in the incorporation as a community into the body of Christ, which is an ecclesial reality since baptized Lutherans and Catholics live out their baptism within the communities where they have been baptized. Both Lutherans and Catholics agree that the body of Christ is not limited to a particular confessional community but extends beyond any defined institutional reality, even while it remains inseparable from each institutional community where it is present through the elements of sanctification and truth. Thus, not only individual Christians belong to the body of Christ but also their ecclesial communities. This has implications for how Lutherans and Catholics understand each other as ecclesial communities and for the relationship of these communities to one another, since they all belong to the body of Christ. The body of Christ is not only a communion of saints but also a communion of ecclesial communities in communion with Christ and with one another.

The expressions "mutual recognition as churches" and "mutual recognition of ministry" cannot be understood in only a juridical way. From a juridical perspective, "mutual recognition" means that a particular ecclesial community and/or ordained ministry has achieved a certain status in the eyes of the ecumenical partner. The indispensable criterion for this recognition by Catholics has been the episcopal ministry in apostolic succession, understood as a continuous succession in ministry going back to apostolic times. Apostolicity is a multi-faceted mark of the church, and succession in ministry is a sign,

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<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §3.

but not necessarily a guarantee, of the apostolicity of a church. Apostolicity is borne not only by ministry but is an attribute of church as a whole. As *Dei Verbum* observes, “the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes”.<sup>2</sup>

The present document proposes an existential, pneumatological, and practical use of the expressions “mutual recognition as churches” and “mutual recognition of ministry.” Our Commission speaks of “mutual acknowledgement” on the way to progress in “mutual recognition.” In this dynamic sense, “mutual recognition” means the discernment of the one church of Christ as being present in that community because it bears the “marks” of that body. These marks, which are also the fruit of the Spirit, are discerned by the effects they produce: the apostolic faith confessed, the sacraments celebrated, the service rendered (*martyria, leiturgia, diakonia*). It is on the basis of this discernment that Lutheran and Catholic communities commit themselves to mutually recognizing one another as churches.

3. Lutheran and Catholic communities share a basic understanding of the Eucharist and commit themselves to increase opportunities for Eucharistic sharing.

The urgency of increased opportunities for Eucharistic sharing as one of the steps toward fuller communion was expressed in the Joint Statement signed by Pope Francis and LWF President Bishop Munib Younan in Lund (October 2016) and reiterated in the Joint Statement issued on October 31, 2017 on the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation:

Many members of our communities yearn to receive the Eucharist at one table, as the concrete expression of full unity. We experience the pain of those who share their whole lives, but cannot share God’s redeeming presence at the Eucharistic table. We acknowledge our joint pastoral responsibility to respond to the spiritual thirst and hunger of our people to be one in Christ. We long for this wound in the Body of Christ to be healed. This is the goal of our ecumenical endeavors, which we wish to advance, also by renewing our commitment to theological dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

The cross for the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation depicts Jesus Christ at the center, seated at the Eucharistic table. At the table, our Lord Jesus Christ offers himself as nourishment for the journey, strengthening the communion of saints established in baptism, reconciling all peoples as walls of division are broken down. The cross of the Joint Commemoration depicts our deepest yearning for a shared Eucharist.<sup>4</sup>

Lutherans and Catholics recognize the connection between baptism and Eucharist. Baptism that excludes Eucharist is a promise without sustenance. The body of Christ into which the baptized is incorporated, in death and in new life, is the body that feeds the community, affirms them in love, unites them, and sends them out as that body into the world. The Eucharist sustains the promise of baptism on the journey of faith in this life.

Pope Francis, in responding to a woman at a Lutheran church in Rome, asked, “Is sharing the Lord’s Supper the end of a journey or is it the viaticum for walking together?”<sup>5</sup> In considering the possibility of a shared Eucharist, Pope Francis identified a number of theological points: baptism as the foundation of Christian unity; the significance of Jesus’ words: “Do this in memory of me;” the church’s teaching that

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<sup>2</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum* (1965), §8.

<sup>3</sup> *Joint Statement on the Occasion of the Joint Catholic-Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation* ([http://www.protestants-aix.fr/IMG/pdf/joint\\_commemoration\\_joint\\_statement\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://www.protestants-aix.fr/IMG/pdf/joint_commemoration_joint_statement_final_en.pdf).)

<sup>4</sup> *Liturgy for the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation*, Lund Cathedral, October 31, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> “Responses of the Holy Father to the Questions of Three Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Community of Rome” (15 November 2015) ([https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151115\\_chiesa-evangelica-luterana.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151115_chiesa-evangelica-luterana.html))

the Eucharist is both a sign of unity and a means to unity; and the theme of viaticum, that is, Eucharist that is food for a journey, since “viaticum” means “walking together.” Viaticum is the Eucharist given to a dying person as food for the journey back to God. Here Pope Francis uses it as food for the couple’s journey. He does not supply an answer to the woman from his pastoral authority as pope but invites her to prayerful discernment. In the end, he refers back to baptism and the Ephesians 4:5-6 text, “One faith, one baptism, one Lord,” and says that the woman’s response should be based on these considerations.

In this Commission’s recommendation for increased opportunities for Eucharistic sharing, it proposes that this notion of viaticum be extended to an ecumenical understanding of the role of the Eucharist on the journey toward full visible unity.

4. Catholic and Lutheran communities mutually acknowledge that the Holy Spirit uses the other’s ordained ministry in preserving the community in faith, hope, and love and commit themselves to make progress in the recognition of the other’s ordained ministry.

Ordained ministry is ordination into service and witnesses to the salvific action of Jesus Christ through proclaiming the Word, administering the sacraments, and serving all of creation (*martyria, leiturgia, diakonia*). Ministry is always for the other.

When ministry in the other tradition is discerned as being effective in preserving a church in faithfulness to the word of God and in effectively ministering the sacraments, this discernment is a recognition of the effectiveness of the ministry of one’s ecumenical partner. This is an existential and practical recognition that may provide the basis for a more official and juridical act of mutual recognition by church authorities.

On the basis of this existential and practical recognition, Catholic and Lutheran ministers are called upon to engage in more active collaboration in study, proclamation, and service in their local context. These activities include increased sharing of liturgical life through pulpit exchange and praying together. Other areas of cooperation include: teaching doctrine as it has been shaped ecumenically in light of the *JDDJ*; and dismantling false narratives about the other faith community and its beliefs and practices.

5. Lutheran and Catholic communities have mandated ecumenical commissions that have identified common understanding of traditionally controversial topics and commit themselves to receive and implement them.

“‘Reception’ is the process by which the churches make their own the results of all their encounters with one another (...).”<sup>6</sup> Reception is more than simple recognition but always demands or implies implementation, for example, receiving elements “such as liturgy, spirituality and forms of witness from one another’s traditions.”<sup>7</sup> In this exchange of gifts,<sup>8</sup> Lutherans and Catholics receive the richness of the tradition from one another. In the spirit of growth in communion through the shared fruit of the Spirit, Catholic and Lutheran churches commit themselves to receiving and implementing ecumenical agreements. This reception and implementation begins by studying ecumenical documents together.

6. Lutherans and Catholics have received the grace of God and commit themselves to proclaim the Gospel together and to promote human dignity, solidarity, justice, and care for creation.

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<sup>6</sup> Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, “*Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress: Receiving One Another in the Name of Christ* (Geneva, 2013), §43.

<sup>7</sup> Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Eighth Report 1999-2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), §43.

<sup>8</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, §28.

Scripture witnesses to the close connection between a sacramental life and a commitment to social justice. Acts 2:42-46 outlines a baptismal order of life. Peter calls the people to repent, to be baptized, and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Those who were baptized gathered in community, devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. They held everything in common. Their community life expressed itself in justice for all as they sold their possessions, sharing with all who were in need. Thanksgiving characterized their life together. This Jerusalem community in Acts is presented as a paradigm for all communities aspiring to live out a baptismal pattern of life.

Furthermore Acts 6:1-7, which recounts the institution of the seven who wait on tables, expresses the essential role of *caritas* in the life of the church and its social character.<sup>9</sup> Such service exists not only for the *bene esse* of the church but also for its *esse* as belonging to the very nature of the church.

Joined in a common baptism, Lutherans and Catholics continue to seek concrete ways to participate in mission together, which witnesses to their growth in communion. This joint participation is not confined to service, but it also more broadly shapes a life of discipleship and proclamation.

Ecumenical consensus on the doctrine of justification is becoming a lived consensus. The urgent common task is translating God's justifying and redeeming act in Jesus Christ into evangelical, pastoral, and social action, which responds to the spiritual and material needs of people today. The body of Christ transcends all human boundaries and incorporates a diversity that constitutes its radical unity. The body of Christ transcends not only individual distinctions but also ecclesial formations. In this way the body of Christ is truly catholic. It transcends human boundaries of denomination, nation, race, and ethnicity. It also transcends various ecclesial units such as visible local worshipping communities.

The reality of growth in communion comes to full expression through a common proclamation of the Word and an embodied sacramental life. As Catholics and Lutherans continue to dialogue and live out the implications of our growing consensus, they are called to make them tangible in the lives of their churches. The liturgy of the common prayer for the Joint Commemoration exemplifies this consensus around the baptismal font that leads to the Eucharistic table.

The fruit of the Spirit, present in different communities, witnesses to this one body of Christ, in which the Holy Spirit is continually active, breaking down walls, bending that which is rigid, reconciling divisions, and calling all believers to the joyful Gospel task of evangelization. God calls all Christians to grow in personal faith, to transform the life of their ecclesial community, and to deepen the communion among their communities, all for the sake of the world. On the way, the churches walk together in God's Word and Sacrament towards an ever-deeper communion, not for their own self-preservation but to proclaim joyously the Gospel to all people and to serve all creation.

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<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), §142. Pope Francis cites Pope Benedict XVI.

# Appendix

## *Special Statement by Professor Dr Christian D. Washburn*

While our document makes a number of important ecumenical advances, I cannot agree with some of its conclusions.

First, I think that it is impossible for the Catholic Church to recognize Lutheran ecclesial communities as “members of the Body of Christ” in the sense that they are simply within or a part of the one Church of Christ. While recognizing the Orthodox churches as churches, the Catholic Church has always taught that it alone is the one true Church of Christ, and that it alone is fully identified with her. This doctrine was repeatedly taught by the Fathers of the Church, popes, and councils, including the Second Vatican Council (*Lumen Gentium*, §8). In *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, the Second Vatican Council clearly affirms the identity of the Mystical Body of Christ and the Catholic Church: “The holy and Catholic Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ ...” (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, §2). When this full identity was denied by some dissenting theologians after the council, it was repeatedly confirmed by the CDF in various decrees and notifications. If our document is correct in its interpretation of *Lumen Gentium* §8, then the council contradicts not only the pre- and post-conciliar magisterium but also itself.

Second, while the Second Vatican Council recognizes that many elements of sanctification and truth are present in non-Catholic churches and ecclesial communities and that the one Church of Christ is present and operative in these churches and ecclesial communities, nevertheless the council also acknowledges that these communities suffer from a series of defects even with respect to those things instituted by Christ (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, §3, §22). Our document is unclear how such communities which lack both apostolic succession and a valid Eucharistic celebration can be considered churches.

# Abbreviations

AS	<i>Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II</i> . Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970-1999.
BEM	<i>Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry</i>
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> . 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ed. Vatican City, Washington, D.C.: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; United States Catholic Conference, 2000. References by paragraph number.
DH	Peter Hünemann, Helmut Hoping, Robert L. Fastiggi, Anne Englund Nash, and Heinrich Denzinger, <i>Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals</i> , 43 <sup>rd</sup> edition San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012. References by paragraph number.
JDDJ	<i>Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification</i> . Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2000.
LW	American Edition of <i>Luther's Works</i> . St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-.
LWF	The Lutheran World Federation
par.	Parallel
PCPCU	Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke</i> , Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Weimar, 1883-.
WA TR	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke</i> , Tischreden. Weimar, 1912-1921.

# Common Statements of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commissions on Unity

## ***Phase I (1967–1972)***

The Gospel and the Church (Malta Report – 1972)

## ***Phase II (1973–1984)***

The Eucharist (1978)

All Under One Christ (1980)

Ways to Community (1980)

The Ministry in the Church (1981)

Martin Luther – Witness to Christ (1983)

Facing Unity – Models, Forms and Phases of Catholic-Lutheran Church Fellowship (1984)

## ***Phase III (1986–1993)***

Church and Justification (1993)

## ***Phase IV (1995–2006)***

The Apostolicity of the Church (2006)

## ***Phase V (2008–2019)***

From Conflict to Communion (2013)

Baptism and Growth in Communion (2019/2021)

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Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification signed by representatives of the Catholic Church and The Lutheran World Federation, 31 October 1999.

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