

Anglican Roman Catholic Bishops' Dialogue Canada
November 2006 (revised November 2007)

**SUMMARY OF PASTORAL PRACTICE: WHEN ANGLICANS AND ROMAN
CATHOLICS ARE AT THE EUCHARIST TOGETHER**

The new reality in which we find ourselves as Christians in Canada today has made us aware of the fact that there is need for a restatement of our teaching and current practice with regard to the Lord's great gift to us of the Eucharist.

A. OUR COMMON FAITH

Our eucharistic theology has been the subject of an agreed statement from the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue (ARCIC), deepened by subsequent elucidations and clarifications. This represents substantial agreement and has been accepted by our two Churches (Lambeth, 1988; letter from Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 1994), as requiring no further study. Our episcopal dialogue noted in 'Commitment to Christian Unity: A Message from the Anglican-Roman Catholic Bishops' Dialogue' in 1994 "At the international level, this year saw the Vatican's welcoming of **Clarifications** on the ARCIC I statements on Eucharist and Ministry. We can be confident that our theology of these questions no longer constitutes a barrier to unity, even though we differ on the question of who may be ordained."¹ We have decided to use this joint statement (despite its use at the time of non-inclusive language) as the theological base for our joint letter about the mystery which is at the heart of our Christian worship and life.

**THE ARCIC STATEMENT ON EUCHARISTIC DOCTRINE
(WINDSOR, 1971)**

1. In the course of the Church's history several traditions have developed in expressing Christian understanding of the eucharist. (For example, various names have become customary as descriptions of the eucharist: Lord's supper, liturgy, holy mysteries, synaxis, mass, holy communion. The eucharist has become the most universally accepted term). An important stage in progress towards organic unity is a substantial consensus on the purpose and meaning of the eucharist. Our intention has been to seek a deeper understanding of the reality of the eucharist which is consonant with biblical teaching and with the tradition of our common inheritance, and to express in the document the consensus we have reached.

2. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God has reconciled men to himself, and in the Christ he offers unity to all mankind. By his word God calls us into a new relationship with himself as our Father and with one another as his children - a relationship

¹ Commitment to Christian Unity: A Message from the Anglican-Roman Catholic Bishops' Dialogue to the clergy and people of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches in Canada. Published in pamphlet form by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994. Also available in *Common Witness to the Gospel*, Jeffrey Gros, E. Rozanne Elder and Ellen K. Wondra, eds. Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1997, pp. 232-234.

inaugurated and deepened through the eucharist, and expressed in a confession of one faith and a common life of loving service.

I. The Mystery of the Eucharist

3. When his people are gathered at the eucharist to commemorate his saving acts for our redemption, Christ makes effective among us the eternal benefits of his victory and elicits and renews our response of faith, thanksgiving and self-surrender. Christ through the Holy Spirit in the eucharist builds up the life of the Church, strengthens its fellowship and furthers its mission. The identity of the Church as the body of Christ is both expressed and effectively proclaimed by its being centred in and partaking of his body and blood. In the whole action of the eucharist, and in and by his sacramental presence given through bread and wine, the crucified and risen Lord, according to this promise, offers himself to his people.

4. In the eucharist we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Receiving a foretaste of the kingdom to come, we look back with thanksgiving to what Christ has done for us, we greet him present among us, we look forward to his final appearing in the fullness of his kingdom when "The Son himself (shall) be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15.28). When we gather around the same table in this communal meal at the invitation of the same Lord and when we "partake of the one loaf", we are one in the commitment not only to Christ and to one another, but also to the mission of the Church in the world.

II. The Eucharist and the Sacrifice of Christ

5. Christ's redeeming death and resurrection took place once and for all in history. Christ's death on the cross, the culmination of his whole life of obedience, was the one, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world. There can be no repetition of or addition to what was then accomplished once for all by Christ. Any attempt to express a nexus between the sacrifice of Christ and the eucharist must not obscure this fundamental fact of Christian faith. (1) Yet God has given the eucharist to his Church as a means through which the atoning work of Christ on the cross is proclaimed and made effective in the life of the Church. The notion of *memorial* as understood in the passover celebration at the time of Christ - i.e. - the making effective in the present of an event in the past - has opened the way to a clearer understanding of the relationship between Christ's sacrifice and the eucharist. The eucharistic memorial is no mere calling to mind of a past event or of its significance, but the Church's effectual proclamation of God's mighty acts. Christ instituted the eucharist as a memorial (anamnesis) of the totality of God's reconciling action in him. In the eucharistic prayer the Church continues to make a perpetual memorial of Christ's death, and his members, united with God and one another, give thanks for all his mercies, entreat the benefits of his passion on behalf of the whole Church, participate in these benefits and enter into the movement of his self-offering.

(1) The Early Church in expressing the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection often used the language of sacrifice. For the Hebrew *sacrifice* was a traditional means of

communication with God. The passover, for example, was a communal meal; the day of atonement was essentially expiatory; and the covenant established communion between God and man.

III. The Presence of Christ

6. Communication with Christ in the eucharist presupposes his true presence, effectually signified by the bread and wine which, in this mystery, become his body and blood. (2) The real presence of his body and blood can, however, only be understood within the context of the redemptive activity whereby he gives himself, and in himself reconciliation, peace and life, to his own. On the one hand, the eucharistic gift springs out of the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, in which God's saving purpose has already been definitively realized. On the other hand, its purpose is to transmit the life of the crucified and risen Christ to his body, the Church, so that its members may be more fully united with Christ and with one another.

(2) The word *transubstantiation* is commonly used in the Roman Catholic Church to indicate that God acting in the eucharist effects a change in the inner reality of the elements. The term should be seen as affirming the fact of Christ's presence and of the mysterious and radical change which takes place. In contemporary Roman Catholic theology it is not understood as explaining how the change takes place.

7. Christ is present and active, in various ways, in the entire eucharistic celebration. It is the same Lord who through the proclaimed word invites his people to his table, who through his minister presides at that table, and who gives himself sacramentally in the body and blood of his paschal sacrifice. It is the Lord present at the right hand of the Father, and therefore transcending the sacramental order, who thus offers to his Church, in the eucharistic signs, the special gift of himself.

8. The sacramental body and blood of the Saviour are present as an offering to the believer awaiting his welcome. When this offering is met by faith, a lifegiving encounter results. Through faith Christ's presence – which does not depend on the individual's faith in order to be the Lord's real gift of himself to his Church – becomes no longer just a presence for the believer, but also a presence with him. Thus, in considering the mystery of the eucharistic presence, we must recognize both the sacramental sign of Christ's presence and the personal relationship between Christ and the faithful which arises from that presence.

9. The Lord's words at the last supper, 'Take and eat; this is my body', do not allow us to dissociate the gift of the presence and the act of sacramental eating. The elements are not mere signs; Christ's body and blood become really present and are really given. But they are really present and given in order that, receiving them, believers may be united in communion with Christ the Lord.

10. According to the traditional order of the liturgy the consecratory prayer (anaphora) leads to the communion of the faithful. Through this prayer of thanksgiving, a word of faith

addressed to the Father, the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit, so that in communion we eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood.

11. The Lord who thus comes to his people in the power of the Holy Spirit is the Lord of glory. In the eucharistic celebration we anticipate the joys of the age to come. By the transforming action of the Spirit of God, earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine, the eschatological banquet for the new man: elements of the first creation become pledges and first fruits of the new heaven and the new earth.

Conclusion

12. We believe that we have reached substantial agreement on the doctrine of the eucharist. Although we are all conditioned by the traditional ways in which we have expressed and practised our eucharistic faith, we are convinced that if there are any remaining points of disagreement they can be resolved on the principles here established. We acknowledge a variety of theological approaches within both our communions. But we have seen it as our task to find a way of advancing together beyond the doctrinal disagreements of the past. It is our hope that, in view of the agreement which we have reached on eucharistic faith, this doctrine will no longer constitute an obstacle to the unity we seek.

B. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

While we can only rejoice at the theological consensus established above, we must take seriously the fact that this one eucharistic faith has diverged in terms of practice in our two Churches, because of differing emphases, in the matter of who can receive Holy Communion. It also needs to be acknowledged that our Churches have been separated since the Reformation, and that, while much progress towards unity has been made, there are still serious issues which have not been resolved. That there is some confusion here in Canada has been the topic of dialogue by the Bishops and has occasioned the need for this clarifying statement. While a certain anguish is frequently felt as a result of the lack of intercommunion, good ecumenical relations are furthered when the eucharistic disciplines of our churches are both understood and respected.

1. The Anglican Church of Canada has no canonical provision regarding ecumenical Eucharistic sharing, but in 1972 the Canadian House of Bishops agreed that:
 - i) Communicants of other Christian Churches who have been baptized with water in the Name of the Holy Trinity are welcome, if they so desire, to receive Holy Communion in Anglican Churches.
 - ii) Members of the Anglican Church of Canada may, in accordance with their conscience, receive Holy Communion in non-Anglican Churches where they are welcome.

This ruling recognizes that there are situations of special pastoral need or of ecumenical significance where Eucharistic sharing may be appropriate. Sensitivity to the convictions and practices of other Churches is also provided for.

For Anglicans, 'membership' is expressed through regular participation in the eucharist. Those who receive regularly in Anglican churches will be considered to be Anglicans.

2. The law of the Catholic Church on this matter of Eucharistic sharing has changed notably with the Second Vatican Council. The two general principles for sacramental sharing are stated in the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, section 8. [Note that the phrase "common worship" is a translation of the Latin "*communio in sacris*" and does not mean simply "prayer in common" but rather the participation in official worship by reception of the sacraments.]

"There are two main principles upon which the practice of such common worship depends: first, that of the unity of the Church which ought to be expressed; and second, that of the sharing in the means of grace. The expression of unity very generally forbids common worship. Grace to be obtained sometimes commends it."

In the understanding of the Roman Catholic Church:

"A sacrament is an act of Christ and of the Church through the Spirit. Its celebration in a concrete community is a sign of the reality of its unity in faith, worship, and community life. As well as being signs, sacraments - most especially the Eucharist - are sources of the unity of the Christian community and of spiritual life, and are means for building them up. Thus Eucharistic communion is inseparably linked to full ecclesial communion and its visible expression.

At the same time the Catholic Church teaches that by baptism members of other Churches and ecclesial communities are brought into a real, even if imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church and that 'baptism, which constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are reborn ... is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ'. The Eucharist is, for the baptized, a spiritual food which enables them to overcome sin and to live the very life of Christ, to be incorporated more profoundly in Him and share more intensely in the whole economy of the Mystery of Christ.

It is the light of these two basic principles, which must always be taken into account together, that in general the Catholic Church permits access to its Eucharistic communion and to the sacraments of penance and anointing of the sick, only to those who share its oneness in faith, worship and ecclesial life. For the same reasons, it also recognizes that in certain circumstances, by way of exception, and under certain conditions, access to these sacraments may be permitted, or even commended, for Christians of other Churches and ecclesial Communities." (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 1993 Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms On Ecumenism, #129)

The Roman Catholic Church has a different discipline with regard to eucharistic sharing with members of Eastern and Western churches. For Christians from churches in the west, the Roman Catholic position is now set out in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, canon 844.4, (and mirrored in canon 673.4 of the Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches):

“If there is a danger of death or if, in the judgment of the diocesan Bishop or of the Episcopal Conference, there is some other grave or pressing need, Catholic ministers may lawfully administer these same sacraments [penance, Eucharist, and anointing of the sick] to other Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church, who cannot approach a minister of their own community and who spontaneously ask for them, provided that they demonstrate the catholic faith in respect of those sacraments and are properly disposed.”

Thus, for Eucharistic sharing to be permitted to a non-Catholic, that person must

- be a baptized Christian;
- have a faith in the sacrament in conformity with that of the Roman Catholic Church;
- experience grave or pressing need;
- have for a significant time or reason been unable to have recourse to a minister of his or her own Church;
- have asked for the sacrament of his or her own accord;
- possess proper dispositions and lead a life worthy of a Christian.

Since the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has not, as a Conference, established norms on this matter, the interpretation and application of these conditions are to be determined by the Bishop of each diocese or the person to whom he has delegated the decision in particular cases. The 1993 Ecumenical Directory, in #159-160, invites the Bishops to special care for inter-Church marriage couples. The Mississauga meeting of Anglican and Catholic Bishops asked that further work be done in this area to move forward in our growing relationship.

The same canon (844), in the second paragraph, states that Roman Catholics may not receive the sacraments of Eucharist, penance and anointing of the sick in the Churches and ecclesial Communities of the West, even if those Churches permit such sharing.

C. LITURGICAL PRACTICES

When Anglicans and Roman Catholics are at the Eucharist together

Many are the riches that Anglicans and Roman Catholics share in Christ; yet our practices diverge. We do not yet know the fullness of the unity for which Christ prayed. Nowhere is this more apparent for most people than when Anglicans and Roman Catholics are gathered at celebrations of the Eucharist in one another's churches perhaps especially upon special occasions such as weddings and funerals. We do not yet share together at the table of the Lord. This reality has to be addressed at many levels, but a liturgical celebration is rarely the occasion for detailed expositions of canon law and practice. Out of our understanding of one another's practices and convictions we have sought gracious ways of explaining our differences in a liturgical context. Our hope is to acknowledge the requirements of church law and individual conscience while maintaining an atmosphere of friendship and welcome of fellow Christians. At such services it may be possible to acknowledge that the congregation has been united in prayer through Christ and that spiritual communion with him is available to all the faithful. At the same time, the

occasion may well warrant acknowledgement of the sadness of our divisions and prayer for a deeper unity.

It is important for members of both our churches to recall that Eucharistic participation is not limited to receiving holy communion. In situations where Anglicans are not invited to receive the sacrament, and/or where Roman Catholics may not receive according to the discipline of their church, they may nevertheless join in the praise of God, receive the proclamation of the Word of God, offer the priestly ministry of intercession for the church and for the world, give thanks for the mighty acts of God, particularly in the memorial of the paschal mystery in the Eucharistic prayer, pray the Lord's Prayer, give and receive the sign of peace with their separated sisters and brothers, and receive the commission of being sent into the world in witness to the Gospel. Such instances of liturgical participation are no less visible signs of the real, though not-yet-fully restored, communion of the Church.

Statements on the reception of communion for use in parishes

In many assemblies, non-communicants are invited to come to the altar rail at the time of communion in order to receive a blessing. Those wishing a blessing are instructed to cross their arms across their chest. Despite the prevalence of the practice, it should be noted that there are several problems associated with it.

- 1) The posture is sometimes used by communicants in Eastern rite churches (and thus Eastern rite Catholics wishing a blessing might use some other gesture, such as placing one arm across the chest)
- 2) The assembly's move to the altar at communion is a *communion* procession, not a blessing procession
- 3) Concerns about hygiene suggest that communion ministers should try to restrict their contact with others as much as possible. This would preclude frequent hand-laying for blessings.
- 4) All members of the assembly commonly receive a blessing at the conclusion of the liturgy.

The following could be included in a service bulletin or other printed material. The deacon, presider or another minister could make this announcement at the gathering of the community or at some other time when announcements are made.

In Anglican Parishes

“All who are baptized with water in the Name of the Holy Trinity who desire to receive, according to their conscience and the discipline of their own church, are invited to receive holy communion in the Anglican Church.”

In Roman Catholic Parishes

“For the Catholic Church, the reception of Holy Eucharist is a sign, not only of communion with God, but also of communion with the faith and life of the Church. For this reason, the Church normally reserves reception of the Eucharist to Catholics.”

When the eucharist is celebrated at gatherings of Anglicans and Roman Catholics

When there is a special occasion on which significant numbers of Anglicans and Roman Catholics are present, where possible liturgical forms should be chosen which a) do not presume that *everyone* is a communicant and b) pray for the unity of the Church.

Regarding the Intercessions

When possible the Prayers of the Faithful should include petitions for both the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury as well as the local bishops.

Invitation to Communion and Post-Communion Prayer:

Forms should be chosen where possible which do not draw attention to the exclusion of any from communion.