

TANGAZA COLLEGE
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

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**“THAT THEY MAY BE ONE, AS WE ARE ONE”,
John 17:11b:
A Call to Christian Unity through the Communion of Churches in the face of
Christian Pluralism with focus on the Church in Kenya**

Supervisor

Rev Fr. Eamonn Mulcahy, C.S.Sp

**A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology.**



NAIROBI, 2011

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved parents from whom I had parental support for my Initial Education. I equally dedicate it to my teachers at all levels of my education and in a special way to those engaged in Ecumenical talks for Christian Unity.

EPIGRAPH

“That they may be one, as we are one”

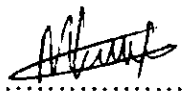
(John 17:11b)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Unity is indeed what we desire for peaceful living in our communities, society, and in the whole world. Such is true of this long essay, *Call to Christian Unity through the Communion of Churches*: I am appreciative for the great support from my supervisor Rev. Fr. Eamonn Mulcahy, C.S.Sp who dedicated his time to have frequent encounters with me while marking my work. I would like also to share my joy of my work and thank the Congregation of Holy Cross that supported me financially and materially to meet the requirements of this Long Essay. I am also appreciative to my peers especially my year mates at McCauley House of Formation in Nairobi for their support and encouragement they gave me when I shared with them my intention of writing on Ecclesiology of Communion.

STUDENTS' DECLARATION

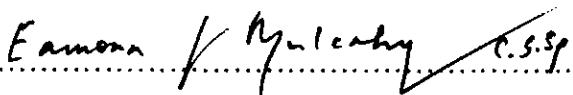
I, the undersigned, declare that this Long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading and research and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Baccalaureate in Theology.

Signed..... 

Name of Student..... MUHINDO LUKE

Date..... 15th April 2011

This essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

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Name of Supervisor..... EAMONN MULCAHY

Date..... 15th April 2011

ABBREVIATIONS

- CCC -----Catechism of the Catholic Church
- CEP -----Church Ecumenism and Politics
- Cf-----Confer
- ECC -----Ecumenical Council of Churches
- Ed-----Edited by
- KEE-----Kibera slums Ecumenical Encounter (found in Nairobi)
- KWEG----Kahawa West Ecumenical Group (found in Nairobi)
- LG -----Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)
- LWF -----Lutheran World Federation
- MSEN-----The Mastered Seed Ecumenical Network (found in Nairobi)
- PCPCU ----Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
- PWUC -----Prayer Week for the Union of Christians
- SCM -----Student Christian Movement
- SCC -----Small Christian Communities
- UEG-----Umoja Ecumenical Group (found in Nairobi)
- UUS -----Ut Unum Sint
- UR -----Unitatis Redintegratio
- YMCA ----Young Men's Christian Association
- WCC -----World Council of Churches
- WCCE ---- World Council of Christian Education
- WCMC ----World Council of the Methodist Churches
- WEA -----World Evangelical Alliance

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WMC -----The Methodist Council

WSSA ----World Sunday School Association

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Motivation

I developed an interest in writing about the Unity of Christians *communio Ecclesiology* when I attended an Ecumenical Symposium that took place at St. Paul's National major Seminary in Fort Portal western Uganda. The participants at the symposium were the Uganda Catholic Theology professors and priests, Orthodox Theologians, an Anglican bishop and priests, Seventh day Adventist pastors, some pastors from some Evangelical Churches from around Fort Portal, and some lay representatives from these Churches. The host was the Catholic Theology Seminary as they were celebrating the year of St. Paul. At the end of the symposium, there was an Ecumenical prayer service that was presided over by the Anglican bishop as he was being assisted by some Roman Catholic priests, an Orthodox priest and some Catholic deacons. My interest in Christian unity was further enhanced by my experience of hundreds of Christian ecclesial communities, and Sects within Nairobi city where I got an opportunity to interact through interviews with some members during my Theology research coursework on "African Independent Churches in February 2010. All these are working tirelessly day and night preaching, at times overshadowing different Radio and Television stations everyday.

The Problem

From the symposium, however, I observed a challenge which is one of the hindrances to the spreading of the Good News and also a hindrance to Christian spiritual development. On many occasions, Christians from different ecclesial communities have engaged in exchange of bitter words on the point of orthodoxy of and true faith yet all them claim preaching the Kingdom of God. The question thus is, if we all believe that we are God's children and that God destined us in his love and made us all his adopted sons and daughters through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1: 4-6), why then should we divide ourselves on the account of faith? When one of you says, "I follow Paul", and another "I follow Apollos", aren't you acting like worldly people (1Corinthians 3: 4)? They are the divisions among Christians, in form of churches, ecclesial communities, and sects, which I am looking into in this Long Essay but focusing on the Church in Kenya.

While we were at the symposium at St. Paul's National Seminary, the common question the majority participants were posing was, "why are we divided and where did these divisions come from and yet we are all preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus Christ has established for us and among us?" Some participants observed and commented that at present, what still brings a rift between especially Catholics and Protestants is the sharing of the Lord's Table yet this should have been the source of unity. Some went on to seek some clarification especially from the Catholic Theologians about what they called the "Catholic Eucharist". These were basically the

Protestant lay representatives who asked for this clarification. My point of departure of my Long Essay, which will also be my point of return, is therefore from Jesus' "Sacerdotal"¹ prayer for unity, when Jesus prayed for his disciples and the future disciples (Jn 17:11b). Since we are the future disciples that Christ prayed and desired unity for, it is a call and duty to each of us to promote this unity.

The Context

I have always wondered why there are so many fragmented Christian groups yet each claim holding to the mission of proclaiming Christ and the Kingdom he has established amongst us. There are numerous of these ecclesial Communities in Nairobi – Kenya whereby each claim authenticity to heralding the Good News of Christ. It is amidst this situation therefore that I wonder if we Christians can still claim living the unity Christ prayed for his disciples and the future disciples in the Gospel of John. This fragmentation of Christians still makes me wonder if there are traces of unity that Christ desired for his disciples and if not can this unity be worked for and be achieved?

Why then do I choose John 17:11b as my point of departure and point of return? Secondly, why have I named my Thesis a "Call to Unity"? Whenever a call is made, what is expected is always a response to that call.² Jesus, after accomplishing his entire ministry as presented by John, embarks on a prayer for unity. Jesus prays for his followers to remain united so that the work he had instituted may be continued through

¹ Cf. HANS KÜNG, *The Church*, 263.

² Cf. W. RUSSELL *Call and Response: The Call to Christian Unity*, 6

his followers³. This, therefore, means that those who have accepted to follow him, those who have been introduced to the Church through Baptism have this calling of working for unity that Christ had instituted and prayed for to prevail among them. Jesus, however, did not single out among his disciples who should continue his mission but it was a task for each follower of Christ. It was not also Jesus' desire that some of his followers separate from the entire college/ group to go on their own. Jesus' desire was that when his followers are united, the mission then will continue smoothly.⁴ It is, therefore, a challenge to me to reflect on how I have responded to this call, a call that is surely from Christ himself.

Articulation

I will make some observation on the various usage of the term *communio*, which I will constantly use from the Latin perspective. I will also be looking at various other terms used from the bible to mean *communio*. I will make an observation of a form of a paradigm shift in the usage of the term *communio* today. The observation is that today the discussion on communion is the discussion on "Ecumenism". My observation therefore leads me to pose certain questions:

1. Whenever we talk about Communion Ecclesiology, are we promoting ecumenism or Communion? Or what is the difference between Communion and ecumenism? Or do the two mean the same? Then, does communion of Churches

³ Cf. B. S. MARROW. *The Gospel of John*, 304

⁴ Cf. W. RUSSELL *Call and Response: The Call to Christian Unity*, 8

mean ecumenism? In the discussion of communion or ecumenism, are we trying to promote this unity Jesus prayed for or we are promoting uniformity?⁵

In this Long Essay, I equally wish to make some clarifications on the different terms used so often interchangeably about the Church. Or what do we mean when we talk of the Church, churches, and ecclesial communities. I will put all my work into four Chapters whereby in Chapter one I will look at the terminology of *Communio* from the biblical point of view and how the Christians of the early Church or the early centuries of the Church understood and lived in *Communio*. I will continue to look at their life in community as they were instructed from the *Didache*. In looking at the terminology of communion, I will look at it from its basis of *κοινωνία*; that is, from the Greek New Testament understanding. I will also look at communion in the Patristic time to see how the Christians in the Patristic period continued with the same practice of communing. I will then close chapter one looking at the brief history of the eventual divisions that erupted in the Church even though the Church had enjoyed the true communion in its early centuries. The purpose of looking into this history of the divisions is to check out how the divisions came about and what measures were always applied to resolve the division.

In chapter two, I will look at the meaning of *Communio* as used by the Church. I will call this chapter a doctrinal chapter looking at the teaching of the Church; that is, from the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. I will venture into their propositions about Christian unity looking at the advancements of ecumenism. I will discuss still in this chapter the importance of sacraments of initiation, that is, the sacrament of Baptism

⁵ Cf. W. RUSSELL *The Catholic Church and Eastern Churches*, 8

which introduces each of the baptized into communion and the sacrament of the Eucharist which is communion itself and the centre of our calling to communion. I will also look at the extra-ordinary synod of bishops in Rome on its priority of ecumenism and their suggestions on Christian unity. I will also look at the advancements and propositions of the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian unity about ecumenism. I will thus discuss about the Primacy of Peter and unity of Churches.

Chapter three is a consideration of unity of churches or ecclesial communities in Kenya. This chapter will first introduce the universal fruits of ecumenism as given by Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Walter Cardinal Kasper the former president of the pontifical commission for promoting unity. The chapter then evaluates the involvement of the Catholic Church of Kenya in the ecumenical movement. The reason for this evaluation is to find out if Christian unity is relevant to the Church of Kenya by practice.

Chapter four is the general introduction pointing out my personal recommendations and suggestions on Christian unity in the Kenya with emphasis on the African fraternity and solidarity as the model of Christian unity.

This Long Essay, therefore, is an examination of the reality of the Church in Kenya as *communio*, as I assess it from the biblical context of the term *κοινωνία*, by looking at its historical, theological, and practical way of living *Koinonia* in the Church of Kenya.

Purpose

I want to explore how the Church is so fundamental in leading the faithful to the *communio* with each other and with God. I also want to explore the fact that our expression of faith in God and being in Communion with Him is not an individual mission, but a joint mission. This is to highlight a positive attitude towards the different Christian Communities and to challenge each one to work for unity of Christian Churches and encourage the process of Ecumenism. I am also underlining the fact that living in Communion as brothers and sisters is a participation in the life of the Triune God. Thus, when we are in *communio* we will realize that we are “a people brought into one by the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”⁶ and this is the work of the Spirit.

Definition of Key Terms of this Long Essay: Church, *Communio* Ecclesiology, Ecumenism, and *Koinonia*

What is Church?

In this Long Essay, we will constantly come across various names associated with the Church. Terms such as Church, churches, ecclesial communities, are all used in this Long Essay. What do they really mean? The Second Vatican Council was so instrumental in defining these terms as used for the Church.

A Church in the proper sense, as we understand it, exists, where the Episcopal office, as the Sacramental expression of apostolic succession, is present, which also implies the existence of the Eucharist as a Sacrament that is dispensed by the Bishop

⁶ Cf. M. L. T SHANAHANN. *Church: A Spirited Communion*, 1995

and the priests. Besides this, the Council Fathers said then we are talking of another model of a new understanding what a Church is. The Second Vatican Council Fathers then called this new model of Church as, “ecclesial community”. So an ecclesial community embodies a different mode of being a Church. This mode is not the same mode in which the Churches of the great tradition of antiquity are Churches. These ecclesial communities are based on a new understanding according to which a Church consists, not in the institution, but in the dynamism of the word that gathers people into a congregation. However, the Second Vatican Council Fathers used the term Church referring to the oriental Churches but not to those Christian communities that were born out of the reformation. The oriental ones are called Churches because the Council Fathers wanted to retain the traditional use of the term to these Churches that have true Sacraments and also because of the apostolic succession. The Christian communities born out of reformation have no apostolic succession and have no Sacramental Priesthood; they are therefore called “ecclesial communities”.⁷

What is Communion Ecclesiology?

The ecclesiology of communion brings to us to the understanding of what the Church is. Comparing the understanding the Church today with the dominant ecclesiology that prevailed in the century before the Vatican Council II, John Fuellenbach, using the models of the Church as advanced by Avery Dulles says that there is a kind of paradigm shift in the understanding of the Church⁸. Fuellenbach says

⁷ BENEDICT XVII, *Light of the World*, 95.

⁸ Cf. J. FUELLENBACH *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, 147

that this new approach today of describing the Church is known as *communion ecclesiology*. Thus communion ecclesiology represents an attempt to move beyond the merely juridical and institutional understandings by emphasizing the mystical, sacramental, and historical dimensions of the Church. It focuses on relationships, whether among the persons of the Trinity, among human beings and God, among the members of the communion of the saints, among members of a parish, or among the bishops dispersed throughout the world⁹. It emphasizes the dynamic interplay between the Church universal and the local churches. Fuellenbach continues saying that Communion ecclesiology stresses that the Church is not simply the receiver of revelation, but as the mystical body of Christ is bound up with revelation itself. The purpose of Communion ecclesiology therefore according to Fuellenbach in his book 'Church: Community for the Kingdom', aims at personal growth through interpersonal relationships in the community. He says that this interpersonal relationship is to the Triune God or to the members themselves. This according to Fuellenbach is what defines what the Church is all about.¹⁰

The etymological Understanding of the Term *Communio*

From the Latin perspective, the term communion has various terms associated with it. There is, for example, *communis*, which means "common". This is derived from '*cum munus* – common-duty, common task, common understanding. There are other Latin equivalents such as congregation, *societas*, *coetus*, *adunatio*, *corpus*, *communio*,

⁹ Cf. J. FUELLENBACH *Church: Community for the Kingdom* 147

¹⁰ Cf. J. FUELLENBACH *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, 147

populus, ecclesia, each with a specification such as *fidelium* or *Christianorum*, as in *communio fidelium* (communion of the faithful)¹¹.

Communion translates the Greek word *koinonia*. This connotes common possession, solidarity, and co-responsibility. This *koinonia* is shown in the earliest Jerusalem Church that devoted itself to the Apostles' teaching and communion (Acts 2:42) and had everything in common. This is *Panta koina* (Acts 4:32)¹²

What is Ecumenism?

The noun "ecumenism" and the adjective "ecumenical" are derived from the Greek word *oikoumene* which is used in the New Testament to mean the Roman Empire (Lk 2:1) or simply, the whole world (Mtt 24:14). Gradually the term came to refer to the whole Church, as opposed to that which is partial¹³. The word currently expresses the modern Christian movement that is concerned with the unity and renewal of the Church and its relationship to God's reconciling and renewing mission through creation.

What is *Koinonia*?

Koinonia is a Greek term that means communion by intimate participation.¹⁴ In the New Testament, the word *κοινωνία* is frequently used to describe the relationship within the early Christian Church as well as the act of breaking bread in the manner which Christ prescribed during the Passover meal (Jn 6: 48-69, Mt 26: 26-28, 1 Cor 10: 16, 1 Cor

¹¹ Cf. M. DOWNET., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 183

¹² Cf. M. G. MIGUEL., *Communion of Saints: Foundation, Nature, and Structure of the Church*, 100

¹³ Cf. K. MICHAEL -- E. C. BRIAN (ed), *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, 1.

¹⁴ Cf. L. NICHOLAS (ed), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* 648

11: 24. The term *κοινωνια*, therefore, as it is used in the New Testament, refers to the idealized state of fellowship and community that should exist and this is communion.¹⁵

¹⁵ Cf. P.AVIS, *Christians in Communion*, 14

CHAPTER I:

Communio in the New Testament and Early Christian Life

1.0. Introduction:

1.1 THE EARLY CHURCH

The Christians of the early Church lived a very good example of the Church as communion. Their life together was admirable for they held everything in common and nor indeed was any one among them in want. (Acts 4:32-37). Their way of living meant having common possession, solidarity, co-responsibility, having fellowships together and sharing or partaking of the bread and wine which is the Lord's Table. In Paul's view of living in communion, the fruits that we derive from sharing in communion should be taken beyond a particular community. This means that there is going outside to proclaim this communion with others. "For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem" (Romans 15:26); this means that the Church at Macedonia and Achaia came together with a mission of helping the poor at Jerusalem. *Communio* living in the Apostolic and the early Church was so significant in the lives of the then Christians.

1.2. The Early Christian Sense of Unity

In the early decades of the Church, Christianity remained a minority movement that it was even subjected to periodic persecutions¹⁶. In the first three centuries, for example, the infant Church was subjected to hostile pressure from the Roman civil authority. This was the time when the emperor was supposed to be given religious homage as an integral part of civic loyalty and duty. In 117AD Pliny the younger governor of Bithynia and Emperor Trajan were so hostile to Christians and looked at them as criminals who deserved to be tried and executed¹⁷. These persecutions, therefore, made the Christian communities to develop strong bonds with each other within a given locality. The Church was equally conditioned by the limits of ancient travel and means of communication. Contact with other Christians was, therefore, for the most part limited to ones own local community of believers. In this sense Gaillardetz in his book, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent*, says that the Christians of the early Church remained bound by unity even if the nature of their bonds were not always clearly articulated.¹⁸

The Christians of the early Church especially of the first and second centuries, moreover, never had any universally agreed upon canon of scriptures, no creed except a few brief interrogatory baptismal formulae, no universally accepted organizational structures, no standard liturgical books. Yet in all these, the Christians still believed themselves to be united in faith. At their gatherings in local community, they were

¹⁶ Cf. C.J BARRY. *Readings in Church History*, 75

¹⁷ Cf. C.J. BARRY, *Readings in Church History*, 75.

¹⁸ Cf. R R.GAILARDETZ *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A people Called and Sent*, 86

God's holy people, the body of Christ in that place and they were also spiritually united with other such communities.¹⁹

The Christians of the early Church too understood communion as the bond of unity between bishops and the faithful, the bishops with one another, the faithful with one another, which is effective and simultaneously manifest through the Eucharistic communion. The understanding was that:

1. Each belongs to that Church where he or she receives communion
2. If anyone establishes another communion, then he or she establishes another Church. The opposite of living in communion was ex-communication.²⁰

For this matter, any bishop could ex-communicate any other and if other bishops did stand by this bishop (ex-communicated), then excommunication fell back onto this bishop ex-communicating. Later however, life in koinonia was regulated by the synods where the bishops ex-communicated in synod and solved many other problems through synods. In 268 for example, Paul of Samosata bishop of Antioch was ex-communicated by a synod.²¹

1.3. The *Didache* and Communion:

What was the *Didache*? The term *didache* comes from Greek, which means the teaching of the Lord through the twelve apostles to the Nations. It is one of the works of the Apostolic Fathers; a brief manual of discipline that dates to the mid-second century, although it is primitive, its character suggests that its origin may be much earlier.²²

¹⁹ Cf. R R.GAILARDEZ *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A people Called and Sent*, 86

²⁰ . Cf. M.M. GARIJO-GUEMBE, *Communion of the Saints: Nature and Structure of the Church*, 215

²¹ . Cf. M.M. GARIJO-GUEMBE, *Communion of the Saints: Nature and Structure of the Church* 215

²² Cf. *The Concise Dictionary of Early Church*, 43

From the ancient *didache*, the Church is clearly seen as a communion of the broken bread that was scattered upon the mountains but was brought together and became one. This is from the prayer recorded from the ancient *didache* that says:

“as this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but brought together and become one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth, into thy kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever” (9:4). This is a prayer for the Church scattered north, east, south, and west and the prayer continues, “Remember Lord, thy Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in thy love, and gather it together in its holiness from the four winds to thy Kingdom which thou has prepared for it”(10:5). The above articles from the *didache* shows how the Church is to stay together in unity. This unity was to be viewed through the exchange of letters, synodal meetings, financial collections for the needy, exchange of hospitality and even theological disputations.²³

Besides the prayer of the broken bread scattered upon the mountains, the *didache* takes profoundly the breaking of bread together. The *didache* proposes Eucharistic rituals that are firmly rooted in the tradition of Jewish prayer or the *berakoth* (*didache* 10- *birkat ha-mazon*. This is the Thanksgiving prayer at the end of the Jewish supper. This Eucharistic meal according to the *didache* was to bring together in communion the people or believers in Christ.²⁴

The *didache* also shows that Baptism is the only way for one to enter into the communion of the faithful. In fact, nobody who was not baptized was allowed to

²³ Cf. C.P. PHAN, *The Gift of The Church: A Text Book on Ecclesiology* 111

²⁴ Cf. W.V. D. DUNGEN, *The Diache: The Handbook of some early pneumatic Jewish Christians*

participate into the 'higher' mystery of the Eucharist. In addition to participating in the mystery of the Eucharist, the *didache* proposed praying the Lord's Prayer three times a day. This Lord's Prayer was to prepare the Christian assembly for the Eucharistic mystery. At the end of the Eucharist, the assembly was to give Thanks to the Lord. Therefore, the *didache* regarded the Eucharist just as in the Catholic Church today as the cornerstone of the salvic work in Christ. Sharing in this *communio* needed one to have been baptized.²⁵

After sharing the Holy Communion, the *didache* shows the embolism or a prayer for gathering with the belief that Jesus Christ is the broken bread and feeds his community. Why this prayer for gathering? The gathering is a symbolic representation or foretaste of the eschatological unification. Chapter Ten of the *didache* shows this Thanksgiving prayer in this way:

We give thanks to you, O Holy Father, for your Holy Name which you made to live in our hearts, and for the knowledge, the faith and the immortality which you did made to us though Jesus your servant. To you belongs the glory forever. You, Lord Almighty, did create all things through your name, and did give food and drink to men for their enjoyment, that they might give thanks to you, but us have you blessed with spiritual food, drink and eternal light through your servant. Above all, we give thanks to you because you are mighty. Yours is the glory forever. Remember, Lord, to deliver your Church from all evil and to make in your love, and gather it together from the four winds, holy in your kingdom which you have prepared for it. For yours are the power and the glory forever. Let grace come and let this world pass away. *Hosannah* to the God of David. If any man be holy, let him come! If any man be not, let him repent. *Marana tha!* Amen. But permit the prophets to hold the Eucharist as they see fit.²⁶

The faithful said this prayer in anticipation of the second coming (*parousia*) of Jesus Christ. The gathering together is for the perfect Church, seen as 'holy' in the Kingdom

²⁵ Cf. W.V. D. DUNGEN, *The Diache: The Handbook of some early pneumatic Jewish Christians*

²⁶ Cf. W.V. D. DUNGEN, *The Diache: The Handbook of some early pneumatic Jewish Christians*

of God. The unity of the bread-Christ is the necessary condition for the unity of the pure Church. The *parousia* however was the central liturgical concept of the Christians of the *didache*.²⁷

In chapter 14 of the *didache*, living a harmonious communal life was central in the life of Christians, which was their prayer after receiving Holy Communion. Before the believers gathered for the Eucharist, confessing each one's transgressions was so important. This was because they wanted to offer to God a pure sacrifice. No one who had a quarrel with a fellow member was allowed to participate in the Eucharist. This was a quotation from Jesus' teaching; "In a very place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the Nations". The *didache* therefore suggested a communal hierarchy to ensure and preserve unity among the Christians. They then appointed bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, meek men disinterested in money, truthful, and approved as per the instructions given in the *didache*.²⁸

The *didache* still encouraged the Christians to always seek daily contact with the saints in order to be refreshed by their discourses. By the saints here the *didache* was referring to the people of God, those who are in communion with Father. On this note still, the *didache* castigated and discouraged the starting of any form of schism²⁹. The *didache* discouraged distinctions between man and man when correcting transgressions instead, it encouraged solving issues amicably and remain united.

²⁷ Cf. W.V. D. DUNGEN, *The Diache: The Handbook of some early pneumatic Jewish Christians*

²⁸ Cf. W.V. D. DUNGEN, *The Diache: The Handbook of some early pneumatic Jewish Christians*

²⁹ Cf. W.V. D. DUNGEN, *The Diache: The Handbook of some early pneumatic Jewish Christians*

The *didache* too castigated the practice of coming to the Lord's Table after one has had a quarrel with a brother or sister or has issues with a fellow brother or sister. The *didache* therefore encouraged the Christians to always first confess their sins so that their sacrifice must be pure. "No one quarrelling with his brother may join your meeting until they are reconciled; your sacrifice must not be defiled. For here we have the saying of the Lord: in every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice; for I am a mighty king, says the Lord; and my name spreads terror among the Nations"³⁰. The *didache* adds, "Correct one another not in anger, but in composure, as you have it in the gospel; and when anyone offends his neighbor, let no one speak with him – in fact, he should not even be talked about by you until he has made amends".³¹

1.4.1. Basis of *Koinonia* in the New Testament

Koinonia is a Greek term that means communion by intimate participation.³² In the New Testament, the word *κοινωνία* is frequently used to describe the relationship within the early Christian Church as well as the act of breaking bread in the manner which Christ prescribed during the Passover meal (Jn 6: 48-69, Mt 26: 26-28, 1 Cor 10: 16, 1 Cor 11: 24). The term *κοινωνία*, therefore, as it is used in the New Testament, refers to the idealized state of fellowship and community that should exist and this is communion.³³ When Jesus Christ joins with the community of the faithful, this union becomes the basis of communion. This union is also experienced in practical daily life.

³⁰ Cf. J.B. COLMAN (ed), *Readings in Church History* 26-27

³¹ Cf. J.B. COLMAN (ed), *Readings in Church History* 26-27

³² Cf. L. NICHOLAS (ed), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* 648

³³ Cf. P. AVIS, *Christians in Communion*, 14

Paul says that, “it is no longer I who lives, but it is Christ who lives in me”. This explains a kind of union that occurs when Christ joins with the Community or an individual. Thus for Paul, our *koinonia* is with the Son of God (1 Cor. 1:9).³⁴ The same bonds that link the individual to Jesus also link him or her with the other faithful. This bond is described by the New Testament letters as so vital that a deep level of intimacy can be experienced among the members of a local Church.³⁵

Paul’s original usage of the term *koinonia* in the early Latin translations of the Greek Bible makes it to be: *communio*, *societas*, *participatio*, or *communicatio*.³⁶ Thus *koinonia* is so rich in meaning that its richness is seen in the societal or community building in the spirit of working together for a common purpose of goodness towards social relationships in the society.

In the early Apostolic Church, *communio* in the Church came to be expressed in letter writing, offering of money to needy people, bishops’ participation at regional gathering, laying on of hands at the consecration of bishops in neighboring churches, mutual consultations about disciplinary and doctrinal issues, and sharing in the Eucharistic fellowships with other Christians in distant churches. At the sharing of the Eucharist, there was a ritual system of breaking a piece of the Eucharistic bread before the communion rite called *fractio panis*. This piece was sent to the neighbouring churches to express visibly the communion that exists among churches.³⁷

³⁴ Cf. P. AVIS, *Christian in Communion*, 15

³⁵ Cf. P.M. RICHARD(ed), *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* 339

³⁶ Cf. P.M. RICHARD (ed), *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* 339

³⁷ Cf. P.M. RICHARD (ed), *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* 337

1.4.2. What is the Meaning of *Koinonia*?

Koinonia, denotes the idea of joint participation. Joint participation leads to development of social structures, rather than working at an individualistic level. As a proverb in Kikonzo a Ugandan local language says; “*Awali haghuma wakathulha erikuha*” literary meaning that with joint effort, the teeth break a bone (in search for marrow) but one tooth cannot manage to break the bone. As far as communion is concerned, working together as community or as team work builds community. We can, therefore, say that communion is the effect of God’s mercy and faithfulness shown towards those to whom the gift of faith is bestowed. This closest union of humans with God and with one’s neighbours is accomplished through the Holy Spirit. In the early Church, being outside the full fellowship of the Church, that is, being outside *communio*, *societas*, *participatio*, or *communicatio*, meant that one is in *ex-communicatio*.³⁸

Κοινωνία also means sharing. *Koinonos*, which means a ‘sharer’, denotes a spirit of sharing possessions among the community members or people who have come together for a common purpose. This means that when people are in *κοινωνία*, they become *κοινωνοσ* in a possession and are all equal sharers. This sharing may mean having business dealings, can mean sharing an opinion with someone. What is shared here is the common ground that makes *κοινωνία* real. Thus this *κοινωνία* builds relationships.³⁹

³⁸ Cf. P. AVIS, *Christians in Communion*, 16

³⁹ Cf. L. NICHOLAS (ed), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* 648

From the various usages of the term *koinonia* from the New Testament and from the early Church we can, therefore, say that *koinonia* means a creation of a bond. Fellowshiping together as *κοινωνία* becomes possible through the Holy Spirit as Paul puts it, and creates a mutual bond which overrides each individual's pride, sharing joys and troubles. This provides a joint participation and denotes common possession of spiritual values since in fellowship there is acting together and not only being together.⁴⁰

1.5. 0. COMMUNION IN THE PATRISTIC TIME:

1.5.1. Tertullian on Communion

Kilian McDonnell in his article on communion in the *Journal Theological Studies* presents the understanding of Tertullian of his ecclesiology of communion and Baptism in the Spirit. McDonnell presents Tertullian as having looked at the origin of communion from the transcendental move of God towards the world in sending the Son, who in turn commissioned the Apostles, who founded the Churches in various cities. Each Church in each city is a communion, but that which binds apostolic city to apostolic city and to other Churches in other cities is communion in doctrine.⁴¹ McDonnell quotes Tertullian on the apostolic communion; "we are in communion with the apostolic Churches because our doctrine in no way differs from theirs; this is a

⁴⁰ Cf. P.M. RICHARD (ed), *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* 339

⁴¹ Cf. K. MCDONNELL, "Communion Ecclesiology and Baptism in the Spirit", 676

sign of truth".⁴² Thus, to prove the unity that existed among the Churches McDonnell quotes Tertullian saying that the Churches gave each other the peace, they called each other brothers; they showed hospitality to one another. McDonnell thus says that these were indicators of communion in the Patristic Churches. But for those Churches which had fallen into heresy, McDonnell quotes Tertullian as having said that:

Under no pretext do the apostolic Churches receive them in the peace and communion... The very fact of their being deprived of communion is witness to their aliens... Thus, the exclusion, of heretics from communion meant that the heretics had a different baptism.⁴³

This reasoning, however, was ultimately rejected by the Church but behind this sacramental exclusion was a profound communion ecclesiology.⁴⁴

1.5.2. St. Ignatius of Antioch on Communion (110)

Looking at the Church and the pagan world by then, bishop Ignatius of Antioch in 110 wrote seven epistles to the Churches. He wrote an epistle to the Christians of Ephesus encouraging them to be united by communing at the table of the Lord. He thus says;

Make an effort to come more frequently to celebrate God's Eucharist and to offer praise. For when you meet frequently in the same place, the forces of Satan are overthrown, and his baneful influence is neutralized by the unanimity of your faith. Peace is a precious thing. It puts an end to every war waged by heavenly or earthly enemies.⁴⁵

For Ignatius besides gathering together for a common meal, celebrating and coming together for communion, was a way of avoiding the forces of the devil.⁴⁶

⁴² Cf. K. MCDONNELL, "Communion Ecclesiology and Baptism in the Spirit", 677

⁴³ Cf. K. MCDONNELL, "Communion Ecclesiology and Baptism in the Spirit", 677

⁴⁴ Cf. K. MCDONNELL, "Communion Ecclesiology and Baptism in the Spirit", 671

⁴⁵ Cf. C.J BARRY (ed), *Readings in Church History*, 23

⁴⁶ Cf. C.J BARRY (ed), *Readings in Church History*, 23

1.5.3. St. Cyprian of Carthage on the Unity of the Churches (251)

Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, writes in 251 about the unity of the Church. It seems the Christian community by then had started getting some challenges of disunity, heretics that were threatening the unity of the Church. Cyprian looks at the Church as one and he emphasizes in his writing on that “oneness of the Church”. Quoting St. Paul’s teaching on the mystery of oneness, Cyprian writes, “one body and one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God”. We should, therefore, as Cyprian says, hold firmly to this oneness. Cyprian then advises his fellow bishops that they, who are the symbol of unity in their dioceses, should firmly hold on and promote this unity. Cyprian adds that the authority of the bishops forms the unity⁴⁷.

Cyprian on unity uses a variety of analogies to demonstrate this oneness. He says,

Just as the sun’s rays are many, yet the strength deriving from its sturdy root is one, so too, though many streams flow from a single spring, though its multiplicity seems scattered abroad by the copiousness abides by reason of their starting point. Cut off one of the sun’s rays – the unity of that body permits no such division of its light; break off a branch from the tree, it can bud no more; dam off our Lord’s Church is radiant with light and pours her rays over the whole world; but it is one and the same light which is spread everywhere, and the unity of her body suffers no division. She spreads her branches in generous growth over all the earth, she extends her abundant streams ever further; yet one is the head-spring, one the source, one the mother who is prolific in her offspring, generation after generation; of her womb are we born, of her milk are we fed, of her spirit our souls draw their life-breath.

Cyprian is trying to ague the Christians to remain united to their faith. Cyprian famously says that, “you cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother”. Cyprian further quotes from the teaching of Jesus Christ that, “he that

⁴⁷ Cf. C.J.BARRY (ed), *Readings in Church History*, 62

is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth". This as Cyprian explains, means, "whoever breaks the peace and harmony of Christ acts against Christ; whoever gathers elsewhere than in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ". Cyprian adds quoting from the Lord's teaching that, "I and the Father are one; and again of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit it is written; and the three are one". For Cyprian, this unity is to be kept by Christians and if one does not keep this unity, Cyprian says that he is not keeping the law of God; he has lost his faith about Father and Son, he has lost his life and his Soul.⁴⁸

Giving support to one another is one of the important issues Cyprian is raising. Cyprian continues to argue the Christians to support one another, with love, and, to strive to keep unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace. Cyprian then asks, "Do you think a man can hold his own or survive, when he leaves the Church and sets up a new place and separate home for himself?"⁴⁹ This is an emphasis Cyprian is making about staying in communion as we give support to one another.

Cyprian gives another analogy by reflecting carefully on the life of the dove, which he says, that because of its joyous nature, living together in a form of community, the Holy Spirit comes in the form of a dove.

A dove is a simple joyous creature, not bitter with gall, not biting savagely, without vicious tearing claws; it loves to dwell with humankind, it keeps to one house for assembling; when they mate they hatch their young together; when they fly anywhere they keep their formation; the resorts they live in are shared in common; by their billing too, they pay tribute to concord and peace; in all things they fulfill the law of unanimity.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Cf. C.J. BARRY (ed), *Readings in Church History*, 62

⁴⁹ Cf. C.J. BARRY (ed), *Readings in Church History* 62

⁵⁰ Cf. C.J. BARRY (ed), *Readings in Church History*, 65

Cyprian says this is the Church we should learn, the charity we must acquire; we should imitate such a life living with and loving our brethren. This according to Cyprian calls for meekness and gentleness.⁵¹

Cyprian thus castigates any form of schism. Cyprian likens those who chose to break away from the Church to the chaff that is swept away by the storm. He says that good people cannot leave the Church; he adds, “It is not the grain that the wind carries away, nor the solidly rooted tree that the storm blows down; it is the empty chaff that is swept away by the storm, the weakling trees that are overturned by the blast of the whirlwind. On these people fall the curse and the rod of John the Apostle when he says; “They went out from us, but they were not for us, for if they had been for us, they would have stayed with us”⁵². Cyprian’s intention was to ague the brethren or believers to remain united such that not even one of the brethren is swayed away and perish. He was writing to caution the believers against the heresies of the time that were a threat to the unity of the Church⁵³.

1.5.4. St. Augustine on Communion

Tillard from his book *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ: At the Source of the Ecclesiology of Communion* (2001) says that St. Augustine expresses a very clear link between the Eucharist and the Church. From his best known document probably sermon 227, a homily given on Easter morning for those baptized during the paschal night; Augustine could talk to the newly Baptised emphasizing on the Eucharist. Augustine

⁵¹ Cf. C.J. BARRY (ed), *Readings in Church History* 62

⁵² Cf. C.J. BARRY (ed), *Readings in Church History* 62

⁵³ Cf. C.J. BARRY (ed), *Readings in Church History*, 65

explained the unity of the Church by giving an analogy of the components of bread.⁵⁴ He could thus ask, “Was that loaf made from one grain? Weren’t there many grains of wheat? But before they came into a loaf they were all separate; they were joined together by means of water after a certain amount of pounding and crushing”.

Augustine then explained that:

Unless wheat is ground, after all, and moistened with water, it cannot possibly get into this shape which is called bread. In the same way you, too, were being ground and pounded as it were, by the humiliation of fasting and the sacrament of exorcism. Then came baptism, and you were in a manner of speaking, moistened with water in order to be shaped into bread. But it is not yet bread without fire to bake it. Fire represents Christ, the anointing and this is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵

This was however the time when the eastern and western Churches were still united and Augustine was emphasizing the fact and love for unity in the analogy of loaf of bread. Augustine, then, made it clear that the Church is not the sum total of the baptized, but “common life” that is, their communion, which reaches all the way into God. And it is the Eucharist that is the sacrament of this. The banquet of the Lord is the unity of the body of Christ, not only in the sacrament of the altar, but also in the bond of peace. Therefore, “As there are many grains of wheat in the flour of which bread is made by mixing it with water and baking it with fire, so also we know that many members makeup the one body of Christ which is brought to maturity by the fire of the Holy Spirit?”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Cf. J.M.R. TILLARD, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*, 39

⁵⁵ Cf. J.M.R. TILLARD, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*, 40

⁵⁶ Cf. J.M.R. TILLARD, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*, 51

1.6. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH

The early Church, though her emphasis was on communal living, sharing the Lord's Table with a common hope of *parousia*, did not escape the misunderstandings among believers that at later culminated into divisions among themselves. As the Church progressed, some misunderstandings developed into schisms and thus various Christians denominations. These misunderstandings were mainly caused by lack of agreement on a certain doctrine, sometimes divisions were based on discipline, or about the structures of the Church. However, whenever there was a misunderstanding, the Church believed in solving issues amicably⁵⁷. At times a consensus was reached or at times not.

Luke in the Acts of the Apostles presents a division that happened among the believers. This is the first division in the Church in the New Testament.⁵⁸ This division arose because some believers – Jewish Christians insisted that the gentile converts must first become Jews before they could become Christians. This meant that they had to be circumcised before they could be baptized. These were the Judaisers who took this proposition. The Church at this time was still young and growing. This issue caused a rift among the believers until a council was called in 49AD. The resolution was reached at with Paul's teaching insisting on faith in the risen Lord. The resolution was then

⁵⁷ Cf. W. RUSSELL, *Call and Response: The Call to Christian Unity*, 11

⁵⁸ Cf. W. RUSSELL, *Call and Response: The Call to Christian Unity*, 10

made recognising that it not just human teaching but divine and then the uncircumcised were freely allowed to join Christianity by their faith (Acts 15:16-21)⁵⁹

Another major division in the Church came with the theological heresies of the 3rd -4th centuries. The first and major heresy in this period that divided the Church was the heresy of Arianism. The question here centered on whether God the Son, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, is really God in the sense that God the Father is God. Arius, a priest of Alexandria, aided by bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia, advanced the teaching of Lucian of Antioch that the Unity of God necessitates subordinating Christ, the Son of God, to a position of foremost creature and creator. Christ is thus not God. The heresy led to the calling of the Council Nicea by Emperor Constantine who had just converted to Christianity and wanted Christianity to be the model in the Roman Empire. The Council of bishops was called in 325 and it condemned the heresy of Arius. The Council then came up with the Nicene Creed, which affirmed that Jesus, although fully and truly man, is also fully and truly God, the Son from all eternity therefore he is *ὁμοούσιος* with the Father.⁶⁰

Around 480 AD, the Assyrian Church of the East declared herself opposed to the doctrine of the Council of Ephesus. The Council had sat in 431 because there was a misunderstanding that had risen about the best title to call Mary; “The mother of God – *Theotokos*”. Since the Church is a *communio* of local Churches scattered in different parts of the world, the Assyrian Church, having opposed the teaching that Mary is the mother of God, decided to break-away from communion with the rest of the Church.

⁵⁹ Cf. W. RUSSELL, *Call and Response: The Call to Christian Unity*, 10

⁶⁰ Cf. W. RUSSELL *Call and Response: The Call to Christian Unity* 21

The Assyrian broke away from the Church in the west (Latin). The Assyrian Church however continued to be a strong Church for many centuries. Some bishops of the Assyrian Church from 16th century have come back to seek for *communio* with the Rome. These Assyrian Christians in *communio* with Rome are called *Chaldean Church*.⁶¹ They however maintain their traditional way of celebrating the Eucharist “*Uniate Churches* and at times they are called Eastern Rite Catholic Churches”⁶².

The teaching of the two natures of Christ also caused some separation among Christians. This led to the calling of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 to resolve the confusion. The Council Fathers at Chalcedon taught that in Christ there are two distinct natures; one being his human nature and the other his divine nature. It also taught that these two natures, nevertheless, come together in his one ‘person’. Some local Churches however accepted the teaching and others rejected it. Those that rejected the teaching are called the Ancient Oriental Churches (Eastern) or at times are called ‘non-Chalcedonian Churches’⁶³.

The Church, in 1054, experienced yet another crisis that led to the separation between the Eastern and Western Churches. This crisis is termed as the Great Schism of 1054. The split between the Greek speaking Eastern and the Latin speaking Western traditions was along doctrinal, theological, linguistic, political, and geographical lines. There was struggle between Rome and Constantinople over five dioceses in southern Italy, disagreements over the missions in Slavonic countries and Bulgaria, different views over Papal authority, and above all was the dogmatic disagreement on the issue of

⁶¹ Cf. W. RUSSELL *Call and Response: The Call to Christian Unity* 23-24

⁶² Cf. W. RUSSELL *Call and Response: The Call to Christian Unity* 24

⁶³ Cf. J.B. COLMAN (ed), *Readings in Church History* 621 -626

the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son, and the insertion of “and the Son (Filioque)” into the Creed. The statement: “and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*” became the direct cause for the schism.⁶⁴ The split, however, led to the modern Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Since the time of the Arian heresy, the most severe blow to unity suffered by Church is said to be the breaking away of the several Protestant Churches which was the result of the 16th century Reformation in the Church. Some of the main Protestant Churches that sprung up at the reformation were Lutherans, Anglicans Calvinists and Anabaptists. The results of the reformation were not only the disunity that was caused in the Church but consequently led to warfare, imprisonment, and massacres. This was especially between the Catholics and the new group of Protestants. In France, for example, the Huguenots became influential among the middle classes and began public attacks on Catholics. King Charles IX, for example, authorized a sudden attack known as the St. Bartholomew day massacre that claimed thousands of lives and many others forced into exile.⁶⁵

The Council of Trent was called from 1545 -1563 to set an agenda for true reform, and took the means to see that its pronouncements were carried out. The Council put into effect a program for the Catholic Church that would last throughout the modern period, until the Second Vatican Council of 1962 – 1965. The Council of Trent defined the belief and life of Catholicism, and its way of being in the new Europe. It

⁶⁴ Cf. A. GEARGE, *The Great Schism*, 23

⁶⁵ Cf. N. BROCKMAN., *A History of the Catholic Church*, 109.

also created a spirit of Evangelism that would extend Catholicism to the end of the earth.⁶⁶

From the history of divisions in the Catholic Church, several events have caused rifts and these events are basically centred on the orthodoxy or on doctrine. There was always, however, means that the elders of the Church reached and this has always been through Ecumenical Councils.

⁶⁶ Cf. N. BROCKMAN., *A History of the Catholic Church*, 113

CHAPTER II:

The Teaching of the Church: Doctrinal

2.0. Introduction

This chapter shows what the Catholic Church teaches about *communio* in general. The ecclesiology of *communio* has been hailed as one of the major achievements of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, Cardinal Walter Kasper puts it clearly that, “for the Church, there is only one way into the future: the way that is pointed out by the Council, the full implementation of the Council and its *communio* ecclesiology. This is the way which God’s spirit has shown us”⁶⁷. This was further stated by the extra-ordinary synod of bishops of 1985 where the bishops affirmed that the ecclesiology of *communio* is the central and fundamental idea of the Second Vatican Council documents. In this chapter, therefore, I am looking at the teaching of the Church on communion.

2.1. The Second Vatican Council on Communion

The Council Fathers at the Second Vatican Council on November 21, 1964 issued a decree on ecumenism which they named *Unitatis Redintegratio* whereby restoration of Christian unity is one of the major concerns of the Council. The Fathers at the Council reflected back on the communion our Lord Jesus Christ desires for his

⁶⁷ Cf. The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod

people. The Fathers, thus, castigated the divisions among Christians and put it that, “divisions contradict the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature” (UR 1)⁶⁸. The Fathers, however, acknowledged that there is that inner longing for unity among many Christians from their own denominations. Observing this longing within Christians in their various denominations, the Fathers at the Second Vatican Council therefore sought to put guidelines to help everyone respond well to what the Fathers called the *grace of divine call – the Unity* (UR 1)⁶⁹

The Fathers reflected on Jesus’ prayer for unity before he offered himself as a sacrifice up on the altar of the cross. They also reflected on the wonderful Sacrament of the Eucharist that Jesus instituted by which the unity of the Church is both signified and brought about. Jesus then gave his followers the new commandment to love one another and thereafter he promised the Spirit, their advocate who as Lord and life giver should remain with them forever. With this the Fathers of the Council teach that Jesus Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only, which he entrusted to the college of the twelve to teach, rule, and sanctify with Peter as their head (UR 2).⁷⁰

The Fathers at the Council do recognize the fact that along the history, separations between Christians did occur due to doctrine, discipline, and the structure of the Church; and that these divisions surely create obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The Council Fathers pointed out the concept of the *separated brethren*. Concerning these separated brethren, the fathers teach that

⁶⁸ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 408

⁶⁹ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 408

⁷⁰ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 409

justification comes by faith in Baptism. Therefore, it is true that all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; the separated brethren are therefore having that right of being called Christians and with good reason are accepted as brothers and sisters by the children of the Catholic Church. The Fathers added that the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using these separated brethren as means of salvation (*UR 3*)⁷¹. This was a great achievement in the way that there was identification of the ecclesial elements and salvation that is present even outside the Catholic Church.

The Council Fathers encourage all the Catholic faithful to be able to recognize the signs of the times whereby in many parts of the world, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires for his followers and therefore the Council Fathers are calling upon all the Catholic faithful to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism. The Council is grateful to note that the participation by the Catholic faithful in ecumenical work is growing daily. The Council commends this work to the bishops everywhere in the world for their diligent promotion and prudent guidance (*UR 4*).⁷²

The Second Vatican Council Fathers also clearly pointed out in their chapter two of the decree on ecumenism that the task of restoring unity involves the whole Church; that is, the faithful and the clergy alike. This can be exercised in the daily Christian living, or in theological and historical studies, the Fathers say, according to each ones

⁷¹ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 410

⁷² Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 411

talent. The Fathers thus called on everyone to put ecumenism in practice by calling on each one's inner conversion. Thus;

there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion. For it is from newness of attitudes of mind, from self denial and unstinted love, that desires of unity take their rise and develop in mature way. We should therefore pray the fathers requested, to the Holy Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self denying, humble, gentle in the service of others and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity toward them (UR 7).⁷³

Thus change of heart and holiness should go along with public prayer for unity of Christians, should be the soul of the whole ecumenical move to merit the name, "spiritual ecumenism" (UR 8)⁷⁴.

Concerning the churches and ecclesial communities separated from the Roman Apostolic See, the Council Fathers looked into a special communion with the Eastern Churches giving it a special position. From their very origins, the Churches of the East have had a treasury from which the Church of the west has drawn largely from its liturgy, spiritual tradition and jurisprudence. The Fathers pointed out basic dogmas of the Christian faith that came from the ecumenical Councils that were held in the East. They pointed out the Trinity and the Word of God made flesh from the Virgin Mary. The Council fathers, therefore, having looked at such a treasury from the eastern churches, gave due consideration while working for the restoration to the full *communio* that is desired between the Eastern Churches and the Catholic Church (UR 19).⁷⁵

For the separated Churches and Ecclesial Communities in the West that got separated from the Apostolic See of Rome during the grave crisis that began in the west

⁷³ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 414

⁷⁴ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 414

⁷⁵ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 421

at the end of the middle ages or later times, the Vatican Council fathers find it difficult to describe them adequately. This is because these churches and ecclesial communities differ considerably not only from the Catholic Church, but also among themselves, due to their different origins and convictions in doctrine and spiritual life. The Fathers add that between these churches and ecclesial communities on the one hand, and the Catholic Church on the other, there are very weighty differences not only of a historical, sociological, psychological and cultural character, but especially in their interpretation of revealed truth. However, the Fathers recognize these brethren for they look to Christ as the source and centre of ecclesial communion and contemplate much on the life of Christ from the scriptural point of view. Thus they express their deep faith in Christ, which bears fruit in praise and thanks giving. The Fathers at the Council thus recommend dialogue with these separated brethren in the areas such as doctrine about the Lord's Supper, Sacraments, liturgy, and issues on morality. These are the areas our separated brethren also share in their churches and ecclesial though at times approaching them in the different ways from Catholics (*UR 22*).⁷⁶

Forms of Local Ecumenism as proposed by Vatican II

As a way of promoting unity among Christian Churches, the Second Council Fathers proposed various forms of local ecumenism. They proposed sharing in prayer and worship of Christian Churches or denominations as they seek the gift of the Holy Spirit for the change of heart and holiness of life and prayer for unity. Sharing in common Bible work like joint translations of the Bible was also proposed as a form of

⁷⁶ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 422

promoting unity. The fathers also proposed a joint pastoral care, for example, Chaplaincy in hospitals. Joint pastoral care as they suggested can be extended in Universities, Industry, Prisons, the armed forces, radio and Television, working as a team. On sharing premises, the fathers point out the rule of the Catholic Churches where the Church buildings and consecrated and reserved for Catholic worship. However, they said that, in case our separated brethren have no place in which to carry out their religious rituals, properly and with dignity, the local ordinary can allow them the use of a Catholic Church. But for the separated Eastern brethren, sharing in sacred functions, objects and places is allowed for a reasonable cause (*UR 5-12*).⁷⁷

The Council Fathers also proposed collaboration in Education, joint use of communications media, cooperation in the health field, National and International emergencies as some of the practical ways of promoting ecumenism. Relief of human need, joint effort in social problems, sodipax groups- the international agency between the Catholic Church and the world Council of Churches for society, development and peace; the Fathers also encouraged bilateral dialogues that involve theological discussions. They also encouraged meetings of joint working groups and councils of the Churches and Christian councils. These can be avenues for reconciliation and thus realizing unity between the Christians that are involved. The Vatican Council Fathers therefore encouraged the Catholics from the grass root –local churches to join in this mission of ecumenism since it is a task for everyone and not only the ordained ministers or bishops. The Council Fathers therefore approached the understanding of the Church as a community and not as an institution or as a perfect society. The fathers emphasised

⁷⁷ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 414 - 416

interpersonal relationship. Thus *Communio ecclesiology* has been one of the achievements of Vatican Council II⁷⁸.

2.2. The Extra-ordinary Synod of Bishops of 1985 on Communion Ecclesiology

After the Second Vatican Council, the desire for Christian unity has always been at the heart of various churches, denominations and has been the issue at several synods of the Church leaders whether at local level or universal level while putting emphasis on dialogue. The extra-ordinary synod of bishops which took place twenty years after the end of Second Vatican Council in 1985 also looked into the ecclesiology of *communio* and affirmed that it was the central and fundamental idea of the Council's documents.⁷⁹ Note, however, that the Synod was called by John Paul II as a twentieth anniversary celebration of the conclusion of the Vatican Council II. The bishops at the synod looked at various aspects of communion. They looked at the meaning of *communio*, unity and *pluriformity* in the Church, the oriental churches, collegiality, Episcopal conferences, participation and co-responsibility in the Church, and Ecumenical *communio*⁸⁰.

The bishops fundamentally defined *Communio* as a matter of having *communio* with God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. They added that *communio* is in the word of God and in sacraments. They continued that Baptism is the door and the foundation of *communio* in the Church. The Eucharist, the bishops added is the source, and the culmination of the whole Christian life. The *communio* of the Eucharistic body

⁷⁸ Cf. J. FUELLENBACH, *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, 147

⁷⁹ Cf. J. FUELLENBACH, *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, 148

⁸⁰ Cf. J. FUELLENBACH, *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, 148

of Christ signifies and builds up the intimate *communio* of all the faithful in the body of Christ which is the Church. The bishops at the Synod therefore say that the ecclesiology of *communio* cannot be reduced to purely organizational questions or to problems which simply relate to powers. Still the ecclesiology of *communio* is also the foundation for order in the Church, and especially for a correct relationship between unity and *pluriformity* in the Church⁸¹

The bishops at the extra-ordinary Synod also stressed on the unity and *pluriformity* in the Church insisting on the ecclesial *communio* with Peter and his successors. They clarified that this *communio* is not an obstacle but the anticipation and prophetic sign of a fuller unity. The bishops here recognize the uniqueness and universality of the Catholic Church as it is fully present in all the particular Churches.⁸²

The extra-ordinary synod of bishops in Rome of 1985 therefore declared that *communio* was the central ecclesiological idea of Vatican council II even though the actual term did not play a key role during the discussions of the Council.

2.3. The Primacy of Peter a sign of Unity of Churches

In his encyclical of 1995 “That they may be one – *Ut unum Sint*”, Pope John Paul II clearly pointed out that the bishop of Rome is a perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity. The Pope adds that the Holy Spirit sustains this bishop in order that he may enable all the others to share in this essential good of unity (UUS 88).⁸³ We may ask ourselves: Who is this bishop of Rome?

⁸¹ Cf. The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod

⁸² Cf. The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod

⁸³ Cf. J, PAUL II, “*Ut Unum Sint*” on *Commitment to Ecumenism*, 99

The Canon Law on the People of God describes the bishop of Rome as;

the head of the College of bishops, the Vicar of Christ, and the pastor of the universal Church here on earth. By virtue of his office therefore, the bishop of Rome has Supreme, Full, Immediate and Universal Ordinary power in the Church, and he can always freely exercise this power. By the decree of the Lord, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles form one college, and so for a like reason, the Roman Pontiff is the successor of Peter and the bishops are the Successors of the apostles who are united together in one (CCL 331-332).⁸⁴

The bishop of Rome is thus the heir to the mission of Peter in the Church, a mission that has its origin in the manifold mercy of God. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical thus says that the Church of God is called by Christ to manifest to a world ensnared by its sins and evil. But despite all this, God can convert hearts to unity and enable them enter into *communio* with him. John Paul explains that this service of unity, rooted in the action of divine mercy, is entrusted within the college of bishops to one among those who have received from the Spirit the task, not of exercising power over the people as the rulers of the gentiles and their great men do (Mt 20: 25, Mk 10:42).⁸⁵

What is then the role of the bishop of Rome? Pope John Paul II in the same encyclical shows that the mission of the bishop of Rome within the college of all the pastors consists precisely in “keeping watch” *episkopein*, so that through the efforts of the pastors, the true voice of Christ the Shepherd may be heard in all the particular churches (dioceses). In this way, John Paul says that all the Churches are in full and visible *communio* because all the pastors are in *communio* with Peter and therefore united in Christ. This means that, the unity of Christians with their local Ordinary or Pastor, is the unity to the Bishop of Rome, and thus, are in union with Christ. So it is

⁸⁴ *Code of Canon Law*

⁸⁵ Cf. J. PAUL II, “*Ut Unum Sint*” on Commitment to Ecumenism, 100

therefore the role of the bishop to promote this unity amongst his flock or Church and to the bishop of Rome. The bishop in his own diocese or particular Church makes the link between the faithful Christians and to the bishop of Rome (UUS 97) ⁸⁶

Pope John Paul II in this encyclical, points out the ways in which this primacy is exercised and at different levels. John Paul then lists down these ways in which the bishop of Rome exercises his primacy. This is through; handing down of the Word, celebrating the liturgy and sacraments, Church' mission, discipline and Christian life, recall the requirements of the common good of the Church. He is however in all his roles and duties in *communio* with the rest of the college of Bishops of which he is a member.

From the dogmatic constitution on the Church, individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of the unity in their own particular Churches which are modelled on the universal Church. It is in these and from these particular Churches that the one and unique Catholic Church exists. Each bishop therefore represents his own Church, and all of them together with the people represent the whole Church in a bond of Peace, Love, and unity (LG 23) ⁸⁷

2.4. Particular Churches, Universal and Communion

The particular Church according to Vatican II has two things necessary for it. That is, the Eucharist and the bishop. The particular Church is essentially an altar community around its bishop. The presence of the bishop in a particular Church brings

⁸⁶ Cf. J. PAUL II, "*Ut Unum Sint*" on Commitment to Ecumenism, 107

⁸⁷ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 343

the particular into that visible *communio* with the other particular Churches. It should however be noted that this is not to make the Church Clerical, for the Church is manifested in “the full, active participation of all God’s holy people” and the Church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized groups of the faithful.⁸⁸

When we talk of ‘particular Church’ and ‘Local Church’, what do we mean? These two terms often used interchangeably. For the Second Vatican Council they often use “particular Church” to refer to the diocese but the same term can also refer to Churches in the same region or culture. For Henri de Lubac he reserves the term “particular Church” for the altar community around the bishop. Thus this makes the definition of particular Church sacramental rather than geographical. In contrast though, de Lubac refers to “Local Churches” as groupings of particular churches which ‘have their own discipline, enjoy their own liturgical usage and inherit a theological and spiritual patrimony. The canon law too identifies the particular Church with a diocese in both personal and sacramental terms⁸⁹.

Note, however, that a particular Church is not a division of the universal Church; “in each particular Church is present essentially, mystically, the entire universal Church since Christ is there through the Eucharist celebrated by the bishop; but equally each particular Church exists fully only in the ‘one, single, and Catholic Church’”. The universal Church is not simply the total sum of particular Churches. The universal Church thus subsists in, but is not limited to, each particular Church in analogous way

⁸⁸ Cf. S.K. WOOD, “The Church as Communion”, *The Gift of the Church, A Text Book on Ecclesiology*, 162

⁸⁹ Cf. S.K. WOOD, “The Church as Communion”, *The Gift of the Church, A Text Book on Ecclesiology*, 163

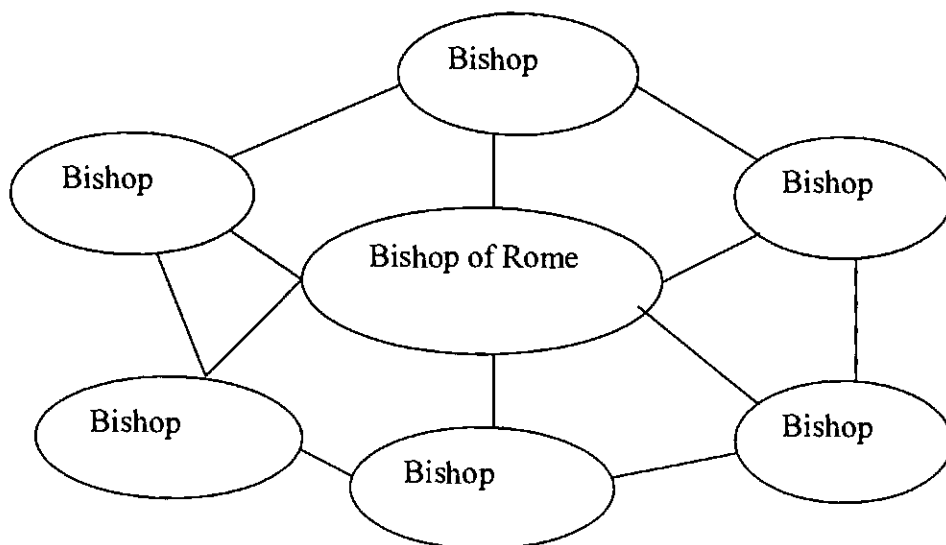
to which Christ is entirely present in, but is not limited to each Eucharistic celebration. Two points to note here: 1. although the Eucharist is a sacrifice, it does not multiply the one sacrifice of Christ, 2. although the body of Christ is present in many places, there is only one body.

The Church is thus present wherever Christ is, which is, wherever, the Eucharist is celebrated. Wood, however, clarifies that although each particular Church is wholly Church, no particular Church can be the Church of God in isolation. The nature of the particular Church is to be in *communio* with the other particular Churches. The unity that exists between a particular church and the universal church is thus, not the unity of a plurality of Churches, but the unity of the one Church which finds concrete, historical objectification in a plurality of particular Churches.⁹⁰

Wood illustrates the *communio* that exists between the universal Church and particular Church on a diagram.

⁹⁰ Cf. S.K. WOOD, "The Church as Communion", *The Gift of the Church, A Text Book on Ecclesiology*, 164

Diagram to describe the relationship between Universal Church and Particular Churches as given by Suzan Wood



Wood quotes de Lubac saying that the episcopacy of all bishops is one, the Eucharist is one, and the Church is one. This is to show the unity that exists between the particular / individual bishops and Churches.⁹¹

Ignatius of Antioch insisted so much that there can only be one Episcopal office in a given place whereby the members of the Church become linked or are in communion with their bishop. Ignatius was defending the public character and the unity of the faith against division into races and classes. The Church thus is one and for all, because God is one and is for all. It is therefore a task of the Church to promote reconciliation. She is not Church if she does not bring together those who from the point

⁹¹ Cf. S.K. WOOD, "The Church as Communion", *The Gift of the Church, A Text Book on Ecclesiology*, 166

of view of their sensibilities, do not suit one another and have no sympathy for one another.⁹²

According to the Fathers at the Second Vatican, ontologically, the Church is mystery, is one and unique, she gives birth to the particular Churches as her daughters and then expresses herself in them; she is the mother and not the product of the particular Churches. The Council fathers show that the Church at Pentecost manifested herself temporarily in the community gathering around Mary and the twelve apostles, the representatives of the one unique Church and the founders to be of the local Churches. The Vatican Council calls the relationship that exists between particular Churches and the universal Church as “the Church in and formed out of the Churches *Ecclesia in et ex-ecclesiis* which is inseparable from this other formula. The Churches in and formed out of the Church *Ecclesia in et ex-ecclesiis*. This relationship is a mystery. This means therefore that the universal *communio* of the faithful and the *communio* of the churches are not consequences of the one another, but constitute the same reality seen from different viewpoints.⁹³

2.5.0. Communion and the Sacraments of:

2.5. 1. Baptism and Communion

We have seen that right from the early Church, for one to be part of the Church, baptism was a requirement. The apostles too from the *didache* stressed the fact that baptism is a gate-way to commune with the rest of the believers. The *didache* thus puts it, “nobody who was not baptized was allowed to participate into the *higher* mystery of

⁹² J. Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: understanding the Church today*, 78.

⁹³ Cf. W.KASPER, *Kasper and Ratzinger Debate on Local Church Versus Universal Church*

the Eucharist”.⁹⁴ From the New Testament, we see in the Acts of the Apostles that baptism is a response in faith to Christian preaching and a rite of initiation into the Christian community (Acts 2: 41). We can therefore say that baptism is a gateway into Christianity. The catechism of the Catholic Church also teaches that “baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*) and it is the door which gives access to other sacraments. Thus through baptism, we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission”. The Catechism of the Catholic Church further explains the bond of unity that baptism creates. Thus, “baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. Baptism therefore constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are reborn” (CCC 1271).

The Church is a reflection of the Church in heaven or simply the Kingdom of God. To be a full member of the Church, baptism is a requirement and we say through baptism, we are reborn as sons and daughters of God. We become adopted children of God. In his Gospel, John the evangelist also says, “no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit”. This is a further explanation to the importance of the Sacrament of baptism affirming it as the gate way into full communion with the Christian Community of the Kingdom of God.

Thomas P. Rausch in his book, “*towards a truly Catholic Church*” quotes Paul saying, “for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ (Gal 3: 27-29). There is neither Jews nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person,

⁹⁴ J. F. KELLY, *Concise Dictionary of Early Church*, 43

there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise. This therefore makes baptism a clear bond of unity for as Rausch says, it reconciles and people previously divided, and so rules out any divisions based on race, sex, or social status in the Church.

2.5.2. Eucharist, the Fullness of Communion

Paul in the early Christian life uses the metaphor of the body of Christ to mean the Church. From the time of the *didache*, in around 100 AD, the body of Christ is called *Eucharistia*. In the Catholic Church, we hear of Mass or liturgy, from the orthodox, they talk of the Divine Liturgy or synaxis-union. We have heard of Holy Communion among the Protestant denominations.⁹⁴ What does all this have to do with *commuio*?

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy looks at the Eucharist as the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made children of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper. (SC 10)⁹⁵. The nature of the Church is presented on the symbolic and sacramental plane while participating in communion so that one could say that the Church realizes or fulfills

⁹⁴ Cf. T. P. RAUCH, *Towards a Truly Catholic Church*, 75

⁹⁵ Cf. FLANNERY, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* 25

itself in the celebration of the Eucharist.⁹⁷ The Council of Trent too puts it that “our Saviour left behind in his Church the Eucharist as a sign of its unity and love, in which he wished to be, assured that all Christians would be united and bound to one another”⁹⁸.

St. Thomas Aquinas too in the scholastic period describes the Eucharist as the sacrament of Church Unity. The Eucharist or the meal Christians partake of is symbolism. Rausch quotes Isaiah 25:6-8, saying that this meal is the image of the great eschatological banquet provided by the Lord in the age of Salvation, an image, Rausch says was found also at Qumran and Jesus too adopted the same metaphor as a sign of the Kingdom (Mt 8: 11, Lk 14:15-24, and that his tradition of table fellowship offered a sharer in the Kingdom to all where no one was excluded. The theology on the Eucharist has had several explanations, but in all as in the Catholic tradition, we notice that the Eucharist is a ritual and liturgical action of the community. The Eucharistic meal is carried on in memory of Jesus, proclaiming his death and resurrection and recognizing him in the breaking of bread *anamnesis*. At this, the risen Jesus is present in a new way and intimate manner. This presence of Christ brings *communio* with one another and Jesus himself⁹⁹. So going back to the term *communio*, or *koinonia*, we see that it applies to sharing in the divine life, thus, through baptism that leads us to partaking of the Eucharist, we share the communion with one another. Through baptism, and Eucharist, the Christians are made one body in Christ but living in his Spirit.

⁹⁷ Cf. M. G. MIGUEL, *Communion of Saints: Foundation, Nature, and Structure of the Church*, 98

⁹⁸ Cf. M. G. MIGUEL, *Communion of Saints: Foundation, Nature, and Structure of the Church*, 98

⁹⁹ Cf. T. P. RAUSCH., *Towards a Truly Catholic Church*, 78

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that, “The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other Sacraments and indeed all Ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented towards it. For in the Blessed Eucharist is contained the whole Spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch”. It is the Eucharist, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, that is the sublime cause of that *communio* in the divine life and that unity of the people of God by which the Church is kept in being (CCC 1324).¹⁰⁰

On the Eschatological point of view, the Eucharistic celebration we already have, unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all”(CCC 1326). So when we are baptized, we are joined in communion with Jesus Christ who is himself the communion. The physical rituals of the Church that are called Sacraments make our Spiritual Union with Christ proper.

Looking back, therefore, at the Church in 1 Cor. 11:18, we see that *ekklesia* refers to the Community when it comes together for worship. The context therefore clearly shows that an assembly for the celebration of the Eucharist is here referred to. The Eucharist moreover, was set up as a celebration which those who believed in Jesus were supposed to celebrate regularly.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Cf. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, *The Eucharist - Source and Summit of Ecclesial Life*, 336

¹⁰¹ Cf. M. G. MIGUEL, *Communion of Saints: Foundation, Nature, and Structure of the Church*, 98

2.6. Conclusion

From the teaching of the Church on *communio*, we see that the Church is fully committed to promoting unity basing on the unity that Christ desires for his followers in his prayer for unity. The Church too bases her commitment to promotion of unity on God's divine plan of uniting all the human family and definitely all the creation together into unity with him. With this therefore, the Church feels duty-bound to work tirelessly through her ministers, and all her faithful to engage in the unity promoting groups and activities. It is therefore a call to every Christian to whole-heartedly participate in this noble activity such that the unity Christ desires for us his followers is realised.

CHAPTER III:

Ecumenism, Way Forward to Christian Unity

3.0. Introduction

I pointed out in the general introduction that today the discussion on communion is also discussion on ecumenism. Ecumenism surfaces because it seeks to reconcile and renew the relationship of the believers in Christ in order to attain that full communion that Christ desired for his disciples and the followers. There is an effort through the ecumenical movement whereby many Christian Churches are involved and through this movement, a certain degree of unity has been achieved even though there are still some remarkable challenges. With the objectives so far and achievements of the ecumenical movement, ecumenism to be the possible way forward through which Christian unity can be attained. This mends the horizontal relationship between Christians. In this chapter, therefore, I am exploring at the universal level, the fruits of ecumenism as pointed out by John Paul II, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, and Walter Cardinal Kasper the former president of the Pontifical Commission for Promoting Christian Unity. I am also, in this chapter, exploring and evaluating the involvement of the Catholic Church of Kenya in ecumenism. I will examine the fruits, the challenges, and the way forward for the Catholic involvement in the ecumenical movement in Kenya.

3.1. The Ecumenical Movement

This movement has its roots in the nineteenth century with later developments such as the creation of the Christian groups such as Young Men's Christian Association and the Student Christian Movement. The beginning of modern ecumenism is the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. It was from this conference that the movement stated the priorities of common service, common fellowship, and common witness. It should be noted that ecumenism does not promote uniformity but unity in diversity¹⁰². Ecumenism, therefore, is all about the renewal of different churches, transformed in large part, by appreciating and receiving the gifts which others bring in the one body of Christ. This has therefore led to the creation of various lay-driven Christian groups such as the World Sunday School Association, World Council of Churches, World Council of Christian Education, among others. Today, this communal Christian spirit has led to the creation of the joint week of prayer for unity every January, which we call "spiritual ecumenism"¹⁰³.

3.2. John Paul II and emphasis on ecumenism

At the time Pope John Paul ascended the throne of St. Peter, he felt an urgency for Christian unity and he immediately started working tirelessly to promote this unity. John Paul II was inspired and motivated by Jesus' priestly prayer, thus, "that they may be one, even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that

¹⁰² Cf. W. RUSSELL, *Call and Response: The Call to Christian Unity*, 6

¹⁰³ Cf. KINNAMON, M – E. C. BRIAN (ed), *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, 2.

the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21)¹⁰³. John Paul’s desire and hard work towards the promotion of Christian unity is expressed in his encyclicals, homilies, declarations, and the addresses he has given at meetings with representatives of different religions and Christian denominations during his several pastoral visits throughout the world.

In his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* – on commitment to ecumenism, John Paul II remarks: “to believe in Christ, means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the Church; to desire the Church means the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father’s plan from all eternity. This is the meaning of Christ’s prayer” (*UUS* 9).¹⁰⁴ John Paul thus wants to show that our faith should be expressed in the desire and commitment to unity which he links to God’s plan for his people from all eternity. This is also a link to Church’s mission of promoting unity.

As far as promoting unity in the perspective of mission of the Church is concerned, John Paul looks at the ecumenical movement as an organic part of the Church’s life, and work. He, therefore, says that the entire life of Christians is marked by a concern for ecumenism. For John Paul, it is absolutely clear that the ecumenical movement is not just some sort of ‘appendix’ which is added to the Church’s traditional activity. It is rather the way forward towards the realization of Christian unity. This is why John Paul calls on everyone to be committed to ecumenism since it is part of the Church’s life.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Cf. P.S. NASRALLAH, “Ecumenism in the Pontificate of John Paul II”, *L’Osservatore Romano* 4

¹⁰⁴ Cf. J. PAUL II, “*Ut Unum Sint*” on Commitment to Ecumenism, 13

¹⁰⁵ Cf. P.S. NASRALLAH “Ecumenism in the Pontificate of John Paul II”, *L’Osservatore Romano*, 4

Pope John Paul II remarked, "Ecumenism is at the heart of the Church: It is a pastoral priority that the Church cannot give-up." For John Paul, therefore, ecumenism as a way for restoring that unity that Christ prayed for, should be lived in peoples' daily life. His commitment to ecumenism is clearly witnessed in his ecumenical pilgrimages, which he made to several countries of the world. He also made personal contacts with different religious leaders.¹⁰⁷ Building on his predecessors, such as John XX III and Paul VI, John Paul expresses in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* expressing his continual commitment to ecumenism. He thus writes, "with regard to the Church of Rome and the ecumenical patriarchate of Constantinople, the process which we have just mentioned began; thanks to the mutual openness demonstrated by John XXIII and Paul VI on the one hand, and by the ecumenical patriarch Athenagoras I and his successors on the other" (*UUS* 52)¹⁰⁸. John Paul thus desires to continue this commitment through ecumenical visitations, where he himself, after two years elected to the throne of Peter, met patriarch Athenagoras' successor, Dimitrios I, at the Phanar dialogue between the Catholic Church and all the Orthodox Churches in canonical communion with the Holy See of Constantinople. From there, the two Churches started the practice of sending delegations to visit each other to represent them. This works in this way: from the ecumenical patriarchate to Rome for the feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (June 29) and from the Holy See to the Phanar for the feast of St. Andrew (November 30). So

¹⁰⁷ Cf. P.S. NASRALLAH "Ecumenism in the Pontificate of John Paul II", *L'Osservatore Romano* 4

¹⁰⁸ Cf. J, PAUL II, "*Ut Unum Sint*" on Commitment to Ecumenism, 58

here we see this on-going dialogue that John Paul got committed to especially between the Church in the West and East¹⁰⁹.

In his commitment to ecumenism and seeking communion of other Churches with the Roman Catholic Church, John Paul II in 1984, just like his predecessors, made an effort to meet Pope Mar Ignatius Zakka II, Head of the Syrian Orthodox Church. Pope Mar Zakka at their meeting with John Paul II made a declaration of faith saying that, "our common faith is in Jesus Christ, true God and true man". The Syrian Orthodox Church is one of the Churches of the East which rejected the dogma formulated by the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. Patriarch Jacob III in 1971 also had made a declaration before Pope Paul VI and two years later, Pope Shenonda III of the Coptic Orthodox Church too made a similar declaration of faith. Thus, this is an effort John Paul II continued with in order that communion becomes more practical in the matter of common profession of faith.¹¹⁰

Practice of ecumenism by Pope John Paul II

Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* of 1995 offers some practical ways of ecumenism by confining it in one word - dialogue. John Paul II gets this idea from the Second Vatican Council. John Paul encourages local structures of dialogue. This involves individual dioceses. For John Paul, dialogue is a Church's priority.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. J, PAUL II, "*Ut Unum Sint*" on Commitment to Ecumenism, 59.

¹¹⁰ Cf. P.S. NASRALLAH "Ecumenism in the Pontificate of John Paul II" 4

Ecumenical dialogue John Paul says is marked by a common quest for truth concerning the Church. (*UUS* 31)¹¹¹

John Paul says that there is a close relationship between prayer and dialogue. He adds that prayer becomes the ever more mature fruit of dialogue (*UUS* 33).¹¹² For John Paul II, the importance of prayer in dialogue is so profound that it makes ecumenism possible. But this is not just prayer; John Paul calls it “deeper and more conscious prayer”. So in the ecumenical dialogues, prayer is necessary since without it ecumenism is not made possible.

For John Paul, dialogue is very important because it is through dialogue that disagreements are resolved. He calls this a natural way of comparing differing points of view. As far as the Church is concerned, John Paul calls every Church member to engage in dialogue, and to find out what hinders this full communion. He encourages Christians, especially Catholic Theologians, to engage in ecumenical dialogues while standing fast by the teaching of the Church and searching together with the separated brethren into the divine mysteries. This is done in love for truth, with charity and humility (*UUS* 36).¹¹³

Pope John Paul II thus sees the unity that Christ prayed for to be realized in our commitment to ecumenical movement. This can be achieved as John Paul puts it through dialogue and cooperation in the apostolate in our social cultural realm of life.

¹¹¹ Cf. J, PAUL II, “*Ut Unum Sint*” on *Commitment to Ecumenism*, 37.

¹¹² Cf. J, PAUL II, “*Ut Unum Sint*” on *Commitment to Ecumenism*, 39.

¹¹³ Cf. J, PAUL II, “*Ut Unum Sint*” on *Commitment to Ecumenism*, 41.

3.3. Joseph Ratzinger on Communion

On developing the ecclesiology of communion, Ratzinger looks at the theology of Martin Luther on ‘faith alone’ and ‘scripture alone’. As far as communion ecclesiology is concerned, Ratzinger says that this theology is a personalization of the faith that reduces the Church to the merely congregational, which is in contrast to the Catholic notion of Church that emphasizes divine institution and connectedness throughout the generations. Luther, as Ratzinger puts it, finds a link exclusively in the relationship between the individual and God. This is thus individualistic.¹¹⁴ Ratzinger then urges that since the Triune God is a community, we who are made in the image and likeness of God must have a communal dimension to our own beings. Ratzinger thus finds in the Trinity a call to give up what he calls, “the lie of independence in all relationships”.¹¹⁵ On the mystical body of Christ and transformation, Ratzinger argues that transformation in Christ is the basic freedom, which entails membership in Christ’s mystical body. Ratzinger refers to membership in the Church which is translated into freedom for the individual, who answers in conscience to God, not to the state. There should be individual witness, which is made possible through participation in a Church that transforms ones ‘I’ into a ‘We’. Ratzinger thus advocates for common good as he defends the importance of small communities and traditional modes of social organizations.¹¹⁶

From *Light of the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, Pope Benedict XVI shows in an interview how his pontificate is committed to work for the restoration

¹¹⁴ Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics*, 110

¹¹⁵ Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics*, 274

¹¹⁶ Cf. D. M. DOYLE, *Communion Ecclesiology*, 107

of full, visible unity among Christians.¹¹⁷ He reveals that in the midst of global Protestantism, the reunion of the Orthodox with the Catholic Church is coming close. The book quotes Bishop Gerhard Ludwig Muller, one who is known for his ecumenical engagements, saying that the Catholics and Orthodox have already attained 97% of ecclesial unity and the remaining 3% consists only in the question of the Papal primacy and jurisdiction¹¹⁸. Benedict XVI shows another development on the Catholic-Lutheran journey to unity saying that Bishop Johannes Friedrich, a Lutheran, has raised the possibility of a limited recognition of the Papal office as “ecumenically accepted spokesman of the world’s Christians”. Thus Benedict XVI comments that this is a sign of an outward form to an inward unity that has never been completely lost among Christians.¹¹⁹ Thus for Benedict XVI, ecumenism is yielding fruits and thus it is a way forward towards full Christian unity.

3.4. Walter Cardinal Kasper

Walter Kasper, as a President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity from 2001-2010 and a noted Theologian, made a tremendous contribution the promotion of Christian unity. As a President, he engaged in various Assemblies, met with Leaders of various Christian denominations and Churches, and also wrote much about Christian unity. In 2010, Kasper reflected on the Forty Years the Catholic Church has been involved in dialogue with other Christian Churches such as the Lutherans, the Anglicans, Reformed and Methodist Churches. In his reflection, he points out that

¹¹⁷ BENEDICT XVI, *Light of the World*, 88

¹¹⁸ BENEDICT XVI, *Light of the World*, 88

¹¹⁹ BENEDICT XVI, *Light of the World*, 88.

which there are a lot that has been achieved in as far as Christian unity is concerned. He has called these achievements the “fruits” of dialogue. Kasper, however, warns against dismay about ecumenism’s future. In his reflection, he acknowledges the growing mutual respect, trust, and friendship in the last decades of ecumenism. For him, these are the true fruits that are even more important than the fruits we have gathered in our documents.¹²⁰

Among the fruits Kasper affirms is the common foundation in Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity as expressed in the common creed and in the doctrine of the first ecumenical councils. This affirmation together with the fundamental truths of the doctrine of justification, have been major achievements because these were basically the Christological and Trinitarian misunderstandings that caused schisms especially between the Western and Eastern Churches.¹²¹

Another fruit registered from ecumenical dialogues is the progress that has been made in ecclesiology and this is in the relationship between sacred scriptures and tradition, the sacramental nature of the Church, apostolic succession and ministries in the Church. There are also convergences on the Eucharist, that is, on the doctrines that in the sixteenth century were at the heart of the bitter controversies. The dialogue with the Anglican Communion has also been the source of the notable results.¹²²

On the Anglican Communion, Kasper has been so committed to this communion so much so that on Wednesday July 31, 2008; he gave an address at the Anglican Communion’s Lambeth conference that comes once in a decade. In his address, Kasper

¹²⁰ Cf. W. KASPER, “Still a place for optimism”, *The Tablet* 8-9

¹²¹ Cf. W. KASPER, “Still a place for optimism”, *The Tablet* 8-9

¹²² Cf. W. KASPER, “Still a place for optimism”, *The Tablet* 8-9

first of all reminded the Anglicans of the special place of the communion that the Catholic Church has with the Anglicans as from the decree on ecumenism in *Unitatis Redintegration* 13. Kasper further reminded the Anglican communion of the progress since Vatican Council that had been registered with this communion the progress of the 1977 communion declaration between Archbishop Donald Coggan of Canterbury and Pope Paul VI. Paul VI and Coggan identified some of the significant ecclesial elements that the Anglican Communion contains. These are ecclesial elements are: Mutual understanding and Christian love, recognition of each other, value, and giving thanks for a common faith in God our Father, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. Other ecclesial elements are: our common baptism into Christ, our sharing of the Holy Scriptures, the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds, the Chalcedonian definition, and the teaching of the Fathers, our common Christian inheritance for many centuries with its living traditions of the liturgy, theology, spirituality and mission. Basing on these elements, Archbishop Coggan and Pope Paul VI reflected on the common ground, common source and centre of our already existing but incomplete unity, and thus they identified that our common source and centre is Jesus Christ, and that we all have the mission to bring him to a world that is so desperately in need of him.¹²³

Kasper, however, acknowledges other fruits so far borne from the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) for over the past nearly four decades. He acknowledges the endeavour to address the Eucharistic doctrine, Ministry and Ordination, and the issue of Catholic authority in the Church. These themes were at the heart of the divisions of the sixteenth century. These addresses were in the first

¹²³ Cf. W. KASPER, "Address to Anglican Communion".

phase of the ARCIC in the 1970s. The second phase of the ARCIC (1983-2005), Kasper acknowledged that it had not been put forward for a formal response in either the Catholic Church or the Anglican Communion, and have not led to a conclusive resolution or to a full consensus on the issues addressed, but they have each suggested a growing rapprochement.¹²⁴ “Salvation in the Church” in 1986 resonates in many ways, with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine on Justification signed by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation in 1999. Building on the understanding of the Church as *Koinonia* which was first set forward in the introduction of ARCIC I final report, ARCIC II offered the commission’s most mature work on ecclesiology in the “Church as Communion” 1991.¹²⁵ On the issue of authority in the Church, progress was made in 1999 with the expression of the need for a universal ministry of primacy in the Church. In 2005, progress was made on the understanding of the Blessed Virgin thus Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ.”¹²⁶

Another achievement from the Anglican- Roman Catholic commission is the newly created commission that took place at Mississauga near Toronto in Canada in 2000 where Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy the then President of the Pontifical Commission for Promoting Unity and Archbishop George Carey of Canterbury invited 13 Anglican primates and the corresponding presidents of Catholic Episcopal conferences, or their representatives. This was meant to assess the achievements of the ARCIC dialogues. From this, a new commission was created and this is the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission

¹²⁴ Cf. W. KASPER, “ Address to Anglican Communion”.

¹²⁵ Cf. W. KASPER, “ Address to Anglican Communion”

¹²⁶ Cf. W. KASPER, “ Address to Anglican Communion”.

(IARCCUM). It is principally composed of bishops and their mission statement is, “growing together in Unity and Mission” 2006¹²⁷. As a sign of further progress, in March 2006, the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams invited Kasper to speak at a meeting of the Church of England’s House of bishops, addressing the mission of Bishops in the Church, note, the backdrop of this – was the Ordination of women to episcopate.¹²⁸

Kasper, however, points out the challenge with the Anglican Communion that has complicated the relations between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church as the ordination of women to priesthood and to episcopacy in several Anglican provinces in 1974 and 1989 respectively. Kasper is also saddened by the controversies on the ordination of a person living in an openly acknowledged communicated same – sex relationship and the authorization of public rites of Blessing for same sex unions.

Kasper, thus, encourages everyone to be involved in this noble struggle for unity by having at heart the word of God, common prayer meetings, common witness to the word of God, joint publications of commentaries on the sacred scriptures, common bible courses or bible themes, publish bible study resources for use in local congregations, organize together various groups such as youth groups, and having weekly meetings. Kasper calls this form of togetherness as “spiritual ecumenism”. Spiritual ecumenism thus as Kasper puts it is the change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians. For Kasper, ecumenism

¹²⁷ Cf. W. KASPER, “ Address to Anglican Communion”.

¹²⁸ Cf. W. KASPER, “ Address to Anglican Communion”.

is then the change of heart and holiness of life which comes with private and public prayer.¹²⁹

3.5.0. The Catholic Church of Kenya and Christian Unity

Ecumenism in Kenya is not an old project; it is still at its prelude stage. The Catholic Church in Kenya has ecumenism as a pastoral priority that is aimed towards the promotion of Christian unity. Kenya has increasingly witnessed the mushrooming of new churches in almost every part of the country. There are mainline churches such as the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian, evangelical and Pentecostal churches.¹³⁰ The Catholic Church is a member of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), an umbrella group that brings churches together for common social, economic and political concerns of the Kenyans. NCCCK has registered some tremendous achievements as far as ecumenism in Kenya is concerned.

3.5.1. The state of Ecumenism in Kenya

The initiative of ecumenism in Kenya is still at its initial stage and it thus requires patience, perseverance and creativity. Even though ecumenism is still at its early phase in Kenya, so far there are some fruits that have been realised and at the same time there are some challenges that have been associated with the ecumenical initiative. The fruits are seen from the various initiatives the Catholic Ecumenical

¹²⁹ Cf. W. KASPER, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*, 11.

¹³⁰ Catholic Bishops of Kenya, *Pastoral Letter on our Commitment to the Ecumenical Journey in Kenya*

Commission in Kenya has put in place and the results so far that have been witnessed from these initiatives.

In collaboration with the Kenya Episcopal Conference, the Catholic Ecumenical Commission in Kenya has set up committees in dioceses to implement ecumenism. The diocesan pastoral coordinators have been assigned with the implementation of the ecumenical programs within their respective dioceses. The diocesan pastoral coordinators will also work closely with the theologians in implementing the ecumenical programs. With the effort of the coordinators, the commission thus expects the message of ecumenism to spread through out up to the Small Christian Communities.¹³¹

The Kenya Catholic Ecumenical Commission is also in direct collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. This ensures that the ecumenical activities in Kenya are in line with the universal Church's commitment to ecumenism. The Kenya Catholic Ecumenical Commission is also in collaboration with ecumenism scholars even of different Christian denominations where they have always engaged themselves in workshops, mutual documentations.¹³² These collaborations render a wider knowledge on ecumenism and by nature the collaborations themselves are a form of unity.

The Kenya Catholic Ecumenical Commission has continued to observe the universal prayer week every January. This was a fruit from the inter-Church workgroup of 2005 that published a common prayer book for Kenya of the universal prayer week

¹³¹ Catholic Bishops of Kenya, *Pastoral Letter on our Commitment to the Ecumenical Journey in Kenya* 9

¹³² Cf. J. LENSSEN, "Ecumenism, a Missionary Task in Kenya" *National Mirror* 8.

for Christian unity. Some ecumenical groups around Nairobi that are basically led by lay people have championed this initiative very well.¹³²

3.5.2. Signs of Hope for Unity in Kenya

There are signs of hope for unity of Christians in Kenya that have arisen from the fruits so far registered. Within the city context of Nairobi for example, there is a more practical way of unity that has surfaced, this is the practical ecumenical groups that have emerged basically championed by lay people. These groups, together with their pastors and assisting priests organize joint prayer meetings, Palm-Sunday processions, the way of the cross procession on Good Fridays, and celebrate together the annual week of prayer for unity in an ecumenical service. This is “spiritual ecumenism” as Cardinal Walter Kasper suggests. These groups are: Musterd Seed Ecumenical Network (MSEN), Umoja Ecumenical Group (UEG), Kahawa West Ecumenical Group (KWEG), Kibera slums Ecumenical Encounter (KEE), and Ngong Road Ecumenical Encounter.¹³³

The Catholic ecumenical commission also works closely with the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK), that does not only promote ecumenism, but also works closely with the government in voicing out social, political and economical concerns on behalf of the Kenyans. Concerns such as constitutional reviews, women

¹³² Cf. J. LENSSEN, “Ecumenism, a Missionary Task in Kenya” 8.

¹³³ Cf. J. LENSSEN, “Ecumenism, a Missionary Task in Kenya” 8.

emancipation, poverty and hunger issues, among others, have been pointed out by NCCCK to the government.¹³⁵

3.5.3. Challenges of ecumenism in Kenya

In an effort to promote Christian unity in Kenya, the Kenya Catholic Ecumenical Commission notices that the Catholic Christians are pressurized by members of other Christian groups advising them to drop their Catholic faith and join their churches. This puts ecumenism on an individual level at risk. This makes ecumenism, therefore, remain a project of the leaders of churches and the full implementation of it at the grass root becomes difficult.¹³⁶

Another difficulty faced with ecumenism in Kenya is the point of numerous Christian groups. The ever increasing number of Christian denominations and sects in Kenya has rendered ecumenism impossible with some Christian groups. Some mushrooming Pentecostal and protestant groups are not open to dialogue in order to achieve that full unity Christ prayed for his disciples, instead, the divisions are ever increasing. The Roman Catholic Church, however, in Kenya is in proper dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox, and Coptic Orthodox churches.¹³⁷

The ecumenical movement in Kenya, even though it is still at its initial stage with a few challenges, has had a proper beginning with creditable results such that this gives high hopes of full communion especially with churches that are already in

¹³⁵ Cf. J. LENSSEN, "Ecumenism, a Missionary Task in Kenya" 8.

¹³⁶ Cf. J. LENSSEN, "Ecumenism, a Missionary Task in Kenya" 8.

¹³⁷ Cf. J. LENSSEN, "Ecumenism, a Missionary Task in Kenya" 8.

dialogue with the Catholic Church. There are also high hopes with some Protestant churches such as the Anglican Church of Kenya, Lutheran Church of Kenya that, though, not yet engaged in dialogue on crucial issues such as doctrinal issues at the level of the Nation, they have kept good relationship with the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER VI:

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Pastoral, Recommendations and Suggestions on Christian Unity in Kenya

4.0. Introduction

The multiplicity of Christian groups that are normally grouped under mainline Churches such as Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, then Pentecostal, and several Evangelical groups and sects, has created a negative impression as far as unity is concerned. There are different reasons as why different Christian groups spring up. Some groups claim orthodoxy, others have separated claiming ecstasy as being inspired by the Spirit, and some people within Kenya have started their own churches as a means of generating income and be able to make connections with some other ecclesial communities in the west especially America. Whichever the case, unity of Christians as Christ desired for his followers is still lacking in Kenya. Unity of Christians in Kenya is needed because of the following factors:

The multiplicity of churches within Kenya has ended up confusing many people in a way that some people are moving from church to church searching for which church teaches the truth, or the right church. Some have joined various groups in search for solution to their personal or family problems such as healing, marriage challenges, and wealth. There is arrogance by some Christian groups over others. This is evident

whereby some preachers have openly attacked Christians from other churches over orthodoxy as they claim to be preaching the true message of salvation. This way of teaching has made some people indulge themselves in physical fighting trying to defend their own churches. This is so common with the evangelical and protestant Christians.

Christian unity that seeks to understand scriptures is needed in Kenya. This is because some Christian groups have misinterpreted the scriptures and ended up preaching the contrary. Some preachers, for example, refuse using modern medicine as they argue that prayers are enough to heal. Thus for them, it is through praying not physical medicine that heals. Some people have claimed false prophecies such as the end of the world, others have caused a lot of sound-pollution in cities and towns in the name of “praising God”, with no concern for the immediate neighbors and thus have ended up in competitions of attracting people and thus distorting the essence of preaching the Good News of Christ. The unity of Christians in Kenya is thus still a long way off.

4.1. Christian Unity from the African perspective of fraternity

In this section, I would like to pose a challenge to the Church in Kenya from the view point of African fraternal living. I am wondering if the unity that the Church in Kenya is searching for has roots in the African view point of fraternity. Are the divisions among the Christians of Kenya reflecting the African concept of unity? Or is there a problem with the Christian message that instead of uniting it has divided the Christians?

Africa, especially south of the Sahara, has deep sentiments in fraternity and solidarity that is rooted in the cultures of its peoples. There is for, example, deep sense of family rooted ness.¹³⁸ A family in Africa is not just the father, mother and children, but it is extended. The grand parents, including the brothers and sisters of one's grand father are part of the family, the brothers and sisters of one's father are family members. A family in the African perspective is enormous. The family thus makes a community where there is great sentiment of community living. In this setting therefore, there is great sense of love with concern for one another. It is important to note that even the unborn children are considered part of the family and are seen as buds of hope for these are the ones to continue or extend the family. A family thus is a unit of peace, stability, and communion with one another with clear understanding that all members are from a common descent and thus quarrels and misunderstandings were not expected.¹³⁹

The African Synod of 1994 laid great emphasis on the Church as family. The Synod stressed that the Christian family live the image of the Holy Family, the richness of love which is in the heart of God using the example of the extended African family. This was so because the Synod participants were aware of the value of the extended family where everyone in the extended family is valued as brother or sister or mother and father with common ideas and sharing of love.¹⁴⁰

Family in the African context gives identity, protects members, and gives sense of belonging. This understanding and indeed the authentic African way of living, challenges the multiplicity of churches in Kenya. The Church in Kenya is thus

¹³⁸ Cf. J. NYENYEMBE, *Fraternity in Christ*, 13.

¹³⁹ Cf. J. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 106.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *The Church-as-Family*, 20

challenged to re-evaluate the meaning of Church as family, which should not be confined with the Small Christian Community only but look at the typical example and values from our extended African families. If the meaning and sense of African family is fully grasped, then the Church will fully be “family” since every Christian will be seeing the other as a true brother, or sister, with common descent. Thus, just as the family protects, and gives identity to its members, that will be fully taken up in the same way in the Christian churches. (AS 27) ¹⁴¹

Africa, especially south of the Sahara, also has a deep sense of solidarity. The solidarity of Africans is for example seen at community or village activities such as road-making, cultivating where many families collected together working at a vast land, community disciplinary action in case of a community member who acted contrary to the expectations of the community, and conflict resolution among community members. The solidarity of Africans is seen at funeral rites whereby death is a concern that people come together to be with the family of the deceased to give company. This explains why in case of a funeral function, people from the neighborhood leave all their duties for a period of about a week so as to give company in form of solidarity to the family of the deceased ¹⁴²

There is a deep sense of sharing among the Africans. After slaughtering an animal either from the farm or after hunting, the families from the surroundings share amongst themselves. This challenges the individualistic tendencies that have also crept into our modern society and Church. Among the Gikuyu of Kenya, for

¹⁴¹ Cf. *The Church-as-Family*, 20

¹⁴² Cf. J. NYENYEMBE., *Fraternity in Christ*, 14.

example, a selfish person has no name or reputation in the community. An individualistic person is looked upon with suspicion and is given a nickname of *mwebongia*, meaning some one who works only for himself and is likely to end up as a wizard. He may lack assistance when he needs it.¹⁴³

In view with the African fraternal way of living, I recommend and suggest that the Kenya Catholic Ecumenical Commission, working hand in hand with the National Council of Churches in Kenya, should rethink the African concept of family and fraternity and be able to apply it through teaching to the practical means of ecumenism.

4.2. Recommendations and Suggestions

The work of the Kenya Catholic Ecumenical Commission, especially in setting up different committees at diocesan, parish, and involving theologians, is highly recommended. These committees are instruments of heralding the message of ecumenism to every corner of Kenya.

The annual week of prayer for Christian Unity in January is a good initiative that should be encouraged the more such that it should be a participation of everyone. Besides the already organised groups that have participated in the week of prayer, this initiative should be more encouraged by sensitizing Christians before on the mode of prayer and not only prayer, a meal for unity if possible may be prepared. This calls for a joint day of prayer and on this day, certain themes can be proposed or seminars can be arranged on some specific areas such as on the bible and relationships between Christian Churches.

¹⁴³ Cf. J. KENYATTA., *Facing Mount Kenya*, 119.

During the early Church, the bishops used to exchange letters of fraternity to one another in order to express their communion with each other. I recommend this system to the leaders of different ecclesial communities in Kenya, especially using the modern means of communication such as the internet or cell phones to wish each other the best in his or her activities, at Feasts, and various other occasions like birthdays. This will create a friendly atmosphere and being free with one another. This is not only with the Church leaders but by each one. In addition, the Church leaders of various churches in Kenya need to develop a spirit of visiting each other not necessarily for dialogue but even at a casual level. This will result in fraternity and friendship that will be a good example to their respective subjects. The extension of friendships can also be practiced at celebrations or functions when the members and especially leaders from other churches are invited.

“It is through dialogue that disagreements are solved”, says John Paul II.¹⁴⁴ The Kenya Catholic Ecumenical Commission should organize occasional dialogues on specific matters that have been the source of divisions among Christians. Matters that pertain to the understanding of the Bible or simply, Bible courses, and doctrine, can be discussed in an open forum such as in symposiums with theologians from various ecclesial communities. This will enhance the spirit of ecumenism and may lead to the understanding of what ecumenism is all about.

I recommend that ecumenism be part of the educational curriculum in all the Catholic schools in particular institutions of higher learning such as Universities,

¹⁴⁴ Cf. JOHN, PAUL II, “*Ut Unum Sint*” on *Commitment to Ecumenism*, 42.

Seminaries, and Colleges, and also in Catechetical training colleges. This will enhance the desire by many people to work for unity of Christians and develop a positive view of Christians from other ecclesial communities. Coupled with this view, the admission of other Christians to Catholic Theological Institutes such as the major seminaries is a step to openness to other Christians, which is the essence of ecumenism and a symbol of unity.

At the Small Christian Community level, members from other ecclesial communities should be allowed to participate in the daily group meetings or prayer meetings. They may not take leadership roles. The Christians within the Small Christian Community may go ahead in a dialogue on unity but should be careful in the discussion of crucial theological matters that they may not be having enough knowledge on. The issue here is that the Small Christian Communities should be open to members of other ecclesial communities in their prayers and other group activities.

4.3. Conclusion

“That they may be one, as we are one” (Jn. 17: 11b). The commitment to unity started with Jesus Christ himself when he prayed for his disciples to live the precious gift of unity which he always desired for them. Commitment to Christian unity is thus a call to each follower of Christ so that, united in body and spirit, that perfect unity with the Triune God and with each other, may be realized. This is the unity that Christ desires for his followers.

The quest for unity involves a journey into deeper mutual understanding in the context of unconditional mutual acceptance grounded on our common baptism into the body of Christ and visible expression in a common Eucharist¹⁴⁵. To attain this unity thus involves a certain sacrifice where everyone is called to get out of him or herself and be able to meet the other people but leaving aside certain prejudices and beliefs. This is the reason for today's ecumenical movement that seeks to achieve visible unity between the Churches and ecclesial communities.

Mutual respect for the others is thus called for and this culminates in dialogue between parties. Dialogue is thus the only way Christian Churches will get to know and understand each other and be able to journey together in communion. When communion is fully attained then, we will no longer appear as though we are in companionship of fellow travelers on the same journey but as a union of lovers dwelling in the same home¹⁴⁶. Unity, though, does not mean absence of differences so to attain this full communion is thus a call to each and every Christian such that everyone joins in this noble journey to the unity for which Christ prayed.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. P. AVIS, *Christians in Communion*, v.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. A. DULLES, *Models of The Church*, 53.

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APPENDIX



A gesture of Christian Unity between Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches

APPENDIX



Walking Ecumenically: Pope Benedict XVI walking with the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams during a courtesy visit: this is a sign of progress of ecumenism and gives hope.

APPENDIX



This picture shows Cardinal Walter Kasper's vision of Ecumenism that he came up with in 2010 which he called: *Harvesting the Fruits of Ecumenism*.

