

Title VI: Physical and Juridical Persons

Chapter 1I JURIDICAL PERSONS

- Can. 119** In regard to collegial acts, unless the law or the statutes provide otherwise:
- 1 in regard to elections, provided a majority of those who must be summoned are present, what is decided by an absolute majority of those present has the force of law. If there have been two inconclusive scrutinies, a vote is to be taken between the two candidates with the greatest number of votes or, if there are more than two, between the two senior by age. After a third inconclusive scrutiny, that person is deemed elected who is senior by age;
 - 2 in regard to other matters, provided a majority of those who must be summoned are present, what is decided by an absolute majority of those present has the force of law. If the votes are equal after two scrutinies, the person presiding can break the tie with a casting vote;
 - 3 that which affects all as individuals must be approved by all.

“The Code of Canon Law”
Title V: Associations of Christ’s Faithful

Chapter 1
COMMON NORMS

Can. 298 §1 In the Church there are associations which are distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life. In these associations, Christ’s faithful, whether clerics or laity, or clerics and laity together, strive with a common effort to foster a more perfect life, or to promote public worship or Christian teaching. They may also devote themselves to other works of the apostolate, such as initiatives for evangelization, works of piety or charity, and those which animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit.

§2 Christ’s faithful are to join especially those associations which have been established, praised or recommended by the competent ecclesiastical authority.

Can. 299 §1 By private agreement among themselves, Christ’s faithful have the right to constitute associations for the purposes mentioned in can. 298 §1, without prejudice to the provisions of can. 301 §1.

§2 Associations of this kind, even though they may be praised or commended by ecclesiastical authority, are called private associations.

§3 No private association of Christ’s faithful is recognized in the Church unless its statutes have been reviewed by the competent authority.

Can. 300 No association may call itself ‘catholic’ except with the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority, in accordance with can. 312.

Can. 301 §1 It is for the competent ecclesiastical authority alone to establish associations of Christ’s faithful which intend to impart Christian teaching in the name of the Church, or to promote public worship, or which are directed to other ends whose pursuit is of its nature reserved to the same ecclesiastical authority.

§2 The competent ecclesiastical authority, if it judges it expedient, can also establish associations of Christ’s faithful to pursue, directly or indirectly, other spiritual ends whose attainment is not adequately provided for by private initiatives.

§3 Associations of Christ’s faithful which are established by the competent ecclesiastical authority are called public associations.

Can. 302 Associations of Christ’s faithful are called clerical when they are under the

direction of clerics, presuppose the exercise of sacred orders, and are acknowledged as such by the competent authority.

Can. 303 Associations whose members live in the world but share in the spirit of some religious institute, under the overall direction of the same institute, and who lead an apostolic life and strive for Christian perfection, are known as third orders, or are called by some other suitable title.

Can. 304 §1 All associations of Christ's faithful, whether public or private, by whatever title or name they are called, are to have their own statutes. These are to define the purpose or social objective of the association, its centre, its governance and the conditions of membership. They are also to specify the manner of action of the association, paying due regard to what is necessary or useful in the circumstances of the time and place.

§2 Associations are to select for themselves a title or name which is in keeping with the practices of the time and place, especially one derived from the purpose they intend.

Can. 305 §1 All associations of Christ's faithful are subject to the supervision of the competent ecclesiastical authority. This authority is to ensure that integrity of faith and morals is maintained in them and that abuses in ecclesiastical discipline do not creep in. The competent authority has therefore the duty and the right to visit these associations, in accordance with the law and the statutes. Associations are also subject to the governance of the same authority in accordance with the provisions of the canons which follow.

§2 Associations of every kind are subject to the supervision of the Holy See. Diocesan associations are subject to the supervision of the local Ordinary, as are other associations to the extent that they work in the diocese.

Can. 306 To enjoy the rights and privileges, indulgences and other spiritual favours granted to an association, it is necessary and sufficient that a person be validly received into the association in accordance with the provisions of the law and with the association's own statutes, and be not lawfully dismissed from it.

Can. 307 §1 The admission of members is to take place in accordance with the law and with the statutes of each association.

§2 The same person can be enrolled in several associations.

§3 In accordance with their own law, members of religious institutes may, with the consent of their Superior, join associations.

Can. 308 No one who was lawfully admitted is to be dismissed from an association except for a just reason, in accordance with the law and the statutes.

Can. 309 Associations that are lawfully established have the right, in accordance with the

law and the statutes, to make particular norms concerning the association, for the holding of meetings, and for the appointment of moderators, officials, ministers and administrators of goods.

Can. 310 A private association which has not been constituted a juridical person cannot, as such, be the subject of duties and rights. However, the faithful who are joined together in it can jointly contract obligations. As joint owners and joint possessors they can acquire and possess rights and goods. They can exercise these rights and obligations through a delegate or a proxy.

Can. 311 Members of institutes of consecrated life who preside over or assist associations which are joined in some way to their institute, are to ensure that these associations help the apostolic works existing in the diocese. They are especially to cooperate, under the direction of the local Ordinary, with associations which are directed to the exercise of the apostolate in the diocese.

Chapter III

PRIVATE ASSOCIATIONS OF CHRIST'S FAITHFUL

Can. 321 Christ's faithful direct and moderate private associations according to the provisions of the statutes.

Can. 322 §1 A private association of Christ's faithful can acquire juridical personality by a formal decree of the competent ecclesiastical authority mentioned in can. 312.

§2 No private association of Christ's faithful can acquire juridical personality unless its statutes are approved by the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in can. 312 §1. The approval of the statutes does not, however, change the private nature of the association.

Can. 323 §1 Although private associations of Christ's faithful enjoy their own autonomy in accordance with can. 321, they are subject to the supervision of ecclesiastical authority, in accordance with can. 305, and also to the governance of the same authority.

§2 It is also the responsibility of ecclesiastical authority, with due respect for the autonomy of private associations, to oversee and ensure that there is no dissipation of their forces, and that the exercise of their apostolate is directed to the common good.

Can. 324 §1 A private association of Christ's faithful can freely designate for itself a moderator and officers, in accordance with the statutes.

§2 If a private association of Christ's faithful wishes to have a spiritual counselor, it can freely choose one for itself from among the priests who lawfully exercise a ministry in the diocese, but the priest requires the confirmation of the local Ordinary.

Can. 325 §1 A private association of Christ's faithful is free to administer any goods it possesses, according to the provisions of the statutes, but the competent ecclesiastical authority has the right to ensure that the goods are applied to the purposes of the association.

§2 In accordance with can.1301, the association is subject to the authority of the local Ordinary in whatever concerns the administration and distribution of goods which are

donated or left to it for pious purposes.

Can. 326 §1 A private association of Christ's faithful is extinguished in accordance with the norms of the statutes. It can also be suppressed by the competent authority if its activity gives rise to grave harm to ecclesiastical teaching or discipline, or is a scandal to the faithful.

§2 The fate of the goods of a private association which ceases to exist is to be determined in accordance with the statutes, without prejudice to acquired rights and to the wishes of donors.

Chapter IV

SPECIAL NORMS FOR LAY ASSOCIATIONS

Can. 327 Lay members of Christ's faithful are to hold in high esteem associations established for the spiritual purposes mentioned in can. 298. They should especially esteem those associations whose aim is to animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit, and thus greatly foster an intimate union between faith and life.

Can. 328 Those who head lay associations, even those established by apostolic privilege, are to ensure that their associations cooperate with other associations of Christ's faithful, where this is expedient. They are to give their help freely to various Christian works, especially those in the same territory.

Can. 329 Moderators of lay associations are to ensure that the members receive due formation, so that they may carry out the apostolate which is proper to the laity.

DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II ON THE CHURCH

Article 33

Gathered together in the people of God and established in the one body of Christ under one head, the laity, whoever they are, are called as living members to apply to the building up of the church and to its continual sanctification all the powers which they have received from the goodness of the Creator and from the grace of the Redeemer.

The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the church's saving mission. Through Baptism and Confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself. Moreover, by the sacraments, and especially by the sacred Eucharist, that love of God and humanity which is the soul of the entire apostolate is communicated and nourished. The laity, however, are given this special vocation: to make the church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that it can become the salt of the earth. Thus, all lay people, through the gifts which they have received, are at once the witnesses and the living instruments of the mission of the church itself "according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph. 4:7)

Besides this apostolate which belongs to absolutely every Christian, the laity can be called in different ways to more immediate cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy, like those men and women who helped the apostle Paul in the gospel, working hard in the Lord (see Phil 4:3; Rom 16:3 ff.). They may, moreover, be appointed by the hierarchy to certain ecclesiastical offices which have a spiritual aim.

All the laity, then, have the exalted duty of working for the ever greater extension of the divine plan of salvation to all people of every time and every place. Every opportunity should therefore be given them to share zealously in the salvific work of the church according to their ability and the needs of the times.

CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI

Article 9

Who Are The Lay Faithful?

The Synod Fathers have rightly pointed to the need for a definition of the lay faithful's vocation and mission in *positive terms*, through an in-depth study of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council in light of both recent documentation from the Magisterium and the lived experience of the Church, guided as she is by the Holy Spirit.

In giving a response to the question 'Who are the lay faithful', the Council went beyond previous interpretations which were predominantly negative. Instead it opened itself to a decidedly positive vision and displayed a basic intention of asserting the *full belonging of the lay faithful to the Church and to its mystery*. *At the same time it insisted on the unique character of their vocation*, which is in a special way to 'seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God.' 'The term "lay faithful"' – we read in the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* – 'is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state sanctioned by the Church. Through Baptism the lay faithful are made one body with Christ and are established among the People of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They carry out their own part in the mission of the whole church and the world.'

Pius XII once stated: 'The Faithful, more precisely the lay faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church's life; for them the Church is the animating principle for human society. Therefore, they in particular, ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness *not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church*, that is to say, the community of the faithful on earth under the leadership of the Pope, the head of all, and of the Bishops in communion with him. *These are the Church . . .*'

According to the Biblical image of the vineyard, the lay faithful, together with all the other members of the Church, are branches engrafted to Christ the true vine, and from him derive their life and fruitfulness.

Incorporation into Christ through faith and Baptism is the source of being a Christian in the mystery of the Church. This mystery constitutes the Christian's most basic 'features' and serves as the basis for all the vocations and dynamism of the Christian life of the lay faithful (cf Jn 3:5). In Christ who died and rose from the dead, the baptized become a 'new creation' (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17), washed clean from sin and brought to life through grace.

Therefore, only through accepting the richness in mystery that God gives to the Christian in Baptism is it possible to come to a basic description of the lay faithful.

Article 30 **'Criteria of Ecclesiality' for Lay Groups**

It is always from the perspective of the Church's communion and mission, and not in opposition to the freedom to associate, that one understands the necessity of having *clear and definite criteria for discerning and recognizing* such lay groups, also called 'Criteria of Ecclesiality'. The following basic criteria might be helpful in evaluating an association of the lay faithful in the Church.

- *The primacy given to the call of every Christian to holiness, as it is manifested 'in the fruits of grace which the spirit produces in the faithful' and in a growth towards the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity. In this sense whatever association of the lay faithful there might be, it is always called to be more of an instrument leading to holiness in the Church, through fostering and promoting 'a more intimate unity between the everyday life of its members and their faith.'*
- *The responsibility of professing the Catholic faith, embracing and proclaiming the truth about Christ, the Church and humanity, in obedience to the Church's Magisterium, as the Church interprets it. For this reason every association of the lay faithful must be a *forum* where the faith is proclaimed as well as taught in its total content.*
- *The witness to a strong and authentic communion in filial relationship to the Pope, in total adherence to the belief that he is the perpetual and visible centre of unity of the universal Church, and with the local Bishop, 'the visible principle and foundation of unity' in the particular Church, and in 'mutual esteem for all forms of the Church's apostolate.'*

The communion with Pope and Bishop must be expressed in loyal readiness to

embrace the doctrinal teachings and pastoral initiatives of both Pope and Bishop. Moreover, Church communion demands both an acknowledgement of a legitimate plurality of forms in the associations of the lay faithful in the Church and at the same time, a willingness to cooperate in working together.

- *Conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals*, that is, 'the evangelization and sanctification of humanity and the Christian formation of people's conscience, so as to enable them to infuse the spirit of the gospel into the various communities and spheres of life.'

From this perspective, every one of the group forms of the lay faithful is asked to have a missionary zeal which will increase their effectiveness as participants in a re-evangelisation.

- *A commitment to a presence in human society*, which in light of the Church's social doctrine, places it at the service of the total dignity of the person.

Therefore, associations of the lay faithful must become fruitful outlets for participation and solidarity in bringing about conditions that are more just and loving within society.

The fundamental criteria mentioned at this time find their verification in the *actual fruits* that various group forms show in their organizational life and the works they perform, such as: the renewed appreciation for prayer, contemplation, liturgical and sacramental life, the reawakening of vocations to Christian marriage, the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life; a readiness to participate in programs and Church activities at the local, national and international levels; a commitment to catechesis and a capacity for teaching and forming Christians; a desire to be present as Christians in various settings of social life and the creation and awakening of charitable, cultural and spiritual works; the spirit of detachment and evangelical poverty leading to a greater generosity in charity towards all; conversion to the Christian life or the return to Church communion of those baptized members who have fallen away from the faith.

DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II ON THE CHURCH

Article 11

The Family

The Creator made the married state the beginning and foundation of human society; by his grace he has made of it, too, a great mystery in Christ and in the church (see Eph 5:32) and so the apostolate of married persons and of families has a special importance for both church and civil society.

Christian couples are, for each other, for their children and for their relatives, cooperators of grace and witnesses of the faith. They are the first to pass on the faith to their children and to educate them in it. By word and example they form them to a Christian and apostolic life; they offer them wise guidance in the choice of vocation, and if they discover in them a sacred vocation they encourage it with every care.

To give clear proof in their own lives of the indissolubility and holiness of the marriage bond; to assert with vigor the right and duty of parents and guardians to give their children a Christian upbringing; to defend the dignity and legitimate autonomy of the family: this has always been the duty of married persons; today, however, it has become the most important aspect of their apostolate. They and all the faithful, therefore, should collaborate with men and women of good will in seeing that these rights are perfectly safeguarded in civil legislation; that in social administration consideration is given to the requirements of families in the matter of housing, education of children, working conditions, society security and taxes; and that in emigration regulations family life is perfectly safeguarded.

The mission of being the primary vital cell of society has been given to the family by God. This mission will be accomplished if the family, by the mutual affection of its members and by family prayer, presents itself as a domestic sanctuary of the church; if the whole family takes its part in the church's liturgical worship; if, finally, it offers active hospitality, and practices justice and other good works for the benefit of all its sisters and brothers who suffer from want. Among the various works of the family apostolate the following may be listed: adopting abandoned children, showing a loving welcome to strangers, helping with the running of schools, supporting adolescents with advice and

help, assisting engaged couples to make a better preparation for marriage, taking part in catechism-teaching, supporting married people and families in a material or moral crisis, and, in the case of the aged, providing them not only with what is indispensable but also procuring for them a fair share of the fruits of economic progress.

Everywhere and always, but especially in regions where the first seeds of the Gospel are being sown, or where the church is still in its infancy or finds itself in a critical situation, Christian families bear a very valuable witness to Christ before the world when all their life they remain attached to the Gospel and give clear examples of Christian marriage.

To attain the ends of their apostolate more easily it can be of advantage for families to organise themselves into groups.

THE FORMATION OF THE LAITY
Pontifical Council for the Laity

THREE OBJECTIVES OF THE FORMATION OF THE LAITY
Cardinal EDUARDO PIRONIO
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

“Friends of God and prophets” (Ws 7:27)

Let us begin with a text we read a few days ago during the liturgy of the Mass: “although alone, she (Wisdom) can do all; herself unchanging, she makes all things new. In each generation she passes into holy souls, she makes them friends of God and prophets; for God loves only the man who lives with Wisdom” (Ws 7:27-28). Friends of God and prophets! That is the goal of our formation: Christian men and women who are deeply involved in temporal realities, rooted at the heart of the Church and always ready to give the reason for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 P 3:15). This presupposes the continual growth in us of Christ, our life, sent by the Father to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom to the poor. The goal of our formation, ever new and ever uncompleted, is Christ: “until Christ is formed in you” (Ga 4:19), something that will only be accomplished in full when Christ is revealed (cf. Col 3:4) and then “we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is” (1 Jn 3:2).

This does not mean an unrealistic and disembodied formation. It means returning to the centre of our Christian faith. It is not naïve to think that the response that we Christians must give to the dramatic challenges of the contemporary world is one that must always be based on the Gospel; but a Gospel meditated and contemplated, enacted and shared, a Gospel really proclaimed by the force of the Spirit and given concrete expression each day in the ordinary conditions of our life. “Friends of God and prophets; for God loves only the man who lives with Wisdom.”

This is our wish during these days: “to live with Wisdom” (letting the Word of God enter

into us like the spring rain or the melted snow of the Prophet). Living with Wisdom during these days means living in an atmosphere of serenity, trust, brotherly joy and compliance, contemplative prayer and capacity for dialogue. The Plenary Assembly is not a parliamentary forum; it is a privileged moment, the most privileged moment of our Dicastery; the most important time in the life of our Council, even though it is not the most immediately visible and quotidian. It is the members of the Assembly who substantially form the Council; hence the importance of listening and sharing, seeking and proposing, praying and committing ourselves, the importance of “living with Wisdom”.

In this simple atmosphere of a family – Christian, ecclesial and apostolic -, I would like to propose to you three points of reflection on the theme that concerns us: “*formation*”. The three points are as follows: first, *formation for a missionary presence in the contemporary world* (being fully a Church of communion, a Church of the Trinity, and being deeply involved in the world of temporal realities); second, *formation for a new evangelization* (the need to interiorize the person of Christ by contemplation, to read “the signs of the time” in the world and the presence of the Lord in history, to proclaim the justice of the Kingdom with courage and to call men and women to conversion); and third, *formation for witness and prophecy* (in other words, a profound ecclesial formation in hope, since “each individual layperson must be a witness before the world to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus, and a sign of the living God” (LG, 38).

Apostolic Exhortation
CATECHESI TRADENDAE
Of His Holiness Pope John Paul II
To the Episcopate, the Clergy
And the Faithful of the Entire Catholic Church
On Catechesis in our Time

Catechesis and ecclesial community

Finally, catechesis is closely linked with the responsible activity of the Church and of Christians in the world. A person who has given adherence to Jesus Christ by faith and is endeavouring to consolidate that faith by catechesis needs to live in communion with those who have taken the same step. Catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren if no community of faith and Christian life takes the catechumen in at a certain stage of his catechesis. That is why the ecclesial community at all levels has a twofold responsibility with regard to catechesis: it has the responsibility of providing for the training of its members, but it also has the responsibility of welcoming them into an environment where they can live as fully as possible what they have learned.

Catechesis is likewise open to missionary dynamism. If catechesis is done well, Christians will be eager to bear witness to their faith, to hand it on to their children, to make it known to others, and to serve the human community in every way.

DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN COUNCIL II
Dogmatic Constitution of the Church
Article 12

The holy people of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office: it spreads abroad a living witness to him, especially by a life of faith and love and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips confessing his name (see Heb 13:15). The whole body of the faithful who have received an anointing which comes from the holy one (see 1 Jn 2:20 and 27) cannot be mistaken in belief. It shows this characteristic through the entire people's supernatural sense of the faith, when, "from the bishops to the last of the faithful," it manifests a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals. By this sense of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the people of God, guided by the sacred magisterium which it faithfully obeys, receives not the word of human beings, but truly the word of God (see 1 Th 2:13), "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). The people unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply through right judgement, and applies it more fully in daily life.

Moreover, it is not only through the sacraments and the ministries that the holy Spirit makes the people holy, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts "at will to each individual" (1 Cor 12:11), he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts, he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the church, as it is written, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit" (1 Cor 12:7). Whether these charisms be very remarkable or more simple and widely diffused, they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation since they are primarily suited to and useful for the needs of the church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be rashly desired, nor from them are the fruits of apostolic labors to be presumptuously expected. Those who have charge over the church should judge the genuineness and orderly use of these gifts, and it is especially their office not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is

good (see 1 Th 5:12 and 19-21).

DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN COUNCIL II
Article 8
Dogmatic Constitution Decree on Ecumenism

This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name, “spiritual ecumenism”.

It is a recognized custom for Catholics to meet for frequent recourse to that prayer for the unity of the church with which the Saviour himself on the eve of his death so fervently appealed to his Father: “That they may all be one” (Jn 17:20).

In certain circumstances, such as in prayer services “for unity” and during ecumenical gatherings, it is allowable, indeed desirable, that Catholics should join in prayer with members of other Christian churches and communities. Such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine expression of the ties which still bind Catholics to their separated sisters and brothers. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt 19:20).

Yet worship in common (*communication in sacris*) is not to be considered as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of unity among Christians. There are two main principles upon which the practice of such common worship depends: first, that of the unity of the church which ought to be expressed; and second, that of the sharing in the means of grace. The expression of unity generally forbids common worship. Grace to be obtained sometimes commends it. The concrete course to be adopted, when all the circumstances of time, place and persons have been duly considered, is left to the prudent decision of the local Episcopal authority, unless the bishops’ conference according to its

own statutes, or the holy See, has determined otherwise.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH UNDERSTOOD AS COMMUNION

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Chapter II

The Universal Church and Particular Churches

The Church of Christ, which we profess in the Creed to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic, is the universal Church, that is, the worldwide community of the disciples of the Lord, which is present and active amid the particular characteristics and the diversity of persons, groups, times and places. Among these manifold particular expressions of the saving presence of the one Church of Christ, there are to be found, from the time of the apostles on, those entities which are in themselves Churches, because, although they are particular, the universal Church becomes present in them with all her essential elements. They are therefore constituted “after the model of the universal Church”, and each of them is “a portion of the People of God entrusted to a bishop to be guided by him with the assistance of his clergy.”

The universal Church is therefore the body of the Churches. Hence it is possible to apply the concept of communion in analogous fashion to the union existing among particular Churches, and to see the universal Church as a communion of Churches. Sometimes, however, the idea of a “communion of particular Churches” is presented in such a way as to weaken the concept of the unity of the Church at the visible and institutional level. Thus it is asserted that every particular Church is a subject complete in itself, and that the universal Church is the result of a reciprocal recognition on the part of the particular

Churches. This ecclesiological unilateralism, which impoverishes not only the concept of the universal Church but also that of the particular Church, betrays an insufficient understanding of the concept of communion. As history shows, when a particular Church has sought to become self-sufficient and has weakened its real communion with the universal Church and with its living and visible center, its internal unity suffers too, and it finds itself in danger of losing its own freedom in the face of the various forces of enslavement and exploitation.

In order to grasp the true meaning of the analogical application of the term *communion* to the particular Churches taken as a whole, one must bear in mind above all that the particular Churches, insofar as they are “part of the one Church of Christ,” have a special relationship of “mutual interiority” with the whole, that is, with the universal Church, because in every particular Church “the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active.” For this reason, “the universal Church cannot be conceived as the sum of the particular Churches, or as a federation of particular Churches.” It is not the result of the communion of the Churches, but, in its essential mystery, it is a reality ontologically and temporally prior to every individual particular Church.

Indeed, according to the Fathers, ontologically, the Church-mystery, the Church that is one and unique, precedes creation, and gives birth to the particular Churches as her daughters. She expresses herself in them; she is the mother and not the offspring of the particular Churches. Furthermore, the Church is manifested, temporally, on the day of Pentecost in the community of the one hundred and twenty gathered around Mary and her twelve apostles, the representatives of the one unique Church and the founders-to-be of the local Churches, who have a mission directed to the world. From the first the Church speaks all languages.

From the Church, which in its origins and its first manifestation is universal, have arisen the different local Churches, as particular expressions of the one unique Church of Jesus Christ. Arising within and out of the universal Church, they have their ecclesiality in her and from her. Hence the formula of the Second Vatican Council: The Church in and formed out of the Churches is inseparable from this other formula: The Churches in and formed out of the Church. Clearly the relationship between the universal Church and the particular Churches is a mystery and cannot be compared to that which exists between the whole and the parts in a purely human group or society.

Every member of the faithful, through faith and Baptism, is inserted into the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. He does not belong to the universal Church in a mediate way, through belonging to a particular Church, but in an immediate way, even though entry into and life within the universal Church are necessarily brought about in a particular Church. From the point of view of the Church understood as communion, the universal

communion of the faithful and the communion of the Churches are not consequences of one another but constitute the same reality seen from different viewpoints.

Moreover, one's belonging to a particular Church never conflicts with the reality that in the Church no one is a stranger. Each member of the faithful, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, is in his Church, in the Church of Christ, regardless of whether or not he belongs, according to canon law, to the diocese, parish or other particular community where the celebration takes place. In this sense, without impinging on the necessary regulations regarding juridical dependence, whoever belongs to one particular Church belongs to all the Churches, since belonging to the *communio*, like belonging to the Church, is never simply particular, but by its very nature is always universal.