

THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE CHURCH CATHOLIC

The Contemporary Theological Problematic

Joseph A. Komonchak
The Catholic University of America

A survey of contemporary theological writings on the theme of this symposium quickly encounters the problem of the terminology in which the questions are posed. The fluidity of Vatican II's language is notorious,¹ and the two new Codes of Canon Law have not succeeded in imposing a universally acceptable vocabulary.² Further investigations reveal, however, that underlying and often determining the terminological disagreements lie options taken with regard to certain substantive questions: what are the elements constitutive of a Church and what are the relations among them? where is the Church realized? does the local or the universal Church have "priority"?, and what is the ecclesial significance of particularity or locality? This essay will focus on these issues in contemporary theology.³

The Elements Constitutive of a Church

The literature reveals a general consensus that the relation between the local Church and the whole Church is unique. Authors commonly exclude two misunderstandings of it: first, that the universal Church results simply from the federation of already existing local Churches, and, second, that the local Church is simply an administrative subdivision or "part" of the universal Church. Authors usually appeal to the statements in LG 23 that while the particular Churches "are formed in the image of the universal Church," it is only "in and out of them that the one and unique catholic Church exists." This and other conciliar statements are invoked in support of a common agreement that the local Church is a full realization of the distinctive spiritual reality of the one Church, its representation in various spaces and times.

This view builds upon the identification of the constitutive principles of the Church. With variations in emphasis, some of them significant, the following are usually invoked: the call of God, the Word of Christ, the grace of the Spirit, the Eucharist, the apostolic ministry, all of them grounding and generating the communion that is the distinctive mystery of the Church. Where all of these principles generate a community, there is the Church, not simply a "part" of the Church but the full reality of the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Spirit. For this reason, the whole Church cannot be said to result from the addition or sum of all the local Churches. The principles that generate a local Church as the catholic Church at the same time generate also all the other local Churches and the communion among them that is the one catholic Church. On the one hand, then, in terms of the

spiritual reality nothing more is realized on any wider or higher level of the Church's life than is realized in the local Church.⁴ On the other hand, what occurs in the local Churches is an event universal, catholic, in its innermost dimensions. A number of authors propose seeing this mutual inclusion as the ecclesial reflection of the circuminsession of the three divine persons in the one nature of God.⁵

judicial

Some authors illumine the relations between local Church and universal Church chiefly by reference to the relations between episcopacy and primacy. On this view, the "universal Church" is the Church over which the pope presides and the "particular Church" the one over which a bishop presides, the relation between the two then being deduced from the relation between the powers of the pope and those of the bishop. This relation is often determined by the supreme and universal authority of the pope and/or the whole episcopal college, which serves as the criterion for assertions about the individual bishop and, therefore, also of his particular Church.

X

Other authors vigorously criticize this approach and insist that a consideration of the nature of the Church take methodological priority.⁶ They stress that the one Church over which the pope and college exercise supreme and universal authority is a communion of Churches and that the bearers of this authority, including the pope himself, are heads of local Churches. Important and necessary as they are, the authority and powers of the visible principles of unity in the local Churches and within the communion of Churches derive from the generative spiritual and sacramental principles of the Church. The apostolic ministers of the Church exist for the service of a local and universal communion which they do not generate but which is the presupposition and the basis of their own authority.

Where is the Church Realized?

At this point the question arises as to where, that is, in which individual communities of the faithful, the Church is realized. The obvious way to answer this question is to determine where the generative principles are all operative; but it also turns on judgements of the relations among the constitutive principles themselves. Leonardo Boff, for example, takes faith to be "the minimal constitutive reality of the particular Church" and thus concludes that a basic Christian community is already a realization of the universal Church.⁷ From a rather different standpoint, Severino Dianich focuses on the intersubjective process by which the faith is communicated and subjectively received and appropriated. This is the primary and always indispensable event through which the Church is generated. All the features of the Church, including its universal or catholic dimensions, are then derived from within this necessarily particular or local event,

occurring, it may be, even among "two or three persons united in the name of Jesus, who believe or communicate in faith."⁸

For other authors, the minimal ecclesial reality is the "altar-community," that is, a community of believers able to celebrate the eucharist under the leadership of an ordained minister. Although many take as the archetypical form of such a celebration a eucharist presided over by a bishop, others argue that it can also be realized in a parish or other small community. In support of this view they invoke the co-mediation of eucharist and Church ("The Church makes the Eucharist; the Eucharist makes the Church."), confirmed by the passage which was added to LG 26 precisely in order to provide a theological validation of eucharistic communities, whether parochial or others, within diocesan Churches.⁹ This position would seem to follow, even if contrary to the intention of some authors, from their strong insistence on the eucharistic assembly as the primary realization of the Church in which the mutual inclusion of the local Church and the entire Church is most clearly realized and demonstrated.¹⁰

Most authors, however, including those just cited, reserve the status of a full local Church for the diocese, presided over by a bishop.¹¹ The patristic vision of the local Church with its close association of Eucharist, Church, and Bishop here dominates. The original situation in which there was a single eucharist celebrated under the bishop is the archetype, and the later multiplication of eucharistic assemblies within one episcopal Church is dealt with by considering the local diocesan Church as itself a communion of eucharistic communions.¹² The eucharist remains at the center and serves as the basis for the theology not only of the episcopal office but also of the mutual inclusion of the local Church and the universal Church, of which the bishop is the visible ministerial principle.¹³

Other authors emphasize other elements in the articulation of the one Church in the many particular Churches (dioceses). Bertrams sees the multiplicity of the Churches as the way in which the Church witnesses to and realizes the fullness of Christ into which all authentic human values are to be taken up.¹⁴ Legrand sees theological significance in the territorial delimitation of dioceses in that this geographical locality ensures that socio-cultural particularity will not become the sole or even the primary reason why people gather in local ecclesial assemblies. Territorial division and the traditional insistence that there be only one bishop in a diocese thus assure that catholicity, the integration of plurality into unity, is not simply a matter of external bonds with other Churches or with the universal Church, but an inner and constitutive dimension of the local Church itself.¹⁵

What is meant by a diocese, however, has shifted considerably over the centuries, the eucharistic role of the bishop often losing importance in favor of jurisdictional powers or of administrative

tasks. Karl Rahner argued that the diocese is theologically legitimated by its capacity for ecclesial functions other than the eucharist and defined a bishop, no longer by reference to his presidency in Word, eucharist, and governance over a local assembly, but by participation in the powers of a "supreme governing board of the universal Church."¹⁶ This position is in some tension with Rahner's theology of the local Church, for which the eucharistic assembly is the most intense realization of the Church as event; it amounts to a theological legitimation of the sociological transformation of the diocese into a large administrative unit. Rahner did have the insight, however, to raise the problem of what he calls "the relationship and the tension between the theoretical and the real structures of the Church," that is between the concentration of pastoral ministry in the bishop as described in Lumen gentium and the fact that most bishops are mainly administrators while most concrete pastoral ministries are carried out by priests in parishes.¹⁷ This is a serious question which needs to be taken into account before one can simply assert that what was true of an Ignatius of Antioch or a Cyprian and of their Churches is also true of the heads of huge dioceses and of their Churches today.¹⁸

The question also arises as to whether ecclesial groups larger than the diocese may be called Churches. There is impressive tradition in favor of this view, and Vatican II certainly had no hesitation in employing both "local Church" and "particular Church" for various groupings of diocesan Churches. But some authors still regard such groupings as Churches in only an analogous sense.¹⁹ This issue is settled in advance if the presence of the fullness of apostolic ministry is considered both necessary and sufficient to define a Church; a different answer is suggested if locality or particularity is included among its constitutive elements.

The Question of Priority

Common agreement about the mutual inclusion of local and universal Church has not prevented the question of priority between them from continuing to arise. The persistence of this question is due in part to the ambiguity or transitional character of the Council's doctrine on the Church,²⁰ which the new Latin Code continues to reflect.²¹ The Council begin its work within the perspectives of the universalist ecclesiology long dominant in the West, and its recovery of an ecclesiology of communion that underlies a theology of the local Church was at best hesitant and unsystematic.

Moreover, the neat formulation of the problem in LG 23, quoted earlier, itself suggests the problem. It is not simply a matter of keeping the two prepositions in the phrase "in quibus et ex quibus" in dialectical tension with one another,²² but also of taking into account the often neglected statement that the particular Churches

are "formed in the image of the universal Church."²³ For this claim appears to give a certain priority to the universal Church, while the "in quibus et ex quibus" formula appears to assign it to the particular Churches. This problem is also reflected in the parallel questions about the relations between the whole college and the individual bishop, about whether ordination first introduces a bishop into the episcopal college or constitutes him the head of a local Church, and about whether baptism introduces one first into the universal Church or into a local Church.²⁴

It will be helpful to give some illustrations of the reasons given for asserting the priority of either term in our relation. Ascribed to the universal Church,²⁵ it means: that only this is comprehensive, including the Church in heaven, that the local Church depends on the universal Church, that the universal Church has pre-eminence and absolute ontological priority (Mondin); that as the Church-from-above, the mystery of salvation, it exists in all the local Churches (Boff); that Christ founded only the universal Church and not the particular Churches (Bertrams, C. Colombo, Bandera, d'Ors); that the universal Church is the exemplary, efficient, and final cause of the local Church (Bertrams); that only the universal Church can be the universal sacrament of salvation (Bertrams, Bandera) and is assured of being indefectible and infallible (C. Colombo, Bandera), and holy (C. Colombo); that the universal Church precedes the local Churches temporally (Ratzinger).²⁶

Explicit assertions of a priority of the local Church are rarer. Bruno Forte defends its "primato" because the Church that is born in the Eucharist is "by priority" (prioritariamente) the local Church and in the sense that "there is no truly ecclesial act which is not by origin (originariamente) an act of a local Church."²⁷ Severino Dianich argues that the necessarily particular event of the communication and reception of the faith is the "first principle" of the Church from which all other elements are derived as developments of its universal virtualities.²⁸

Recent Roman concern about one-sided claims for the local Church may also be directed against various movements in favor of the basic Christian communities²⁹ and the communities which claim to be constructing "the Church from below."³⁰ This would seem to be the case, for example, in Ratzinger's vigorous reply to the claim that a local community may be said to have a "right" to the Eucharist.³¹ The recent working-paper on episcopal conferences expressed the fear that a one-sided emphasis on the local churches was threatening "the ontological and also historical priority of the universal Church over the particular church." "The Petrine Primacy itself, understood as 'plenitudo potestatis,'" it argued, "has no meaning and theological coherence except within the primacy of the one and universal Church over the particular and local Churches."³²

To support this claim the text cited three recent speeches of Pope John Paul II in which he warned that emphasis on the local Churches should not lead one to neglect that they "find their authentic meaning and their ecclesial consistency only as expressions and realizations of the 'Catholica,' of the one, universal, and original [primigenia] Church." In the last of the three talks cited, the Pope said that "while probing the concept of the local Church or, better, the particular Church, theologians will thus avoid the one-sided and untenable emphases which maintain that the Church is in origin and by priority (originariamente e prioritariamente) the local Church."³³

On both sides the question of priority has arisen out of concern about contemporary needs and challenges. The option for the priority of the local Church often expresses a desire to present a more accessible and immediate image of the Church, to defend the Council's call for the responsibility of all members of the Church, or to claim for the Churches room to exercise their own self-responsibility in the face of quite specific challenges. The priority assigned to the whole Church often expresses a concern that the unity of the Church not be compromised by various types of particularism and that the universal authority of the Pope not be weakened.

As legitimate as both sets of concerns are, to try to solve problems by asserting a priority on either side is surely a mistake. It is mistaken historically, because the Church which first emerged at Pentecost was at once local and catholic, gathered in Jerusalem but already speaking the one message in all languages, and because the Churches generated from that mother-church are the same Church, becoming catholic now concretely, in various other places.³⁴ "Ontologically," the mistake lies in imagining that the constitutive principles of the Church can ever realize the universal Church except in a local Church or a local Church except as the universal Church.³⁵

The arguments advanced for either position do reveal the disorienting effect of the "Copernican revolution" in ecclesiology,³⁶ represented by the shift from a universalistic ecclesiology to an ecclesiology of communion. As the quotations above indicate, the issue is whether certain attributes may be referred to the universal Church that are not referred to the local Church and vice-versa. If the question is asked of a single local Church, the answer appears at first sight to be clear: no local Church is promised indefectibility, infallibility, holiness, etc., and in this sense the universal Church transcends any single local Church. But there is an exception to this rule: the case, once realized in the mother-church of Jerusalem but not impossible again, in which only one local Church realizes the universal Church; in this case, all that is true of the universal Church is true also of this local Church.³⁷

This example itself suggests that the real comparison is not between the universal Church and an individual local Church, but between the universal Church and the communion of all the local Churches. In this perspective, the universal Church does not transcend the communion of local Churches: it is that communion. For that reason, the universal Church is not a distinct subject of existence, attributes, or activities; it does not exist "before" the local Churches and no more "imparts" its characteristics to the local Churches than the latter "participate" in it. Statements about the universal Church are true only insofar as they are verified in the local Churches. Not only does it not exist except in and out of the local Churches, only in and through them is it also one, holy, catholic, apostolic, indefectible, engaged in its mission, etc. To deny this would appear to make the universal Church into what scholastics call a universale ante rem.

Take as an example the claim that the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation. Only the catholic Church could fulfill this role, but it would still fulfill it if it were realized only in "the little flock" of one local Church (see LG 9) and can only fulfill this role now in and through the local Churches by which all the peoples and cultures of the world are restored to Christ (LG 13). The universal Church is not the "historical subject" through which Christ redeems the world except in and through the historical subjects of the local Churches' self-realization and mission in the world.³⁸

But it is just as confusing to claim that there are ecclesial acts which are by priority acts of the local Church, for this suggests that these are not acts of the universal Church. At first glance this also might seem to be true, since the whole communion of the Churches is not doing what the Church in, say, Bangkok is doing and what that Church is doing is not what the Church in Bogota is doing. And yet the Church in Bangkok or in Bogota is the one catholic Church present and active in those cities. As particular as the self-realization and the activities of these Churches are, it is the same catholic Church that in the one place is marked by its commitment to the poor and in the other by its inter-religious dialogue. Were no local Churches making such particular commitments, it would not be true that the catholic Church is opting for the poor and undertaking the dialogue among the religions. Local and particular options may distinguish one local Church from another, but they do not distinguish the local Church from the universal Church which only exists and acts in the local Churches. That is why a discussion of the relation between the local Church and the universal Church must treat the ecclesial significance of locality or particularity.

The Meaning and Relevance of Locality and Catholicity

The issues may be illustrated by Henri de Lubac's influential little book. De Lubac uses the term "particular Church" of the diocese, "the assembly of the baptized around a bishop teaching the faith and celebrating the Eucharist." Of this he says that "although it always exists in a given place and gathers people who care about all sorts of human concerns, the particular Church as such is not determined by either topography or by any other factor of a natural or human order, but by 'the mystery of faith.' In a word we would say that it's criterion is of an essentially theological order." On the other hand, the local Churches, by which de Lubac means larger groupings of particular Churches, have a "contingent" structure and are formed because of "simply human" factors. "We would say then...that to an appreciable degree their criterion is of a socio-cultural order."³⁹ While the particular church is said to belong to "the fundamental structure of the universal Church," the local Church is "something useful, indeed indispensable ad bonum Ecclesiae" because including the great cultural areas that constitute "the human geography of the Church."⁴⁰ The local Churches contribute to the catholicity of the Church because in them "to the element of divine unity...is joined a rich element of human variety. Thus is effected that union of the supernatural and of nature (that is, here, the human, the cultural) in which is recognized all that is authentically catholic."⁴¹

De Lubac's position is nuanced and cannot be said to neglect the importance of concrete local realizations of catholicity; but one may surely question some of its assumptions and the way in which it is expressed. What is striking about his view is not so much that the groupings of particular Churches into local Churches are not given the same theological status as the diocesan Church (although one can certainly question how de Lubac addresses this issue), but that particularity and locality are distinguished so sharply from one another. The result is that the particular Church appears to float in mid-air, constituted solely by theological, divine, supernatural elements,⁴² while socio-cultural locality represents at best the natural and human variety within catholicity, indispensable ad bonum Ecclesiae, and at worst centrifugal tendencies. Dimensions of concrete locality do not enter into the definition of the particular Church, and tension with catholicity almost defines the nature of the local Church.

The basic question is asked by Giuseppe Colombo: whether the local, socially, culturally, and historically specific elements can be constitutive characteristics of the local Churches.⁴³ For Colombo the generative elements of the Church common to all the Churches--Word, eucharist, and charisms--are also the vital principles of the diversities found among them. They themselves thus provide a richer, more ontological plurality than the more superficial sociological differences. To characterize the local Churches by the latter is to use an extrinsic designation and to

run the risk of underestimating the new life which the Church brings with it and which requires it always to confront any historical culture. "Thus cultures cannot be the constitutive element that characterizes local Churches: a cultural characterization of them can only be conventional and therefore superficial, basically misleading."

For Colombo, "no culture can make the Church; only the Word of God, the eucharist, and charisms can make the Church." Ecclesial diversity arises from the varying interplay of these constitutive elements. The different cultures "have only the value of an introduction or of a 'pre-understanding,'" which, while necessary and inevitable, is secondary, determined rather than determining. "It is somewhat like matter in relation to form, but in a concept of matter as continually predetermined and modified by the form." "Only the diversity of Christian (my emphasis) experience can explain the multiplicity and differences among the particular Churches, the diversity of Christian experience produced by the infinite ways in which the Word of God can be assimilated, the life of Jesus Christ can be shared and reproduced, and one can be open and docile to the charisms."

Colombo is correct that the constitutive principles of the Church themselves generate not only the Church's unity but its diversity also: it is differences in Christian experience itself which characterize the local Churches. But one may question whether it does not oversimplify the nature of Christian experience itself if the cultural pre-understanding is presented simply as unformed "matter" that receives its determination by the "form" of the distinctive elements generative of the Church. As Donato Valentini has pointed out, this runs the danger of regarding the human element in the construction of the Church as merely passive and receptive and thus of "interpreting the Word of God, the eucharist, and the Spirit's charisms as realities which somehow pass over man's head."⁴⁴

In part under Colombo's influence, the same analogy appears in more nuanced form in the International Theological Commission discussion of the relation between "The Church as 'Mystery' and as 'Historical Subject.'"⁴⁵ The Commission located the distinctiveness of the Church in its Spirit-inspired memory and expectation of Jesus Christ and in its mission to proclaim them to all people. But "with this memory, this hope, and this mission it is not a matter of a reality which is placed upon or added to an existence or activities already being lived." The Church's activity is "the confrontation of a human activity in all its forms with Christian hope, or, to keep to our vocabulary, with the demands of the memory and hope of Jesus Christ." The Commission then used the Scholastic analogy:

The new People of God is not, then, characterized by a way of existence or a mission which substitute for

an existence and for human projects already present. The memory and hope of Jesus Christ must rather convert or transform from within the way of existence and the human projects already being lived in a group of people. One might say that the memory and hope of Jesus Christ by which the new People of God lives are like the "formal" element (in the scholastic sense of the term) which must structure the concrete existence of people. The latter, which is like the "matter" (again in the scholastic sense), free and responsible, of course, receives one or another of a variety of determinations in order to constitute a way of life "according to the Spirit." These ways of life do not exist a priori and cannot be determined in advance; they display a great diversity and are thus always unforeseeable even if they can be related to the constant action of the one Holy Spirit. On the other hand, what these different ways of life have in common and as a constant is that they express the demands and joys of the Gospel of Christ "in the ordinary conditions of family and social life in which human existence is interwoven" (see LG 31).⁴⁶

This states more clearly the freedom and responsibility of the "material element," the existence and projects within which and to which the Gospel is preached. These are not abolished nor even replaced by the announcement of the memory and hope of Christ, but rather transformed from within in ways that cannot be anticipated in advance but which will represent ever new and different ways in which the Spirit realizes the power of the Gospel to guide and inspire human existence.⁴⁷

This discussion shows the importance for ecclesiology of prior theological options, and in particular of the question of what Ratzinger calls "the value and necessity of the anthropological in theology."⁴⁸ The place within an ontology of the Church of what has been called its "humanly subjective pole"⁴⁹ is the question not only of the relationship between God's freedom and human freedom in the genesis of the Church, but also of the relations between human freedom, sin, and grace in the self-construction of cultures themselves. If the encounter between Gospel and culture were simply the contestazione between grace and sin, then Colombo's view might stand. But if the Gospel finds in the various cultures not only what needs to be "purified" and "elevated," but also what can be "promoted" and "taken up" (see LG 13), then the encounter is far more complex.⁵⁰

It must also be asked whether it is even possible to speak of diverse Christian experiences without taking account of the total human experience in which the constitutive genetic principles are received. As history amply demonstrates, social, cultural, and even geographical factors have been crucial determinations of the various legitimate diversities among the local Churches. These

factors, then, are not simply receptive "matter;" they have also served as the "formal principle" of local Churches. It is, of course, true that the Gospel does effect a discretio spirituum within particular cultures, and it is the Gospel and not the cultural particularities which primarily generate a Church. But a local Church arises out of the encounter between the Gospel and a particular culture, a set of specific social and historical experiences, and this encounter, as it differs from other encounters of Gospel and culture,⁵¹ must also generate a constitutively different local Church.

A few years ago, Pope John Paul II, commenting on LG 13, described the relationship between particular Christian experiences and the whole Church.⁵² The Pope began with the "gifts" of various peoples which the Church must harmonize "in a higher unity," to the mutual enrichment of the parts and of the whole. He went on to talk about "the particular Churches with their own traditions" of which that conciliar text spoke, leading one to see the universal Church "as a communion of (particular) Churches and, indirectly, as a communion of nations, languages, and cultures." He noted contemporary emphasis on "the 'special' Christian experiences which the particular Churches are having in the socio-cultural context in which each is called to live":

Such special experiences concern, it is stressed, the Word of God, which must be read and understood in the light of the givens that emerge from their own existential journeys; liturgical prayer, which must draw from the cultures in which they are inserted the signs, gestures, and words which serve adoration, worship, and celebration; theological reflection, which must appeal to the categories of thought typical of each culture; ecclesial communion itself, which sinks its roots in the Eucharist, but which depends for its concrete unfolding on historical and temporal conditions that derive from insertion in the milieu of a particular country or of a particular part of the world.⁵³

It is customary, of course, after such an affirmation of particularity to stress the need for unity, and the Pope himself issues such a warning. But his immediate reference is not to the universal Church, but to other particular Churches:

But to be fruitful, these perspectives presuppose respect for an unavoidable condition: such experiences must not be lived in isolation or independently of, not to say in contradiction to, the lives of the Churches in other parts of the world. To constitute authentic experiences of the Church, they must in themselves be synthesized with the experiences which other Christians, in touch with different cultural contexts, feel called

to live in order to be faithful to the demands that flow from the single and identical mystery of Christ.

His subsequent invocation of the phrase "mutual inclusion", has the same reference:

In fact among the individual particular Churches there is an ontological relationship of mutual inclusion: every particular Church, as a realization of the one Church of Christ, is in some way present in all the particular Churches "in which and out of which the one and unique catholic Church has its existence." This ontological relation must be translated on the dynamic level of concrete life, if the Christian community does not wish to be in contradiction with itself: the basic ecclesial choices of believers in one community must be able to be harmonized with those of the faithful in the other communities, in order to allow that communion of minds and hearts for which Christ prayed at the Last Supper.

In other words, the comparison is not between "special" Christian experiences and some unitary "universal" Christian experience, but between the special experiences of one Church and those of the others, all of them attempts to be faithful, locally, to "the demands that flow from the single and universal mystery of Christ."

Finally, the Pope presents the special role of the Apostolic See as the service of this catholic unity: "to see to it that the 'gifts' to which the conciliar text alludes flow towards the center of the Church and that these same gifts, enriched by the mutual encounter, flow out to the various members of the Mystical Body of Christ, bringing them new impulses of fervor and of life."

These papal reflections suggest the usefulness of introducing into our discussion, besides the relation between the universal Church and the local Churches, the relations of mutual inclusion that exist among the latter. It may even be possible to say that the communion of the many local Churches is in fact the mutual inclusion that exists among all the local Churches, and that the role of the Bishop of Rome is not best conceived as one of mediating between a local Church and the universal Church, imagined as something above all the local Churches, but between one local Church and the other local Churches, to assure, that is, that the "special Christian experiences" possible because of their socio-cultural particularities do not contradict one another but that, harmonized with and enriched by one another, they may constitute a genuine communion. In other words the communion that constitutes the universal Church is precisely the mutual inclusion of all the local Churches.

The mutual inclusion that defines the communion among the Churches, then, is richer than often appears in the literature. Most authors discuss this inclusion solely in terms of the divine principles of the Church, Word and Sacrament, leaving out of consideration their reception in the believing community. But the local Church arises only out of the encounter of divine and human freedom that generates its distinctive Christian experience. It is the integration of these concrete experiences into a catholic synthesis that constitutes the real challenge of catholicity. The various Churches bring to one another not only their natural cultural gifts, but their special Christian experiences generated by the encounter between Gospel and culture. The achievement of catholicity requires the symphonic harmony of all the special, local ecclesial experiences.⁵⁴

9. As Tillard has noted, this makes "inculturation" and "reception" central notions in ecclesiology,⁵⁵ a position paralleled in Dianich's discussion of the role of subjectivity, in that communication and reception of the faith that constitutes the primordial and protean event of the Church. This process cannot be analyzed without taking into account the subjectivity--the concrete historicity--both of those who in earlier generations received and appropriated the faith and handed it on and of those to whom it is now proclaimed and in whose historical projects it must be received.⁵⁶

In two recent works Dianich has developed his thought into a discussion of the relation between the nature and the mission of the Church. The necessarily particular, that is local and historical, character of the founding event of the Church's genesis means that the Church's mission may not be left for a late chapter in an ecclesiology but represents in fact the concrete realization of the Church's nature itself. "In fact, non only does the Church carry out the mission; the mission realizes the Church."⁵⁷

But this directs attention to the missions in which the local Churches realize themselves. It is indeed possible to discuss the Church's genesis in general or (as I am tempted to call them, "heuristic") terms and even to speak of a single mission of the Church, defined by its christological, pneumatological, and eschatological dimensions. But the one mission is undertaken only within the specific missions of the particular Churches where the founding event takes place everyday. This event, the realization of the specific mission in and to different historical circumstances, always involves a new, original, and unrepeatable experience precisely because the event is the encounter, not between Gospel or charism and mankind in general, but between Gospel or charism and the concrete, particular, pre-existing subjectivity of these men and women, here and now. Each individual Church is a new and distinct "encounter between the liberating freedom of the Spirit and the liberated freedom of man."⁵⁸

In the local Church, the particular mission generates a distinct self-awareness, irreducible to others or to a single pattern because grounded in and related to "its concrete life-situation, its concrete network of relationships, the concrete persons it addresses, and the concrete particular situation in which its mission unfolds." Thus a Church confronting the challenge of the world religions will have a different self-awareness than one facing the challenges of post-colonialism, or of poverty, or of post-Christian secularization. The one Church cannot realize itself except in these and similar historical engagements. Nor is this a denial of catholicity, but its realization: "The church's self-incarnation in situations and, therefore, its awareness of itself as a historically determined subject so far from negating its universality, constitutes its real transcendence, since this is the way in which it enters into relation with each and with all without ever exhausting the totality of its possibilities."⁵⁹

Dianich's essays reveal the key substantive issue to be the way in which unity, catholicity, and locality are related to one another. When unity and catholicity are practically identified, locality can only be considered as the ecclesiological equivalent of individuating matter in scholastic philosophy, that is, it is left without intelligible content. When catholicity is understood to add to unity dimensions of plurality and integration, locality (that is cultural and historical particularity) is seen to be an inner dimension and requirement of catholicity, which is now understood as "fullness in unity" and, so far from a denial of the unity of the Church, as the most splendid illustration of its concretely universal character (see LG 26). The local elements, of course, are not the principles of the Church's unity and, in that sense, of the Church-character of the local communities; but they are what makes such communities local Churches, and, since the one catholic Church only exists in and out of such local Churches, they are also, precisely in their cultural and historical particularity, what makes the whole Church catholic.⁶⁰ Paradoxical as it may seem, then, locality, so far from being the antithesis of catholicity is its very realization.

The catholicity of the Church, then, also is only realized in and out of the local Churches. It characterizes the essential redemptive work of the local Church as this gathers up into unity the diversities that characterize its members, and this, as noted above, provides a theological basis for territorial units such as the parish and the diocese. This redemptive catholicity is concretely realized and experienced in the historical missions that distinguish local Churches from another. Because the divine principles of this local catholicity are the same everywhere, however, there is an inner exigence that all these particular experiences be open to one another, challenge one another, be inclusive of one another, and thus be integrated into that catholicity that makes the whole Church throughout the world the

same redemptive principle of unity that the local Church is in its particular situation.

All this makes it clear that the Church's catholicity is always something that must be achieved. It must be realized because the essence of the Church is the assembling into diversified unity made possible because of the Word of Christ and the grace of the Spirit. But it must be achieved ever anew because these divine principles do not effect catholic unity, either locally or universally, on some abstract or merely formal level but only by generating among the members of the Church and among the local Churches the liberated freedom by which these become the subjects at once of the Church's self-realization and of its mission in the world.⁶¹

Concluding Remarks

Let me conclude by short remarks on a key methodological issue.⁶² Much ecclesiology is often content to describe the objective and formal elements that constitute and distinguish the Christian Church from all other human communities. These are usually identified in the unique divine initiatives--Word, grace, Sacrament, apostolic ministry--which lie at the historical origin of the Church and generate the Ecclesia de Trinitate everyday. The articulation of these divine principles and of the relations among them grounds in ecclesiology an image of the Church that focuses on what is universal in all realizations of the Church and therefore generate the communion that makes the many Churches one Church. The methodological bias of such ecclesiologies is, therefore, in favor of the one universal Church, with the question of the local Church arising only secondarily if indeed at all.

But if this is where an ecclesiology not only begins but ends, it tells only half the story. For the objective principles of the Church's realization do not constitute the Church except insofar as they are received and appropriated in the acts of faith, hope, and love of the human members of the Church. Under the Word and by the power of the Spirit men and women are also the subjects of the Church's self-realization. Thus the formal principle of the Church's genesis includes not only the gifts of God but also the freedom of men and women with which they receive them.

When the human subjects of the Church's realization are introduced into ecclesiology, the focus shifts to include also the local communities in which alone the Church is realized, since human freedom is never realized except in particular individuals and communities and as a moment in their historical self-projects. This does not mean an option for the local in place of the universal; in fact, it represents the basic methodological shift required in order to understand why it is a fatal mistake to counterpose the two adjectives. But it does mean that a general

ecclesiology of the formal elements of the Church has to include as a necessary and intrinsic dimension a consideration of the co-constituting freedom of the human subjects of the Church's realization. A treatise De Ecclesia would then become a heuristic discipline, identifying and articulating the divine and human principles of the one Church's genesis in and out of local Churches. Ecclesiology would thus become the general theory of the self-realization of the Church in the Churches, setting out the normative and thus universal elements by which local communities realize the one Church, and provoking, as an immediate necessity, the construction of local ecclesiologies exploring not simply what it means to be the Church in general, but what it means to be the one Church locally, here and now, in response to specific challenges and opportunities.

NOTES

¹ See Winfried Aymans, "Die Communio Ecclesiarum als Gestaltgesetz der einen Kirche," AKKR, 39 (1970), 70-75. Since some authors think that the Council favored the identification of the "particular" Church with the diocese, it is worth noting the bishops deliberately retained other uses of it (see the vigorous defence of the phrase in Orientalium Ecclesiarum in Acta Synodalia, III/VIII [Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1976], pp. 563-64, and the exploration of its implications by N. Edelby, "Les Eglises particulières ou rites," in Les Eglises orientales catholiques: Decret "Orientalium Ecclesiarum" [Unam Sanctam, 76; Paris: du Cerf, 1970], pp. 127-72) and that, since a major development of the theme of the local Church took place during the Council (see Wolfgang Beinert, "Die Una Catholica und die Partikularkirchen," Theologie und Philosophie, 42 [1967], 8-10), the terminology used in later texts should not be disregarded.

²The history of the terminological options made by the writers of the new Code deserves study. Two pieces of the dossier may be found in George Nedungatt, "Ecclesia universalis, particularis, singularis," Nuntia, 2 (1976), 75-87, and in W. Onclin, "Ordinatio Ecclesiae universae in specie ad Ecclesias rituales sui iuris quod attinet," Revue de Droit Canonique, 30 (1980), 304-17; see also Roch Pagé, "Note sur la terminologie employée par le Code de Droit Canonique de 1983 pour parler de l'Eglise," The New Code of Canon Law: Proceedings of the 5th International Congress of Canon Law, Ottawa, August 19-25, 1986 (Ottawa: Faculty of Canon Law, St. Paul University, 1986), vol. I, pp. 271-74.

³Valuable annotated bibliographies on the local Church can be found in Mario Mariotti, "Appunti bibliografici," Vita e pensiero, 54 (1971), 347-75, and in Antonio Contri, "La teologia della Chiesa locale e i suoi orientamenti fondamentali," Euntes Docete, 25 (1972), 333-401; see also Jose R. Villar, Teologia de la Iglesia particular: El tema en la literatura de lengua francesa hasta el Concilio Vaticano II (Pamplona: Ed. Universidad de Navarra, 1989).

⁴See Aymans, "Die Communio Ecclesiarum," pp. 81-82; see also Antonio M. Rouco Varela, "Iglesia Universal - Iglesia Particular," Ius Canonicum, 22 (1982), 231-32.

⁵For examples, see Wolfgang Beinert, "Die Una Catholica und die Partikularkirchen," Theologie und Philosophie, 42 (1967), 3-4; Yves Congar, "La Tri-unité de Dieu et l'Eglise," in Essais oecuméniques: Le mouvement, les hommes, les problèmes (Paris: Le Centurion, 1984), pp. 297-312.

⁶Giuseppe Colombo, "La teologia della Chiesa locale," in La teologia della Chiesa locale (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1969), pp. 29-30. See also Hervé Legrand, "Nature de l'Eglise particulière et rôle de l'évêque dans l'Eglise," in La charge pastorale des évêques: Décret "Christus Dominus" (Unam Sanctam, 71; Paris: du Cerf, 1969), pp. 115-21; "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," in Initiation à la pratique de la théologie, III (Paris: du Cerf, 1983), pp. 169-71.

⁷Leonardo Boff, EcclesioGenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), p. 19; note, however, that Boff immediately distinguishes the degrees in which communities of Christians "express" the universal Church, with the basic communities at the lowest level, and later, pp. 61-62, insists on the crucial ecclesial importance of the Eucharist.

⁸Dianich, "Soggettività e chiesa," in Associazione Teologica Italiana, Teologia e progetto-uomo in Italia (Assisi: Cittadella, 1980), p. 116.

⁹It is often overlooked that this passage refers to worshipping communities within the diocese, as the Relatio of the Doctrinal Commission made clear: "Consideratur... Ecclesia particularis praesertim infra dioecesim, sive sit paroecialis, sive alia ratione convocetur, semper tamen sub dependentia ab Episcopo;" AS, III/I, p. 253.

¹⁰When, for example, Joseph Ratzinger says that "the worshipping assembly provides the starting-point for the idea of the Church," (see "Demokratisierung in der Kirche?" in Ratzinger-Maier, Demokratie in der Kirche: Möglichkeiten, Grenzen, Gefahren [Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1970], p. 39) it is not surprising that readers should think first of the parish or other small eucharistic gathering. For other examples, see Karl Rahner, "Theology of the Parish," in The Parish: from Theology to Practice, ed. H. Rahner (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1958), pp. 23-35; Bouyer, L'Eglise de Dieu: Corps du Christ et Temple de l'Esprit (Paris: du Cerf, 1970), pp. 333-43, 365-71; Tillard, L'Eglise d'Eglises: L'ecclésiologie de communion (Paris: du Cerf, 1987), p. 47.

¹¹E. Lanne, for example, says that "only the episcopal Church is a true and complete Church," the parishes being only its "integrating parts." Parishes are of divine right "insofar as the communities gathered in them are of divine right and are a figure of the one Catholic Church," but not "in virtue of their own structure and nature, which depend on the local episcopal Church;" "Chiesa locale," Dizionario del Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano Secondo, ed. S. Garofalo (Rome: UNEDI, 1969), c. 804. For Aymans, parishes cannot materially realize all the functions of the Church; art. cit., p. 75.

¹²See, for example, Tillard, L'Eglise d'Eglises, p. 47.

¹³See Legrand, "Nature de l'Eglise particulière," pp. 113-19; "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," Initiation à la pratique de la théologie, pp. 169-70.

¹⁴Bertrams, "L'ufficio dell'unità della Chiesa e la moltitudine delle Chiese," Vita e pensiero, 54 (1971), 271-72.

¹⁵Legrand, "La délimitation des diocèses," in La charge pastorale des évêques, pp. 177-219; "Inverser Babel, mission de l'Eglise: La vocation des églises particulières au sein de la mission universelle," Spiritus, 11 (1970), 335-39; "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," pp. 171-76. See also Bouyer, L'Eglise de Dieu, pp. 365-71, and John D. Zizioulas, Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985). A similar argument has been made on behalf of the territorial parish, in response either to a call for smaller, "intentional" communities or to an effort to relate contemporary "movements" primarily to the universal Church. For the first question, see Karl Lehmann, "Was ist eine christliche Gemeinde? Theologische Grundstrukturen," Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift "Communio", 1 (1972), 481-97; "Chancen und Grenzen der neuen Gemeindeftheologie," ibid., 6 (1977), 111-27; Karl Neumann, "Diasporakirche als sacramentum mundi: Karl Rahner und die Diskussion um Volkskirche - Gemeindekirche," Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift, 91 (1982), 52-71; J. Wohlmuth, "'Kirche von unten,' als Anfrage an eine heutige Ekklesiologie," Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift, 93 (1984), 51-64; for the second question, see Giulio Brambilla, "La parrocchia nella Chiesa," Teologia, 13 (1988), 18-44; Severino Dianich, "Le nuove comunità e la 'grande Chiesa': un problema ecclesiologico," Scuola cattolica, 116 (1988), 512-29.

¹⁶See Karl Rahner, "The Episcopal Office," Theological Investigations, vol. VI (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), pp. 313-60. In this essay Rahner argues that a local community can really be the realization of the whole Church only if "the whole of the Church's realization of her life can be representatively brought about, and not only the celebration of the Eucharist (Sacrament) and the proclamation of the Word." There are other functions that necessarily belong to the universal Church and must therefore be realized in any community that can rightly be called a Church. In today's world this means a diocese of sufficient size and self-sufficiency. "For only such a member-part [Teilglied] of the Church can meaningfully claim that its leader should be a member of the supreme governing board of the Church" (pp. 335-36).

¹⁷See Karl Rahner, "Pastoral-theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II," Theological Investigations, VI, p. 366.

¹⁸ See Tillard's remark, L'Eglise d'Eglises, p. 149, that if "it is fundamentally at the level of the local Church that what we have presented can and must take form," dioceses may have to "return to a more human size." This problem is surely an important factor in the degeneration of episcopal pastoral service into dominium that Bouyer so vividly criticizes, L'Eglise de Dieu, pp. 618-26. For a different view of this question, see Lanne, "L'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle," Irénikon, 43 (1970), 490-92.

¹⁹ Thus for Wolfgang Beinert, "Dogmenhistorische Anmerkungen zum Begriff 'Partikularkirche,'" Theologie und Philosophie, 50 (1975), 66, the primary meaning of Teilkirchen would be the diocese, with infra- or supra-diocesan groups supplying respectively the secondary and tertiary meanings.

²⁰ See H.-J. Pottmeyer, "Kirche auf dem Weg--20 Jahre nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil," Universitas, 37 (1982), 1251-58; "Die zwiespältige Ekklesiologie des Zweiten Vaticanums--Ursache nackkonziliaren Konflikte," Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift, 92 (1983), 272-83; "Der pneumatologische Dimension der Kirche," Diakonia, 21 (1990), 170-74.

²¹ See Eugenio Corecco, "Aspects of the Reception of Vatican II in the Code of Canon Law," in The Reception of Vatican II, ed. G. Alberigo, J.-P. Jossua, J.A. Komonchak (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1987), pp. 249-96; Hubert Müller, "Communio als kirchenrechtliche Prinzip im Codex Iuris Canonici von 1983?" in Im Gespräch mit dem dreieinen Gott: Elemente einer trinitarischen Theologie, Festschrift W. Breuning (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1985), pp. 481-98; Ilona Riedel-Spangenberg, "Die Communio als Strukturprinzip der Kirche und ihre Rezeption im CIC/1983," Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift, 97 (1988), 217-38.

²² See Aymans, "Die Communio Ecclesiarum," pp. 80-85; more briefly in Handbuch des katholischen Kirchenrechts, ed. J. Listl, H. Müller, H. Schmitz (Regensburg: Pustet, 1983), pp. 239-41; Klaus Mörsdorf, "Die Autonomie der Ortskirche," in Schriften zum Kanonischen Rechts, ed. W. Aymans, K.-Th. Geringer, H. Schmitz (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1989), pp. 287-89.

²³ Aymans appears to take this term to refer particularly to the presence in both Churches of "the head-body relation;" see also Klaus Mörsdorf, "Ueber die Zuordnung des Kollegialitätsprinzips zu dem Prinzip der Einheit von Haupt und Leib in der hierarchischen Struktur der Kirchenverfassung," in Schriften zum Kanonischen Recht, ed. W. Aymans, K.-Th. Geringer, H. Schmitz (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1989), p. 280. Legrand, "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," p. 152, warns against taking the phrase in the sense of a sort of subsistent Platonic form, and proposes to see it as referring to the identity between what is realized "out of" the local Churches (which results from their communion) and what is

realized "in" the local Churches. "The local Churches must be in the image of the universal Church, not as reproductions of an 'ideal' Church, but by agreement with and reception of what constitutes the communion of Churches." I would myself argue that "the image of the universal Church" refers to the generative principles of the Church, tout courte, which may be described formally or heuristically, but are only concretely universal as actually generating local Churches.

²⁴See E. Lanne, "L'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle: Actualité et portée du thème," Irénikon, 43 (1970), 497-506.

²⁵References are to: Armando Bandera, "Iglesia particular y Iglesia universal," Ciencia Tomista, 105 (1978), 80-87; Wilhelm Bertrams, "L'ufficio dell'unità della Chiesa e la moltitudine delle Chiese," Vita e pensiero, 54 (1971), 83; Leonardo Boff, Ecclesiogenesis; Carlo Colombo, "La teologia della chiesa locale," Vita e pensiero, 54 (1971), 261-65; Alvaro d'Ors, "Iglesia universal e iglesia particular," Ius Canonicum, 28 (1988), 295-303; Battista Mondin, La chiesa primizia del Regno (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1986), pp. 405-18; Joseph Ratzinger, Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology (New York: Crossroad, 1988), pp. 74-77.

²⁶Ratzinger, Church, Ecumenism and Politics, p. 75: "the priority [Vorgängigkeit] of the universal Church over the particular Church;" Ratzinger argued the historical point at the meeting of the College of Cardinals in 1985: "As in a body the unity of the organism precedes and sustains the individual organs, because the organs could not exist if the body did not, so also the unity of the Catholic Church precedes the plurality of particular churches which are born from this unity and receive their ecclesial character from it. This temporal order is stated in many ways in the New Testament writings.... According to St. Luke's narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, the Church began on the day of Pentecost in the community of Christ's disciples speaking in all languages. Here St. Luke, indeed the Holy Spirit, is intimating that the catholic, universal Church, our mother, existed before the individual churches were born, which arise from this one mother and are always related to her;" "De Romano Pontifice deque collegio episcoporum" (typescript), p. 3. During the redaction of Christus Dominus, Msgr. Veuillot excluded the priority of the bishop's relation to his own Church on the grounds that "certum sit Christum condidisse Ecclesiam suam, i.e. universalem, in qua postea tantum constitutae sunt particulares Ecclesiae seu dioeceses;" Acta Synodalia, III/VI (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1975), pp. 117-18. For this discussion see H. Legrand, "Nature de l'Eglise particulière," pp. 113-15; Aymans, "Die Communio Ecclesiarum," pp. 76-79.

²⁷The second statement quoted above is followed by the claim: "The negative side of this principle is that any structure or initiative, directed towards communion or mission, is not authentically ecclesial if it is not rooted in and related to the local Church or the local Churches. In short, the alternative is not between the local Church and the universal Church, but simply between the local Church and no Church at all;" Bruno Forte, La chiesa icona della Trinità: Breve ecclesiologia (Brescia: Queriniana, 1984), pp. 48-54.

²⁸ Severino Dianich, "Soggettività e Chiesa," p. 116; see also his La Chiesa mistero di comunione (Torino: Marietti, 1977), p. 132-35. To some degree Dianich is defending the methodological priority of the local event of the Church in the construction of an ecclesiology, although this rests in the end on the genetic priority of that local event in the actual self-realization of the Church.

²⁹ Boff's genesis of a new Church from below, from the poor, could be understood in this way, although in Ecclesiogenesis and in Church: Charism and Power (New York: Crossroad, 1985) he refuses to counterpose the basic community and the great Church, and in his article, "Mission et universalité concrète de l'Eglise," Lumière et vie, #137 (1978), 33-52, he argues that the Church from below, so far from denying the Church's universality, concretely realizes it. Rouco Varela, "Iglesia Universal - Iglesia Particular," p. 227, sees in the effort to ascribe primary emphasis to the basic communities "a desire to introduce 'congregationalism' into the living ecclesiology of the Catholic Church."

³⁰ Although I have not found the word "priority" in the discussion, the great emphasis on the "Gemeindeprinzip" in certain German circles could lead one to suspect that it is meant; but Josef Wohlmuth, "'Kirche von unten,'" maintains that the dichotomy between "Church from above" and "Church from below" should and can be overcome. Much of this controversy, of course, will depend on what is meant by "community" and the relationship between it and the central ecclesial reality of communio.

³¹ See Joseph Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), pp. 285-98; see also pp. 298-311, in connection with "local ecumenism," where he warns against "a new one-sidedness" in recent emphasis on the local Church. Ratzinger's reply to the claimed "right" is in some tension with the remarks he once made about the Gemeinde as "Rechtssubject in der Kirche" and his attempt to overcome the dichotomy between "von oben" and "von unten" by appeal to the "Ineinander von Ortskirche und Gesamtkirche;" see "Demokratisierung der Kirche?" pp. 38-41.

³² "Draft Statement on Episcopal Conferences," Origins, 17 (1987-88), 735.

³³ The texts cited may be found in Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, VIII/I (1985), 997-98; IX/I (1986), 1133-34; IX/II (1986), 1921. Placed in context, they are far more balanced than might be concluded from the use to which the Roman Working-Paper puts them.

³⁴ "The Church of all times and places was founded in a first local Church, the Church of Jerusalem, from which it has been propagated into other quite similar local Churches, as if by cuttings and replantings;" Bouyer, L'Eglise de Dieu, pp. 337; see de Lubac, Les églises particulières, pp. 53-54; Legrand, "Inverser Babel," pp. 328-31; Tillard, L'Eglise d'Eglises, pp. 15-36.

³⁵ The "ontological" priority ascribed to the universal Church appears at times to mean that God's intention falls on the unity of the messianic people redeemed by Christ, on the one Body of Christ transcending all time and place, the one Mystery which reaches from Abel to the last of the just. But, as Congar notes, "The universal Church does not pre-exist the particular Churches as a concrete reality might pre-exist other concrete realities; it pre-exists them in God's plan as their definite ideal, their rule, or their absolute essence" (Yves Congar, Ministères et communion [Paris: du Cerf, 1971], p. 131. But since it is only in particular Churches that this salvific plan is realized, it is surely mistaken to say that Christ founded only the universal Church and not the particular Churches or that he prayed only for it and not for them!

³⁶ See H. Legrand, "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," p. 152; E. Lanne, "L'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle," p. 490.

³⁷ Were the whole Church one day reduced to what it was in the beginning, namely a single local Church, then, as Tillard notes, "the Church of God would exist there in all its integrity, all the Church being then in the Church of Corinth, of Ephesus, of Rome, of Kinshasa, or of Lyon;" "L'Universel et le Local: Réflexion sur Eglise universelle et Eglises locales," Irénikon, 60 (1988), 30. See similar remarks in Karl Rahner, "The Episcopate and the Primacy," in Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, The Episcopate and the Primacy (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), p. 27, and in Louis Bouyer, L'Eglise de Dieu, p. 608, 610.

³⁸ Hermann J. Pottmeyer, "Continuité et innovation dans l'ecclésiologie de Vatican II," in Les Eglises après Vatican II: Dynamisme et prospective, ed. G. Alberigo (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981), pp. 91-116, discusses Vatican I as "the discovery that the Church as a totality, as communion, is the sacrament of salvation in the form of a subject," while at Vatican II this is shown to be realized as "a communion of subjects," involving not only the

clergy but all Christians and not only the pope but the communion of the Churches also.

³⁹De Lubac, Les églises particulières, pp. 43-45; see similar distinctions between "theological" and "geographical" or "anthropological" factors in the construction of the local Church in Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, pp. 290, 297, 308. De Lubac's distinction was taken over, nearly ad verbum, in the International Theological Commission's text "Select Themes in Ecclesiology," V.1; see ITC, Texts and Documents, 1969-1985 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), p. 282.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 60, my emphasis.

⁴²De Lubac does admit that "each Church, local or particular, always has more or less its own phyiognomy," but this happens because it is "composed of traits in which the profane and the religious mingle" (p. 47, my emphasis), surely an inadequate description of the factors involved in the genesis of an individual Church.

⁴³Giuseppe Colombo, "La teologia della Chiesa locale," in La Chiesa locale (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1969), pp. 17-38, esp. 32-38.

⁴⁴Donato Valentini, Il nuovo Popoli di Dio in cammino: Punti nodali per una ecclesiologia attuale (Rome: LAS, 1984), p. 56. This seems to me to be a crucial point: the freedom of the human subjects of the Church's self-realization, which cannot be separated from their concrete historical situation, is not related to the divine freedom as matter to form; in fact, it is an intrinsic element of the formal principle itself.

⁴⁵ See ITC, Texts and Documents, pp. 274-78; see G. Colombo, "Il 'Popolo di Dio' e il 'mistero' della Chiesa nell'ecclesiologia post-conciliare," Teologia, 10 (1985), 97-169.

⁴⁶ ITC, "Select Themes in Ecclesiology," III.4, Texts and Documents, pp. 277-78.

For this co-mediation of culture and Gospel in the realization of the Church, Walter Kasper uses the notion of an Aufhebung, meaning that local characteristics are "abolished in the sense of being gathered up and preserved in something higher;" see "The Church as

Communion," in Theology and Church (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p. 159. "Abolish" is perhaps too strong here.

⁴⁸Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, p. 312, where he distinguishes between "Gemeinde," as "an immediately theological concept" and "as an anthropological reality." Note a parallel dichotomy: "Faith is not born from experience but from the Word of God; it is then enfleshed and verified in experience" ("Theological Notes," in Directory for the "Ad Limina" Visits [Vatican City, 1988], p. 21.)

⁴⁹Claude Welch, The Reality of the Church (New York: Scribners, 1958), p. 48.

⁵⁰See Beinert, "Die Una Catholica," p. 5, 12-13.

⁵¹Angel Anton, "Iglesia universal - Iglesias particulares," Estudios Ecclesiasticos, 47 (1972), 409-35, makes the pertinent point: "Since its reality is a mysterious unity of human and divine, historical and metahistorical elements, the local and temporal dimension is an essential element of its earthly existence. The Church exercises its mission in the world tied in many respects to a particular place. A person does not encounter the Church except in a concrete place, with space-time coordinates. This is an exigence imposed by the nature of man composed of spirit and body and by the reality of the Church as an eschatological community incarnate in the world and in history" (p. 416).

⁵²Pope John Paul II, Address to the Roman Curia, December 21, 1984, AAS, 77 (1985), 503-14. Note that in these remarks the Pope is using "particular Church" in the sense of LG 13 and not, therefore, to refer to a diocese.

⁵³In his speech to Australian aborigenes, the Pope strikingly reaffirmed this point: "The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ speaks all languages. It esteems and embraces all cultures. It supports them in everything human and, when necessary, it purifies them. Always and everywhere the Gospel uplifts and enriches cultures with the revealed message of a loving and merciful God. That Gospel now invites you to become, through and through, aboriginal Christians. It meets your deepest desires. You do not have to be people divided into two parts, as though an aboriginal had to borrow the faith and life of Christianity, like a hat or pair of shoes, from someone else who owns them. Jesus calls you to accept his words and his values into your own culture. To develop in this way will make you ever truly aboriginal;" Origins, 16 (1986), 476. Tillard, "L'Universel et le Local," has rightly drawn attention to this talk.

⁵⁴ Pope John Paul II's 1985 Encyclical, Slavorum apostoli, esp. #16-20, contains a powerful illustration of the encounter of Gospel and a single culture.

See Tillard, L'Eglise d'Eglises, pp. 30, 164, 175.

⁵⁶ Dianich, "Soggettività e chiesa," pp. 120-27.

⁵⁷ Dianich, Chiesa in missione, p. 65; see especially pp. 172-73.

⁵⁸ Dianich, Chiesa in missione, p. 77. Dianich has extended his consideration of the role of human subjectivity in the genesis of the Church to include the question of the sense in which charity may be said to be constitutive of the Church; see "'De caritate Ecclesiae': Introduzione ad un tema inconsueto," in Associazione Teologica Italiana, De Caritate Ecclesiae: Il principio "amore" e la chiesa (Padua: Messaggero, 1987), pp. 27-107.

⁵⁹ Dianich, Chiesa estroversa: Una ricerca sulla svolta dell'ecclesiologia contemporanea (Milano: Paoline, 1987), pp. 110-112.

⁶⁰ "The essential component of ecclesial catholicity is the particular Church insofar as it is only in it and through it that concrete human beings encounter the fullness of the grace which the Church is to mediate;" Beinert, "Die Una Catholica," p. 15.

⁶¹ See Hervé Legrand, "Le développement d'Eglises-sujets une requête de Vatican II: Fondements théologiques et réflexions théologiques," in Les églises après Vatican II: Dynamisme et prospective, ed. G. Alberigo (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981), pp. 149-84. Legrand has also pointed out that "the theology of the particular Church is a chapter in the theology of the relations between the Church and the world;" see "Inverser Babel, p. 334, "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," pp. 162-64; and also E. Lanne's comment in connection with various typologies within the one Church: "What is the relation of the local Church to the world, to creation? The Word is proclaimed in a particular place; it is incarnated in a culture, conjoining the divine and the human. Similarly, the sacraments, the life of "koinonia" are expressed in a given place and time and thus manifest, express, and activate the universal Church of all times and of all places, insofar as it is the Church of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. The Church-world relation seems to me to be basic in our search for a better understanding of the possibility of different typologies within the same ecclesial commitment, of a legitimate pluralism within the unity willed by the Lord for his Church in the image of the divine unity which expresses and reveals to us the Trinity of Persons;" "Pluralisme et Unité: possibilité d'une diversité de typologies dans une même adhésion ecclésiale," Istina, 14 (1969), 190.

⁶²See Dianich, "Soggettività e chiesa," and "Ecclesiologia e ecclesiogenesi," Rassegna di Teologia, 21 (1980), 415-18. I have addressed the question in "Ecclesiology and Social Theory: A Methodological Essay," The Thomist, 45 (1981), 262-83; "Towards a Theology of the Local Church," FABC Papers, 42 (Honk Kong, 1986); and in "The Church: God's Gift and Our Task," Origins, 16 (1987), 735-41.

THE LETTER OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Joseph A. Komonchak

On June 15, 1992, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith released a letter to the world's bishops on "Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion."¹ I thought that some comments on the letter might be appropriate for our discussion.

The Letter seems to have been prompted, first, by the central importance of the idea of "communion" both in the Scriptures and Tradition and at Vatican II. But the Congregation seems also to have wished to address certain problems it sees in the way some people are using the term today. From the Letter, I find the following indications of such problems:

--"a clearly inadequate awareness of the church as a mystery of communion, especially insofar as they have not sufficiently integrated the concept of communion with the concepts of people of God and body of Christ, and have not given due importance to the relationship between the church as communion and the church as sacrament" (#1).

--"Sometimes...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" (#8).

--"The rediscovery of a eucharistic ecclesiology, though being of undoubted value, has however sometimes placed one-sided emphasis on the principle of the local church. It is claimed that where the eucharist is celebrated the totality of the mystery of the church would be made present in such a way as to render any other principle of unity or universality inessential. Other conceptions, under different theological influences, present this particular view of the church in an even more radical form, going as far as to hold that gathering together in the name of Jesus (cf. Mt 18:20) is the same as generating the church. The assembly, which in the name of Christ becomes a community, would hold within itself the powers of the church, including power as regards the eucharist. The church, some say, would arise 'from the base.' These and other similar errors do not take sufficiently into account that it is

¹See Origins 22/7 (June 25, 1992) 108-12.

precisely the eucharist that renders all self-sufficiency on the part of the particular churches impossible" (#11).

Of these three statements, the first is too general to be able to identify particular tendencies or movements; its purpose is rather to indicate the theological deficiencies that the Congregation thinks led to the one-sidedness described in the other, more particular problems. This unilateralism seems to be found in two somewhat distinct emphases in some writings on the local church. First, there is a eucharistic ecclesiology that places such emphasis on the assembly that gathers for the eucharist that it neglects other principles of unity and universality. This statement is so general that it is hard to know who might be intended by it; I do not myself know anyone who claims that the eucharist is the only principle of ecclesial unity and universality. Even the Orthodox theologians, who have proposed a eucharistic ecclesiology, do not maintain this; and most Catholic theologians who have been influenced by it would also maintain that there are other such principles, such as the Scriptures, the common faith, episcopal communion, and communion with the Bishop of Rome.

Related, at least by appearing in the same paragraph, are other views, reflecting "different theological influences," that stress the genesis of the Church "from below," building their case on the words of Jesus about two or three gathering in his name or stressing the principle of community to the point of arguing that the ecclesial community has "a right to the Eucharist." This latter phrase does not appear in the Letter, but seems implied. Here one suspects that the intended target is theologians who stress the ecclesial reality of basic Christian communities (Latin America) or the Gemeinde-Prinzip (Germany). One also suspects (but NB: the Letter names no names!) that the Congregation is thinking of such theologians as Leonardo Boff and Edward Schillebeeckx, who have tried to address the issue of so-called "priestless parishes" and proposed forms of the argument that the local community has a "right" to the Eucharist which ought at least to be taken as a basic principle for addressing the absence of the Eucharist in countless numbers of Christian communities and which might ground a right of such communities to provide themselves with ministers of the Eucharist. The reference to the Church "from the base" probably intends those in Germany who have spoken of the Kirche von unten.

The Congregation's response is to stress that "it is precisely the eucharist that renders all self-sufficiency on the part of the particular churches impossible" (#11). This is, first, because the eucharist effects incorporation into the one Body of Christ, which cannot be divided. The communion that results in the unity of the Body of Christ within a particular assembly is at the same time and inseparably communion in the unity of the Body of Christ within the communion of all particular assemblies. The mystery that makes the members of one particular body one in Christ transcends their

numbers and incorporates them into unity with all the other members of the Body of Christ.

Secondly, the eucharistic character of the Church entails also the episcopal character of the Church. Little attention is given to this as a feature of the particular church, and the Letter instead moves directly to the principle of the unity of the episcopate, the ministry of the Bishop of Rome. Thus as the bishop is not absent from any eucharistic assembly within his particular Church, neither is the successor of Peter absent from it. And this is symbolized by the remembering of both the bishop and of the pope in the eucharistic celebration.

The other tendency indicted is that which so stresses the idea that the universal church is the communion of particular churches that this appears to result simply from the reciprocal recognition of the particular churches. The Congregation's description of this tendency is so rapid that it is difficult to know precisely to whom it is referring. I can say that the idea of universal communion as mutual recognition is found in the writings of people like J.M.-R. Tillard, Hervé Legrand, and your humble servant. I fail to recognize myself and the other two theologians in the tendency as described and as indicted as "one-sided." Since this section (#7-10) is the central one, perhaps I can offer some comments on it.

As noted above, in the body of my paper, one of the questions commonly asked in the discussion of the local church and the universal church is which of these two should be considered to have "priority." On the one hand, some people maintain that it is the universal Church that has priority, for various reasons: that Christ intended a one and universal Church; that it alone is the sacrament of salvation; that it generates the other churches; that it alone is indefectible because it alone is the object of Christ's prayer, etc. On the other hand, some maintain that since the universal Church exists only in particular Churches, since the latter are a full realization of the mystery of the Church, since they are the concrete subjects of the one Church's self-realization and mission in the world, it is the local Churches that have priority.

The Congregation has come down on the side of the first position, maintaining that the universal church "in its essential mystery is a reality ontologically and temporally prior to every individual particular church" (#9). The Letter recalls that there is a relationship of "mutual interiority" between the particular Church and the universal Church, so that the latter cannot be "conceived as the sum of the particular churches or as a federation of particular churches." This latter phrase is often found in the literature, and is meant to prevent people from thinking that you first have particular churches which only later, at a second moment, come together in order to constitute the universal Church. I do not know any theologian who maintains this position.

The Letter then tries to show why the universal Church has both an ontological and an historical priority to the particular Churches. Ontologically, it says, "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 particular churches." And the Pentecost assembly is presented as a proof of this priority. Historically, it is only as "particular expressions of this one unique church of Jesus Christ" that the different local churches have arisen. They derive "their ecclesiality in her and from her." And then the Letter proposes a specification of a famous phrase in Vatican II which has been much used in the literature:

Hence the formula of the Second Vatican Council: The church is and formed out of the churches (ecclesia in et ex ecclesiis) [see LG 23] is inseparable from this other formula, "The churches in and formed out of the church (ecclesiae in et ex ecclesia)."

The second of these phrases is not found in Vatican II but comes, according to note 45, from an address of Pope John Paul II to the Roman Curia on Dec. 20, 1990. Unfortunately, I have not had access to this speech.

It may be worth having the actual text of LG 23 in front of us:

The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their particular churches, which are formed in the image of the universal Church (ad imaginem Ecclesiae universalis formatis), and it is in them and from them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists (in et ex quibus una et unica Ecclesia catholica existit).

The two subordinate clauses pose the question of priority. The first (ad imaginem Ecclesiae universalis formatis) seems to suggest that the universal Church comes first, providing the image for the formation of particular Churches. The second, on the other hand, (in et ex quibus una et unica Ecclesia catholica existit) suggests that the particular Churches come first, since it is only in and from them that the one Catholic Church exists. The Congregation, desiring to come down on the side of the first response, does so by introducing a balancing phrase that the Council did not employ that we should speak of the particular churches as existing in and out of the universal Church (ecclesiae in et ex ecclesia). Apparently this new formula is designed to emphasize the mutual interiority of the universal church and the particular churches.

In comment, I would say, first, that there is wide agreement that the real mystery is precisely this "mutual interiority," which makes it impossible to set the universal and the particular church over-and-against one another as if they were distinct and the problem were how to relate them. But, secondly, it is precisely because they are interior to one another that makes it impossible to pose the question in terms of the "priority" of one to the other. This is true both ontologically and historically. Ontologically, (1) there cannot be a church except in time and place, gathering in communion specific men and women; and (2) a local community is not a church unless it is also universal or catholic in its constitutive principles: catholic both because the whole of the mystery of the church is realized in it and because the mystery that makes it a communion in Christ is the same mystery that makes every other community a communion in Christ. Historically, the paradigmatic case of Pentecost makes it clear that the church was born both local and universal. The assembly gathered in Jerusalem and yet it included representatives of all the nations, all of whom heard the one message in their various native languages. It was in this Jerusalem assembly that the universal Church was already realized, and it was as a development and realization of this original catholicity that other particular and local churches were founded. As one theologian has put it: when a new local church was formed, there were not now two churches but one: in ecclesiology, one church plus one church equals one church.

This is a rather different interpretation of the Pentecost assembly than that proposed by the Congregation. But it has behind it the views of such theologians as Louis Bouyer, Henri de Lubac, J.M.-R. Tillard, and Hervé Legrand. Both Bouyer and Tillard propose the thought-experiment of imagining that some catastrophe has reduced the church to a single community of believers gathering around a bishop to celebrate the eucharist. (Nothing in Christ's promises prevents one from imagining that what happened, say, to the church in North Africa, could not happen on a world-wide scale.) In that case, this one little community of the faith would be at once the local and the universal Church, the heir of Christ's promises and the bearer of his mission to the world.

With regard to the idea of "reciprocal recognition," when people use this phrase, they do not mean some second moment when individual particular churches look around. see that they all agree about certain things, and then decide to form a federation. All the theologians who have spoken about reciprocal recognition would repudiate this idea: that the universal Church results from a second moment after the constitution of the particular churches. What they (or at least what I) mean is that the mystery of communion that makes the Church to be the Church, whether locally or universally, consists in the common consciousness of its members of their incorporation, together, into Christ. Locally, we are one in our common faith, hope, and love, in the bonds of communion among ourselves and within the society of the Church. That's what

makes it true that in the individual congregation we are no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or woman, but we are all one in Christ--this is already the realization of the catholicity of the Church, and it is an intrinsic and constitutive dimension of being the church even locally. (This is why, in planning the 1991 Salamanca conference, we did not entitle it, "The Local and the Universal Church," but "The Catholicity of the Local Church"!) The concrete reality of the local church is the reciprocal reception of one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Similarly, the universal Church is the communion of the local Churches; it does not result from, it is their reciprocal reception of one another as all the beneficiaries of Christ's word and grace. What is realized locally is what is realized universally. What is called the universal Church is this common and universal consciousness among all Christians and among all particular Churches. Apart from this embodiment in this common consciousness, the universal Church is, as Pope Paul VI said, an abstraction, what Henri de Lubac called a mere "être de raison," what Scholastics used to call an "universale ante rem." This common consciousness includes all the elements that make up the Church: the one call of God, the one Word of Christ, the one grace of the Spirit, the apostolic ministry of pope and bishops, etc.

Finally, as it is a mistake to assign priority to either the universal Church or to the local Church, it is as much a mistake to ask whether faith and baptism incorporate one first into the universal or into the local Church (see #10). One is baptized into the one Church as realized locally. One is not baptized generically into the universal Church or particularly into the local Church. There is only the one Church as realized locally, and to be baptized into a particular local Church is at the same time and inseparably to be baptized into the universal Church. When maternal images are used of Christian initiation (the baptismal font as the "womb of the Church," etc.), these images of the Church as the Mother that generates us into eternal life apply at once to the local Church and inseparably also to the universal Church. It is not as if somehow the universal Church is our Mother in and by itself, apart from the local Churches. The local Church's generation of us into eternal life is how the one and universal Church gives us birth. Make this concrete: we are the children of the Church because some believer has proclaimed the Gospel and invited us to believe, and because a community of believers has received us by Christian initiation into the communion it enjoys with God (see 1 Jn 1:1-4). This process is necessarily local and concrete, as concrete as the words of the preacher or catechist, as concrete as the splash and feel of the baptismal waters, but its being this concrete does not mean that it is not universal in its inner reality and mystery: communion in Christ who is not divided, either locally or universally.

The problem, I think, is that many people, including the Congregation in this Letter, don't grasp sufficiently that one doesn't have to choose between the local and the universal, as if these are two incompatible dimensions. What is realized locally is a mystery of catholicity, and what is catholic is only catholic concretely, in specific believers and local communities.

Consider what it means to say, for example, that "the Catholic Church" is opposed to racial discrimination. This could be taken to mean that popes or bishops have given authoritative statements about racial justice and equality. But while this is important and could be a legitimate interpretation of the statement, the real question of whether it is true or not is decided not on the basis of authoritative statements but on whether or not the Catholic Church is in fact and concretely opposed to racial injustice. And how is that question settled: not by looking at something called "the universal Church," but by looking at the local Churches that constitute the universal Church and apart from which the latter does not exist. In other words, it is by examining how local Churches are living that you find out whether or not it is true that the Catholic Church is opposed to racial injustice. The one Church realizes itself and fulfills its mission in and through the local Churches.