

No blueprint

From the beginning the Association of Interchurch Families has made it clear that there is no blueprint for an interchurch family. Each couple has to find their own way forward, depending on their own judgement of their family situation, and the concrete possibilities that are open to them in their particular circumstances at any one time. So much depends upon the quality of pastoral care available to them when it is needed. What the Association can do is to show couples that they are not isolated in their problems, and to enable experiences to be shared. For some couples and pastors this can open up whole new worlds of possibilities. For some couples it can mean that they are able to work together on their situation, instead of tugging (or allowing themselves to be tugged) in opposite directions. For some couples it can show that although they may not be able to achieve just what they want in their particular circumstances, there are other ways of affirming the two-church nature of their family life. There is no need to think in terms of a single model.

The baptism of a child of an interchurch family is an important moment in affirming the fact that the two parents want to bring up their child in relation to their two church communities, if indeed that is what they want to do. In this issue we give two quite different stories of how interchurch couples have recognised this dual relationship, and by recognising it have strengthened it.



Two church communities

Dominus Iesus could have a positive effect if it pushes us all to reflect more deeply on what we mean when we use the word 'church'. From a Roman Catholic point of view it may mean the Roman Catholic Church worldwide – but should we perhaps more properly call this the Roman Catholic Communion rather than 'the universal Church', an expression that should surely be reserved for the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of the creed? It may mean the Church of Rome as a 'sister-church' to the ancient churches of the East – should we perhaps speak here of the western patriarchate? It may mean 'the Roman Catholic Church in' a particular area, country or place. Ecumenical progress often depends on a refinement of terminology.

What is important for interchurch families is to affirm the psychological equality within their marriage of the two church communities that are represented within it. It is a similar problem to that tackled by Abbé Paul Couturier, founder of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. He saw it was important for Christians to pray *together* for unity, on an equal footing, but how could they all pray for unity around the Pope when they were not all convinced that this was the kind of unity God wants? Hence his inspired formula: *prayer for the unity that Christ wills, to come as He wills it*. In a similar effort to express a psychological equality while not prejudging theological positions, interchurch families may be quite happy to talk of 'our two church communities' rather than 'our two churches'. The phrase covers very well both the congregational and the denominational church life that they share.

RR

Three baptisms in our family

My wife is Roman Catholic and I am Anglican. Christ is at the centre of our “domestic church”. Liz and I are convinced that our shared life in Christ is more important, more powerful and more real than any division which comes from the fact of our being brought up (and remaining) Christians of different traditions. We are bringing up our children within our shared faith in Christ and have put no stress on it coming to them through two different communions. Only recently (our eldest child is 6 years old) are the children starting to pick up denominational language – mostly from our Roman Catholic parish and school.

Thomas

Our first child was baptised in the church community in which we were most involved at the time. It was a Roman Catholic parish. That suited us; the whole of our post-marriage growth within a Christian community had been nurtured there – although we both went to an Anglican mid-week eucharist fairly often (not together but near our respective places of work). We also went together to our local Anglican parish church for festivals and sometimes to evensong. The Catholic parish in which Thomas was baptised is a pearl of great price – totally welcoming in a way inconceivable to many Roman Catholics. The Anglican church to which we went for evensong was delighted to use one of those evensongs a few weeks after Thomas was born to celebrate his birth in the modern equivalent of the service for the “churching of women”. The service of thanksgiving for the birth of a child is a part of the liturgy of the *Alternative Service Book* of which I am very fond.

Joanna

When Joanna was born slightly less than two years later we adopted the same model. At that time the Roman Catholic community was still the main focus of our family worship, although we were worshipping there slightly less and in the Church of England parish slightly more often, including some morning services. Liz had started up a toddler group at the Anglican church so we were more involved there. Still, it seemed natural to take Jo to our Catholic parish for her baptism, and we knew that the important thing was that she was baptised into Christ. The thanksgiving for Jo’s birth was at a morning Sunday service in the Anglican church – we rarely got to evensong with two young children.



Deborah

When Deborah was born nearly three years later our worship life had changed. We had moved house in the meantime, and sadly left the Catholic parish that had been our home. The move meant that we had both reasons against going to our new Catholic parish for the baptism *and* reasons for doing so. We were not experiencing a loving welcome in our new Catholic community similar to that we had enjoyed earlier, so it was not so natural to go there. However, Thomas was attending our nearest church school, a Roman Catholic school and proud of it. If we chose to baptise Deborah in a different tradition, then (whatever Rome says about validity) school admission would in all probability be tricky, even for a younger sister of children already at the school.

Once again, therefore, we celebrated our thanksgiving for Deborah’s birth at our new and very welcoming Anglican church two or three weeks after she was born. For the baptism we went to the new parish of the priest who had been curate at our former Catholic parish. He is a most loving and welcoming person, who wanted to do for and with us what he felt called to do as a pastor. So, once again, we have a baptised Christian child for whom the Christian minister was a Roman Catholic priest. I might add that when we were preparing the baptism and going through the service, we came to the parents’ declarations of their faith and their believing and trusting in “the church”. At this point he commented very simply: “which is meant in the broadest sense of the word”.

Our family and the Church of England

So how has this practice of thanksgiving in the Anglican church and baptism in the Roman Catholic parish impacted on us as a family? The reality for us is that here in England the formula works very comfortably. If any of the five Ballasters want to practise their Christian faith in the Church of England they are free to do so. All we need to do is to “be Anglican”. The other four can (or when of suitable age will be able to) be on electoral rolls and serve on parish councils. The Church of England has allowed dual membership to those who are members in good standing of a trinitarian church not in communion with the Church of England, provided that they also declare themselves to be members of the Church of England and habitually attend worship in the parish. Even before that, they will certainly be welcome to receive the eucharist, as baptised members of a

Christian tradition which has a trinitarian belief, under the rules of eucharistic hospitality.

Our family and the Roman Catholic Church

The reverse is not true. That is, according to the rules, although of course there are Roman Catholic priests who will apply loving pastoral understanding which reaches the same answer in practice. Therefore, if we had celebrated the birth at a Roman Catholic service and the baptism at a Church of England service we would have made our lives more complicated. This is not only so because of the “rules” but also because of the attitudes we meet with in our present parishes. Our Anglican parish is hugely welcoming of Liz and not particularly interested in her “denomination”; she is a worshipper with everyone else. Probably only a minority of the people we know there recall that she is a Roman Catholic. I have also found a great lack of interest in my denomination in the Roman Catholic congregation, and indeed, many parishioners there are scandalised that I am refused a eucharistic welcome. This is not entirely so, however, and certainly the priests in the parish are anxious that I “make up my mind”, “accept the consequences of my decision”, and so on.

Our family as domestic church

Within our household, as I have tried to imply, there is no issue for us; we would have been happy to celebrate the baptism within either tradition. It is Christ who baptises and it would have been done by Christ regardless of the form of the celebration or the minister involved. We are a domestic church and our church community is fed and nurtured by two traditions. All five of us are so fed; “membership” in any technical sense is not what governs who is fed when by which tradition.

I have only recently come to formulate and grasp the experience of our Christian life together in this way. This was not the conscious foundation on which we built our baptismal choices – but I guess it is a “discovery” not an “invention”. That is to say, it was already a lived reality in our household, although I have only recently come to understand it in this way.

Ups and downs

During the times when I am Spirit filled and sensible, I see the three baptisms in our family as I have set out the story above and it is a truly wonderful family experience which I enjoy. Occasionally, though, I am tempted to get really irritated. If *my church* were more legalistic and less pastoral, some of *my children* would have been baptised into it. Why have we let the rules of only one of our denominations govern our actions in this way?

But then I get myself straight again and say to myself that this is silliness on my part – do I really want the Anglican church to be loving and welcoming and Christ-like or would I prefer it to be superior and anti-stranger? If it is the former, this will govern the

welcome it offers and which I applaud. We have responded to the way in which the Church of England, as an institution, has been able to express its pastoral flexibility. We have therefore found the smoothest way to express the life of our domestic church, and have adopted a recurring liturgical pattern. First we have celebrated and given thanks to God for the birth of our child within our Anglican community, and then we have celebrated Christian baptism later in our Roman Catholic community. I should be happy with this pattern, and indeed I am...

All the same, I long for a Roman Catholic Church that stops using the phrase: “but you are not one of us”.

Rufus Ballaster

I'm lucky not weird

Being Interchurch in Northern Ireland

I'm an interchurch kid
Living in Ulster Mid
At school they think I'm weird,
Cos if I'm not one or the other,
With the right view,
Then maybe I'm a Jew.

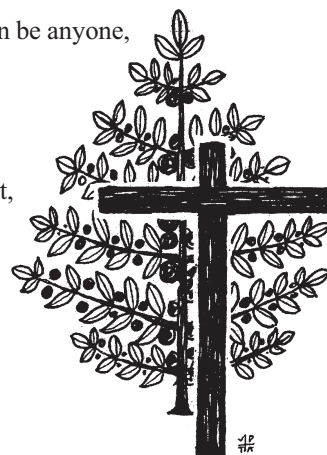
As I'm obviously,
Not black or brown or yellow,
Just like St Paul,*
I may not be understood,
If I think my neighbour can be anyone,
Black or brown or yellow,
Catholic or Protestant.

I'm lucky, not weird,
Cos with peace in my heart,
No anger or fears,
I've hope for the future,
One with no tears.

* Acts 21

Laura Spiers (aged 12)

(From the *NIMMA Update*, September 1999)



Marc is baptised

I, Vincent, am French, a Roman Catholic from a family of active church-goers. My wife Martha is American and a Methodist, from a family very much involved in ministry. Both her grandfathers were pastors, as well as her uncle, who has just retired, while her father is still an active pastor. We live in Cologne, Germany.

We used to experience a great deal of stress when we talked about religion and how we would bring up children in the Christian faith. This was true even before we thought of getting engaged. But we got married in 1997, in a shared wedding ceremony, and two years later were expecting our first child in March 2000. This was when we began to look for more help, and I had no difficulty in finding the interchurch families' web site.

Learning from other interchurch families

So we were able to obtain a Baptism Pack from the Association of Interchurch Families in London. This pack is very valuable when you have so many questions; the reports in the pack helped us a great deal. It is much easier when you read about real-life scenarios, the questions couples had to answer, the life situations they were in, and the results they got through talking with each other and through the support of the religious communities around them.

We were also put in touch with a wonderful German group of interchurch families, and went to a conference they held in Dornstadt in October 1999, with a Catholic priest and a Methodist pastor. We were struck by how successful these families have been in creating a truly positive way of living out their mixed religious traditions in their homes, in spite of difficulties.

Our son Marc was born on 31st March 2000. Thanks to the ideas and thinking we had gained through our interchurch family friends, we planned a shared celebration of baptism. This was done with the priest of the American church in Bonn, who was very open to our wishes since he had already had experience with ecumenical couples, with the pastor of the American Protestant church in Bonn, and with Martha's father. The two Catholic and Protestant congregations in Bonn share

the same building; it was established in the 1950's for the American soldiers in Bonn. Now we go to church there together, usually going to mass at 9.30 a.m. on Sunday morning and staying for the Protestant service at 11 a.m.

'The church at its best'

Marc's baptism was celebrated on Easter Sunday, 23 April 2000. We decided that Martha's father would pour the water and thus do the baptism. The other pastor did the welcome, along with the priest, and the benediction. The priest read the gospel (Mark 1:1-11), as well as performing some of the Catholic rites, such as the anointing with chrism. We left out the litany of the saints and the prayer to Mary. Martha's father gave a short sermon/homily, which was really great. He began by saying: 'This is the church at its best.' My twin brother translated what he said into French for my family.

The baptism was celebrated after the church services and our close friends attended it. We had extended an open invitation to both Catholic and Protestant congregations, but it was Easter Sunday and the baptism took place at lunch time...



The baptism was incredible; both sets of parents were astonished at the way we had been able to organise it, incorporating the main traditions from both churches, and at the overall atmosphere of joy and prayer. We felt we had come such a long way to be able to have a baptism without stress and to have found our own personal solution – another example of the richness of the ecumenical path. Glory be to the Lord!

We found that this shared celebration of baptism was the best way to express the importance of both our traditions to us as a couple and family. We plan that Mark goes mainly to Sunday school at first and we will find a way through local support groups to incorporate as many Catholic traditions as we can, so that he will feel at ease whenever we go to mass. We are aware that this will be a long process, and not all our difficulties are over. But we are very grateful for Marc's baptism, and for all the support and prayers we have received.

Vincent Randy



The Assistant Editor of *INTAMS review*, Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi, himself a Roman Catholic married to a Lutheran, has edited a special number of the review devoted to interchurch families (6, 2 Autumn 2000). (INTAMS stands for the INTERNATIONAL Academy for Marital Spirituality.)

‘All the effort and art of married life is required to reconcile differences and to attain to a new togetherness that is constantly on the watch for renewal’, he writes. ‘When spouses are from different Christian churches and would consciously like to maintain their confessional allegiance, they are confronted by an additional demand. ... There is still an anxious concern among church leaders and theologians that such couples might be taking on a task that is beyond their powers. This is entirely understandable if we restrict ourselves to the areas of theology and discipline. ... But in marriage as it is lived many interchurch couples have coped better than many church leaders and theologians could have anticipated. Could this not be connected with the fact that “unity in diversity” must be practised and lived in marriage in a manner with which churches as big organisations are not familiar? ... Many interchurch couples show in the inner love and life community of their marriage that the unity of Christians is possible and that it has to some extent already become reality. ... Pure togetherness does not grow overnight; it is a dogged lifelong process; and it is not a matter of the enjoyment of secure possession, it is a matter of lasting threat, because of which we must pray for a unity that we cannot create ourselves.’

There are two short statements by Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Dr Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. In explaining why interchurch spouses cannot share the eucharist ‘on a regular basis’, Cardinal Cassidy writes: ‘There is for each partner a question of faith involved. If each is convinced of the faith of the Church or Communion to which he or she belongs, then that partner cannot obviously be convinced of the faith of the Church or Communion to which the other partner belongs.’ Does he ‘restrict himself to the areas of theology and discipline’ here? He continues: ‘If there is no question of faith involved, then the two partners must obviously reflect on the reason for the two belonging to different Christian denominations.’ Here is a challenge (a theological as well as a practical challenge) to interchurch couples to reflect on and to articulate more clearly their deep reasons for remaining two-church families in the present state of church divisions. If they can do this in a convincing way they will serve ecumenism well. The thinking of Konrad Raiser that ‘interchurch marriages shape an ecumenical space’ will be familiar to our readers from his address to the World Gathering of Interchurch Families at Geneva in 1998 (*Interchurch Families*, 7, 1 January 1999, pp.9-13).

Martin Reardon situates mixed marriages in the modern ecumenical movement, and Ruth Reardon looks back over thirty years of the Association of Interchurch Families. Their writing will again be familiar to the readers of this journal, as will that of Canadian Ray Temmerman, who with his wife

Fenella contributes an article entitled ‘Revealing the Holy’. For them a crisis point was finding Fenella (an Anglican) refused communion in the Roman Catholic parish where she had previously been made welcome. Yet ‘God has nourished us in our hunger, and that nourishment has in turn increased our hunger, and our energy. We have found our relationship with each other deepening as we share together not only in the exclusion and misunderstanding, but especially in the gift of richness and diversity with which God had blessed us as an interchurch couple. ... We believe that as individuals and as church, our ecumenical work is about developing the capacity to see and recognise the profound unity that exists, and the tools to roll away the stones in our hearts and in our churches which keep us separated from that unity in Christ.’

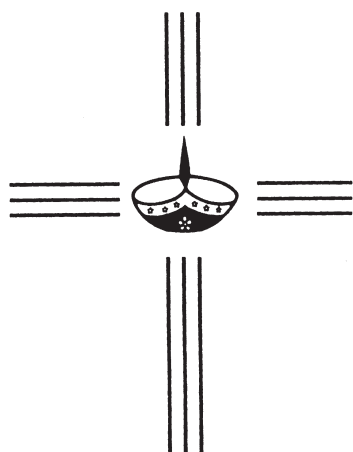
Professor Michael Lawler’s research at Creighton University with a view to pioneering better marriage preparation and support for interchurch couples is also familiar to our readers. A large part of his article here is on ‘Shared Communion’ as ‘the neuralgic pastoral question for many interchurch couples’. This includes a critique of the norms proposed for eucharistic sharing in *One Bread One Body* issued in 1998 by the Episcopal Conferences of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland. ‘The Bishops adopt two interesting strategies. While acknowledging the general norm which allows shared communion in exceptional circumstances ... of grave and pressing spiritual need (n.77), they introduce a shift from the category of *need* to the category of *pain*.’ Taking away the *pain* will not of course heal the brokenness of the Body of Christ. But ‘the point on which all the discussion of shared communion turns is the more radical “serious (spiritual) need” felt by interchurch spouses who already share communion in baptism, communion in marriage, and, above all, communion in the intimate partnership of live, love and faith. ... When unfulfilled, that inter-spousal *need* causes pain, as unfulfilled hunger causes pain. But it is the need not the pain, as it is the hunger not the pain, that must be satisfied. It is not palliative but authentic pastoral care that is required. ... The second strategy the Bishops adopt is ... the transposition of the exceptional *case* to the exceptional *unique occasion*, “a one-off situation which will not come again”(n.109). ... A marriage which lasts as long as life lasts is certainly a unique event in the modern world, but it is ongoingly unique. ... A marriage is not a one-off wedding; it is a partnership of the whole of life. ... If married people allow the one-off, unique event interpretation to stand unchallenged, there can be no exceptional but ongoing sharing of communion, though [other] norms interpret such ongoing exception as possible because of ongoing “serious (spiritual) need”’.

‘Oneness for all couples, all churches, all nations is a challenging goal; it is a goal that takes time. It is also a goal towards which many interchurch couples are now mapping out the way’, concludes Michael Lawler. And Fr René Beaupère, OP, concerned in France with pastoral care for interchurch families since 1962, ends his article with the hope that ‘our beloved old churches may be able to seek healing for their ecumenical arthritis in the rejuvenating waters of interchurch marriages’.

Single copies of this number are available from INTAMS, Steenweg naar Grote Hut 156 A/1, B-1640 Sint-Genesius-Rode (Brussels) Belgium, price 15 Euro or 600 BF.

Guidelines for Interchurch Marriages in India

The Commission for Ecumenism and Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India has published for the Catholic Community of India its *Guidelines for Ecumenism: Towards an Ecumenical Life-Style* (CBCI New Delhi, 130 pp., Jubilee Year 2000). The document has four parts: (1) the doctrinal and theological foundations of ecumenism, (2) the history of the division of the Church in India and of its ecumenical efforts, (3) a general exposition of what we have in common and what separates us, and (4) pastoral suggestions for fostering the ecumenical spirit and action. In the fourth part (over half the book) an 8-page section is devoted to mixed marriages. We give extracts from it below.



A call to marry across church divisions

56. Many circumstances of life, and undoubtedly divine Providence itself, arrange that at times compatible members of different Churches develop a desire to be united in a permanent bond of marriage and ask their respective Churches for permission to do so.

Unity in love requires mutual respect

58. Since by marriage both partners are united in love, each of them will respect the faith of the other and his or her belonging to a specific Christian community different from one's own. . . . It is important that the in-laws too share in that sense of respect for the faith of the partner of another Church, specially if she or he lives with them.

Family stability a primary obligation

60. In case of conflict of faith perceptions the matter should be discussed even before marriage so as to arrive at a vision which is acceptable to the conscience of both partners. At any rate, once married the partners must remember that the stability of the family is a primary obligation of both of them, and the fulfilment of other obligations should not threaten it. Hence in some cases they may want to delay the baptism of their children if no other viable solution has been found acceptable to both. But long delay is not the solution, which should be based on the shared belief of all Churches that there is only one baptism. The Catholic partner will also remember that there are many ways, besides baptism, of sharing his or her Catholic faith, like enhancing the Christian atmosphere in the home, and showing by word and example the values of the Catholic tradition.

The wedding: participation of both ministers

62. When necessary for maintaining family harmony, obtaining the parental consent, or other such grave reasons, the Bishop of the Catholic party may give a dispensation from the Catholic canonical form.
63. At the invitation of the family, a Catholic priest or deacon, with the permission of the local bishop, may attend such a celebration in another Church and take some part in it, e.g., read from the Bible, give a homily, offer appropriate prayers, bless the couple.
64. When a mixed marriage is celebrated in the Catholic Church it is equally appropriate and advisable that, with the permission of the Bishop, a minister of the other Church be invited to participate in some way in the celebration, like reading from the Scriptures, giving the sermon and/or blessing the couple.

Admission to communion for spouse, family and friends: spiritual strength and joy

65. It may not be advisable in cases of a mixed marriage to add to the marriage rite a Catholic Eucharist which may not be familiar to the other party and in some cases creates conflict. The Catholic liturgy for weddings offers possibilities of a complete liturgical celebration based on the Word of God and the riches of the sacrament of marriage itself. Such possibilities should be exploited to the full in such situations.
66. The couple may however request for their own spiritual strength and joy that the celebration of the sacrament of marriage be integrated within a Catholic Eucharistic celebration. When the other party is a member of an Oriental Church, the celebration and sharing of the Eucharist could be encouraged, as the marriage itself is a very good reason to share in the Eucharist. Where the other partner belongs to one of the Churches derived from the Reformation, if she or he manifests a real faith in the eucharist and in the presence of the Lord in it, and is properly disposed, the momentous importance of the wedding day for the parties concerned is a sufficient reason to grant by way of exception the sharing of communion with the believing Christian who asks for it. When there is a reasonable assurance that other members of the family and close friends who attend the wedding ceremonies also have a similar faith in the Eucharist, the eucharistic hospitality could also be extended to them, for their greater spiritual joy in such an auspicious occasion. To deny it would indeed cause surprise and even be a scandal.
67. If communion is offered in such cases, the solemnity of the wedding day and the tradition in most Churches would recommend that communion be offered with both species even if it is not the customary practice in the parish.

Support from the clergy and other pastoral ministers

68. For the couple who have decided to be united in holy matrimony and want to preserve their Christian identity, the wedding ceremony is of great importance. The priests and other pastoral agents must therefore be sensitive and show great respect for the freedom of the couple and the decision they have taken. They should be supportive of the couple and their families at this important moment of their life. Specially at this stage they must avoid any impression of censoriousness for the decision taken, even if it was against their own advice. Nothing should give the impression of unwillingness to co-operate in all possible ways to make the wedding day an authentic spiritual and communitarian experience for the couple and their relatives and friends.

Bonds with both communities

71. It is recommended that the partners occasionally at least visit one another's Churches and become friendly with the members of the local community of both Churches with a sense of joy at being able to present to the community an example of ecumenical life at its deepest form. They should also establish common bonds of friendship and trust with the spiritual leaders of the respective communities who could occasionally be invited to their homes. They should make constant efforts to learn more about the teachings and devotional practices of the partner's tradition and thus enrich their own Christian lives.

Christian symbols in the home

72. In the decor of the home the Christian identity may be professed with some picture and/or inscriptions reflecting that the family belongs to God as He has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. The Bible will also be a much used treasure of the family and will be accessible to all the members of the family in their most familiar language. A picture of mother Mary may also be a source of inspiration and blessing for the family, provided the partner of the other Church feels sufficiently comfortable with it. The Indian tradition in some parts of the country of having a small family altar, for instance on a mantelpiece or a small table or a niche in the wall, with appropriate Christian symbols agreeable to members of both families, may be a help in fostering an authentic family prayer.

Families which share the Christian life of two communities

73. It is of great importance that Catholic priests in the parish and other pastoral agents will take special pastoral care of the mixed families, conscious that they often need the encouragement of their respective pastors and that they have a rare opportunity of sharing the Christian life of two communities. The pastoral agents must be respectful of the Christian tradition of the other community and value its own perceptions of the Christian faith.

Shared pastoral care for the couple, their children and relatives

74. It may be useful if the priest in charge of the Catholic community meets occasionally the pastor or priest in charge of the Church of the other partner to see if both can undertake an ecumenical pastoral care of the family

concerned and avoid presenting conflicting messages that might confuse the partners or their children or relatives. An occasional joint visit to the family may prove useful, during which they may hold together a Bible prayer service and jointly bless the family.

An example of unity of mind and heart in Christian faith and love

75. In the context in which we live in India, families with mixed Christian traditions have a special responsibility to offer an example of unity of mind and heart in spite of ecclesial differences and the belonging to different communities. They can thus offer a shining example of the depth of Christian faith and love, and inspire the wider community to live in harmony and respect for the conscience of each person, in spite of religious differences.

Becoming a one-church family

76. If the other party of a mixed marriage requests to be admitted to the Catholic Church, the priest in charge must inquire carefully about the reasons that have led to the decision, whether the decision comes truly from the depths of freedom or has somehow been forced on him or her, and whether she or he is inspired by an authentic faith. Where possible the priest should contact the minister or pastor of the Church concerned and discuss the case. Only then, if the partner shows perseverance in his or her desire, should he proceed to instruct and admit him or her into the Catholic community.
77. The partner should gratefully remember the way she or he received the Christian faith and the values manifest in the way of life of the Church whose member he or she was earlier. As far as possible friendly contact with the members of his former community should be maintained.
78. If the Catholic partner of a marriage communicates a decision to pass over to the Church of the other partner, the priest in charge or other friendly persons may inquire about the reasons for the projected change, make clear its implications, and show that the person can live an authentic Christian life within the Catholic communion, in close contact with the other Church through his or her partner. He or she should be invited to develop within the Catholic Church the values that attract him or her to the other Church.
79. In no case should a priest call such persons apostates or renegades from the Christian faith.

Conscience

In a later section on Proclamation of Jesus Christ, the CBCI document returns to this theme:

We must show respect for the decision taken by any individual or family and should avoid attributing it to bad will or unworthy motives. 'Do not judge and you will not be judged' (Matthew 7:1, Luke 6:37): each person is called to respond to the invitation of God in his or her own conscience. We may surely offer friendly help in forming the conscience, but the ultimate decision must belong to each individual. (115)

INTERCHURCH FAMILIES AROUND THE WORLD

AUSTRALIA

Brisbane: A year ago we reported that Pat and Debbie Mullins had become convenors of IFAB. Congratulations to Debra, recently elevated to the Queensland Supreme Court. Pat is Secretary to the (Catholic) Brisbane Archdiocesan Commission for Ecumenism. In summer 2000 the Commission arranged four Halifax-Portal lectures to spread the “good news” of ecumenical dialogue. Elizabeth Harrington, Education Officer with the Brisbane Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, gave one, entitled *What God has joined let no one put asunder – not even the Church!!* She spoke as a member of the National Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Uniting Church in Australia, which in 1999 produced a report on interchurch marriages (see *Interchurch Families*, 8, 1 Jan. 2000 p.13). She concludes: ‘Of course, as with any official ecumenical agreement, the problem of reception remains. The churches must work to ensure that pastors, couples, families and worshipping communities hear about, know about, the “good news” of new possibilities for interchurch marriages and put it into practice.’

Melbourne: Jeff Wild, Executive Secretary of the Commission for Ecumenism of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, sent news of the launch of the RCC/UCA report early in 2000 in Melbourne: ‘the speech by a local Catholic Member of the House of Representatives was very affirming’. He and Margie (a minister in the Uniting Church) with another interchurch couple conducted a tutorial on the report at the Melbourne College of Divinity.

Newcastle and Hunter: The group remains small, but Bev Hincks has been involved in a symposium of the New South Wales Ecumenical Council and in a number of workshops on eucharistic sharing. She and Kevin visited Ireland and were present at the NIMMA conference in March 2000 (see below).

Perth: AIF Western Australia met in May and raised the question of an Australian national meeting for interchurch families. David White approached the eastern states to see what the possibilities are.

AUSTRIA



The annual conference of the ARGE-Ökumene was held at Pinkafeld, 26-28 October 2000, on the themes of sin, forgiveness and redemption. John and Vita Jenkins were there from England.

The conference moves around Austria; here in Burgenland on the Hungarian border it took place where Catholic and Protestant numbers are more evenly balanced than in most of Austria. In Pinkafeld the Catholic parish has 8,000 members and the Lutheran parish 6,000, and some of the surrounding vallages are almost entirely Lutheran. The Lutheran superintendent and the Catholic Bishop of Burgenland both visited the conference.

CANADA



Across Canada interchurch family groups in Montreal, Saskatoon and Calgary, co-ordinated by Ray Temmerman in Morden, Manitoba, have been preparing for the international conference to be held in Edmonton, Alberta, 1-6 August 2001 (see back cover).

The special Jubilee edition of the Canadian quarterly *Our Family*, published in May 2000, is of particular interest to interchurch families. Craig Buchanan writes on the life of a ‘dual congregation’ – the Christian Community of St John’s United and St Edward the Confessor, RC. He finds it good for an interchurch family to be where two congregations have been brought together ‘not just because they are under the same roof, but because they are united in Christ and thereby belong to the household of God’s people. We strive to be one family because we are all one in Christ.’ There is an interview on her work with Cathy Harvey, Co-ordinator for the Ecumenical Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton, and married to David, an Anglican. Cathy is working closely with Ray Temmerman on preparations for the Edmonton conference. Gilles Bourdeau, OFM, one of the presenters at Edmonton, also contributes an article. One by Kathleen O’Connor, Ontario, an Anglican married to Pat, a Roman Catholic, is entitled ‘Love one another’ and deals specifically with interchurch families as a sign of Christian unity. She tells her story movingly – one of a deeply shared faith, a commitment from the beginning to worship together (usually alternately), the almost unbearable hurt of exclusion at the eucharist, especially with growing children. Yet ‘slowly I began to see that God had not imposed a burden on me, but was asking something of Pat and me as a couple. I discovered the Association of Interchurch Families. Discovering that other families shared the same experiences was tremendously supportive and encouraging. I especially appreciated the fact that we could openly express our joys as well as our disappointments, knowing that others truly understood our feelings. My resentment and rebellion melted, and I found that God’s love was able to reach me again through the words and music of the service. Although nothing had changed in the way we worshipped, for the first time I felt part of Pat’s community as well as my own – because I felt that this was God’s will for us. For the first time I felt that as a couple we shared two communities. We had reached yet another stage of our journey together.’

Together in Christ: the Hope and Promise of Christian Marriage (Novalis, Toronto, 2000, 100 pp.) offers Ecumenical Perspectives from the Commission on Faith and Witness of the Canadian Council of Churches. It is a collection of denominational essays that explore the churches’ differences and common understandings of Christian marriage.

ENGLAND

A particularly important initiative in 2000 was the *Considering Confirmation* weekend held at Shallowford House in Staffordshire, 28-30 May, for interchurch children aged between 12 and 16. Led by

Beverley Hollins, Martin Reardon and Mgr Chris Lightbound, it helped the young people to think about the nature of confirmation and to consider the concrete options open to them if they wished to affirm their two-church belonging.

The annual conference of the Association of Interchurch Families was held at Swanwick, Derbyshire on the theme of *Spirituality in Interchurch Families*. The programme, prepared by Brian Dwyer, included a good deal of small-group sharing, following input from Tim and Chantal Evans, an Anglican-Roman Catholic couple now living in Lyon, France. (They brought their four children with them.) There was feedback from Fr Bernard Longley, Secretary of the Christian Unity Committee of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference for England and Wales, and Ruth Harvey, Director of the Living Spirituality Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. At the AGM Ruth Reardon, who had retired at the beginning of 2000 as Honorary Secretary, was elected an AIF President.



Responses to the Roman Catholic Bishops' norms on eucharistic sharing in *One Bread One Body* have included one from *l'Arche UK*. Because *l'Arche* welcomes people with learning disabilities at the heart of

its communities, its experience is in many ways similar to that of interchurch couples and their children. How do you explain structured division in the church, made visible in the eucharistic meal of the disciples of Christ, to people with learning disabilities in *l'Arche* communities and to children of interchurch families? (see 'Nick and the Eucharist' in *Interchurch Families*, 3, 2 Summer 1995, pp.5-6). *L'Arche* realised that 'the Bishops' document hits at the very heart of its ecumenical life ... The eucharist is about life, about the everyday and about the ordinary. The life that we share in our houses cannot be separated from the life that we celebrate at the eucharist.'

The *National Board of Catholic Women* has published a very useful leaflet entitled 'May my husband (a Christian from another Church) ever receive Holy Communion with me? – How?'. It spells out the possibilities for admission to communion given in *One Bread One Body*, possibilities that are still unknown to very many interchurch families in England, although other couples of course are saddened that the Bishops have not gone further.

FRANCE



The correspondents of the review *Foyers Mixtes* meet every two years in Lyon. Melanie Finch from England joined them 11-12 December 1999. In May 2000 Anne Garsed

and Martin and Ruth Reardon participated in the third *Rencontre des foyers interconfessionnels francophones*, held at le Rocheton, Melun, near Paris 6-7 May. This followed Versailles 1995 and Lyon 1997. The theme was 'In my Father's house are many rooms: fears and joys of differences'. The Secretary of the French Bishops' Commission for Christian Unity and the Editor of *Réforme* both took part. There was more discussion on eucharistic sharing than is usual at interchurch family conferences in France; it seems to be more difficult in some places than it used to be. The fourth *francophone* conference will probably be held in 2002. The *Comité francophone permanent* met in Lyon in early November 2000, planned another *Lettre aux Amis* and began discussions on preparations for the Second World Gathering of Interchurch Families, Rome 2003.

GERMANY

The new network for German interchurch families, launched in 1999 as a 'supra regional forum', held its first meeting in Freising, near Munich 29-30 January 2000. Claire Malone-Lee was there from England. The Network is associated with the AOEK, the national Council of Churches in Germany, and the theme of the meeting was 'Are interchurch families a burden or a hope for the churches?' The Roman Catholic theologian Professor Peter Neuner focused on the need of the 'domestic church' for eucharistic sharing, and the Lutheran Professor Harding Meyer spoke of the involvement of interchurch couples in the ecumenical movement. Beate and Jörg Beyer spoke of their experiences as an interchurch couple and family, and of their pastoral work for interchurch families. The Network now comprises about 120 families and individuals. A second meeting was held in Dornstadt, near Stuttgart, 13-15 October 2000, on the theme 'From divided to converging churches: our special task.'

IRELAND

Bishop Richard Clarke of the Church of Ireland wrote an interesting response to *One Bread One Body* – one year on. He noted a rather surprising silence of the Irish Catholic Bishops, who seemed reluctant to defend or even to discuss the document. He observed however since publication a much greater degree of self-consciousness among Roman Catholics about accepting eucharistic hospitality from other churches. Those who had felt able to receive communion on occasion at a Church of Ireland service now feel conscious that they may be making a statement of disobedience towards their own church. Regrettably, prominent Roman Catholics who still decide to accept hospitality on public occasions attract media attention. 'But one must sadly suspect that the principal victims in this entire affair have been, as so often, the partners in interchurch marriages. They have been told explicitly (84 ff.) *not* to take communion at the same altar, but instead to receive a "blessing" in the other's church.' But he sees room for movement, and asks that both Catholics and Protestants should 'lovingly but firmly' ask the awkward questions in their ecumenical dialogue. 'Can any of us justify to ourselves, let alone to God, our *disgraceful* treatment of those in interchurch marriages, reminding ourselves that the concept of "disgraceful" does contain within it a denial of *grace* that needs to be given its full spiritual connotation?' But he asks the members of the Church of Ireland to look at themselves honestly. There may be a subconscious relief that the Roman Catholic Church is in fact preventing something that (at a visceral level anyhow) they might not really want.

AIF-Ireland

AIFI held its annual day conference on 18th September 1999 at Taney Parish Centre, Dundrum on the topic: 'Is double belonging confusing?' The day had been prepared by a questionnaire to interchurch children, and a number of them were present to answer questions and take part in the discussion. One family reported that 'their friends actually think that they are lucky having a choice of church to attend'. There was a general feeling that double belonging was an advantage to children in giving them a perspective on different churches that children raised in a one-church family did not have. The AGM that followed decided that there were not enough members willing to serve on the AIFI committee to make it possible to continue in the same way. As an alternative a 'Telephone Committee' was

established, to deal with enquiries and to hold the fort while waiting for new people to get the association up and running again. For the time being the Irish School of Ecumenics is holding the AIFI archives. Subscriptions continue to be received, so that there will be funds in hand when they can be used. Involvement in marriage preparation courses continues; 150 couples were prepared in 1999. The interchurch marriage preparation programme is now distinct from the general marriage preparation of ACCORD; it has been given its own name: EMBRACE.

NIMMA



Congratulations to Anne Odling-Smee of the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association who was awarded the CBE for her contribution in the field of education. In March 2000 NIMMA itself was awarded £16,000 per annum for three years by the Community Relations Council, which allows it to maintain its office and employ part-time staff. At the beginning of July 2000 Philomena McQuillan started work as the new Administrator/Co-ordinator, also responsible for outreach. Philomena previously worked with the Columbanus Community; she is a NIMMA member who has been planning for some time a book about couples who dare to marry 'across the divide'. Another grant has allowed the purchase of a new computer and the provision of Presentation Skills Training for NIMMA members. The NIMMA annual conference was held 25-26 March at the Derrynoid Conference Centre, Draperstown. Gillian Walsh was there from England. Much time was spent in planning for the future.

SCOTLAND



Following the third international English-speaking conference held at Scottish Churches House in Dunblane, 1984 (organised from England), an independent Scottish AIF was formed, including the existing Scottish members of AIF and other Scots attracted by the international conference. Alastair Haggart, Primus of the Episcopal Church in Scotland, was present

at Dunblane and very supportive; he was already a President of AIF and remained so until his death in 1998.

A committee was formed, and between 1985 and 1987 annual day conferences were held at the university chaplaincy at Stirling. A memorable SAIF residential conference was held at Carberry Towers in October 1988, animated by John Bell of the Wild Goose Worship Group of the Iona Community, and addressed by Bishop Mario Conti. In 1989 SAIF met at St Colm's, Edinburgh, the General Synod offices, and in 1990 held an overnight conference at the Loch Ard youth hostel. A great deal of effort was put into organising the Seventh International Conference of Interchurch Families, held at St Mary's Redemptorist House on Kinnoul Hill, Perth in May 1992. The English brought a copy of their new video, hot off the reels, and Fr George Kilcourse from the USA brought copies of his recently published book, *Double Belonging*. Since 1992 however SAIF has not been active as an association, although the secretaries, Avril and Gerald Dobson, have continued to be an information point for interchurch families. With the help of Scottish Churches House they organised three meetings in 1999 and 2000, but the weekend conference planned for September 2000

was cancelled because of lack of support. The Dobsons will continue to be a contact point for Scotland, but there is not enough active help to run SAIF as an organisation. It seems likely, therefore, that the Scots will join with the English again, and AIF in England and Wales will become AIF in Britain once more.

SWITZERLAND

The eighteenth meeting of Swiss *foyer mixtes* took place at Sapinhaut in the Valais 23-24 September 2000, on the theme of the Trinity. The first conference was held in 1974, when Fr René Beaupère, OP came from Lyon as co-leader with Pastor Richard Ecklin (now over eighty, but present at Sapinhaut). This year too Fr Beaupère was there as one of the speakers, together with Jacques Nicole, pastor of the Reformed church at nearby Martigny, and formerly Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey. Martin and Ruth Reardon were there from England. The Swiss meetings were originally held every eighteen months, now every two years, and they move around the country, prepared by a different group each time. Valais is a Catholic canton, and the local group is almost entirely made up of Catholic husbands and Protestant wives who have come from Protestant cantons to join their husbands. The local parish priest and his curate spent the whole weekend with the group – the first time they had ever both been away from the parish on a Sunday. In two years time the next meeting will be in a Catholic area, prepared by the Fribourg group.

UNITED STATES



In May 2000 Michael Slater, co-chair of the American Association of Interchurch Families manned an AAIF exhibition at the National Workshop on Christian Unity held at Louisville, Kentucky, 15-18 May. This Workshop is for Ecumenical Officers, and in 2000 included a seminar in two parts, on interchurch and on interfaith families. In June Ray Temmerman was present at the annual liturgical gathering sponsored by the University of Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy; this year's theme was *Eucharist without Walls*. He was able to speak of the experience of interchurch families, and the presiding Catholic Bishop Sklba of Milwaukee commented that the church as a whole needed to be informed by this experience. The Spring-Summer 2000 issue of AAIF's *The Ark*, introduced the co-chairs Barbara and Michael Slater from California, and vice co-chairs Diane and Lamar Burton of Louisville, following the introduction of Mary Jane Glauber, AAIF secretary, in the Fall-Winter number.



Guidelines for Eucharistic Sharing in Canada

In 1993 an Ecumenical Directory on the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism was issued by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Since then Interchurch Families has tried to collect information from different parts of the world on how the norms of that Directory are being implemented by Roman Catholic bishops and episcopal conferences, particularly in relation to eucharistic sharing for interchurch families. We have given a series of reports and studies over the past few years. The French bishops simply referred back to their Note on Eucharistic Hospitality of 1983 (Interchurch Families Jan.95, 3,1 p.1). The Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australia issued Blessed and Broken: Pastoral Guidelines for Eucharistic Hospitality at Easter 1995 (IF Summer 96, 4,2 p.8). The German Bishops' Conference issued guidelines through their Ecumenical Commission in February 1997 (IF Jan 98, 6,1 p.10), and the Archbishop of Vienna followed suit in June 1997 (ibid p.12). The Southern African Bishops' Conference issued their norms on eucharistic sharing in the context of a Directory on Ecumenism for Southern Africa in January 1998 (IF Summer 1998, 6,2 p.6) and revised them in January 2000 (IF Summer 2000, 8,2 p.5). Meanwhile, in May 1998 the diocese of Rockhampton in Queensland, Australia, prepared its own guidelines (IF Summer 2000, 8,2). In October 1998 the Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland published One Bread One Body, a teaching document on the eucharist that included the norms for eucharistic sharing agreed by the three episcopal conferences; we printed an interchurch family response (IF Summer 1999, 7,2 p.10 ff.).

Eventually it may be possible to make a comparative study of these and other guidelines on eucharistic sharing. In the



meantime, we will continue to report on those that appear, as we learn of their existence.

We give below the text of the Canadian Policy on sacramental sharing; this is reprinted from Studia Canonica, 34, 2000, pp.117-18. The Policy document was drawn up by the Canadian Episcopal Commission for Ecumenism, and approved by the Permanent Council of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. In April 1999 it was sent to all the diocesan bishops, to be promulgated by them if they wished to do so. It was to be publicised as an interim policy; after a suitable period of time the Commission for Ecumenism will survey the dioceses which have participated and evaluate their experience. It is expected that after such evaluation the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops will be able to enact a common policy based on that experience. With the Policy text the Bishops received a model decree by which they could establish the policy for their own dioceses. They also received a Pastoral Commentary, Sacramental Sharing between

Catholics and other Christians in Canada, intended to help priests, deacons and lay ministers to determine cases of serious need. In addition, they were sent a pamphlet, Conditions Permitting Non-Catholics to Receive Sacraments from a Catholic Minister: Notes for those who may benefit from the policy; this is intended for potential Anglican and Protestant recipients of the sacraments to help them to find out whether they would qualify. We give first the short text of the Policy itself.

It is important to read the Policy in the light of the Pastoral Commentary and the Notes for those who may benefit that accompany it. The Canonical Commentary that follows is also very helpful in drawing out some of its implications.

POLICY ON CASES OF SERIOUS NEED IN WHICH THE SACRAMENTS OF PENANCE, EUCHARIST, AND ANOINTING OF THE SICK MAY BE ADMINISTERED TO ANGLICANS AND BAPTISED PROTESTANT CHRISTIANS

The Eucharist is a profound mystery which is both a sign of unity and a source of grace. As a rule, Roman Catholic canon law restricts the reception of holy Communion and other sacraments to those who are full members of the Catholic Church. This rule preserves the notion of the Eucharist as a symbol of unity. On the other hand, the Catholic Church recognises that the participation of other Christians in the sacraments under certain circumstances is permissible because it is a source of grace for all the baptised.

Accordingly, the canon law admits separated Eastern Christians and members of like churches to receive the sacraments of penance, Eucharist, and anointing of the sick from a Catholic minister whenever they ask on their own for it and are properly disposed. Anglican and Protestant Christians may receive the same three sacraments in danger of death and in other cases of

grave need as determined by the diocesan bishop or the conference of bishops in accord with canon 844, 4 of the Code of Canon Law. This policy specifies these cases of grave need.

1. In accord with canon 844, 4, Catholic ministers may lawfully administer the sacraments of penance, Eucharist, and anointing of the sick to Anglican and Protestant Christians in danger of death or in any of the following cases of grave need:

In areas where they do not have access to their own minister.

In institutions where they stay day and night and do not have regular access to their own minister, including prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages, and boarding schools.

In other cases of grave need, permission must be obtained from



the diocesan bishop (or his delegate).

2. An Anglican or Protestant party in a mixed marriage who has a serious spiritual need for the Eucharist may receive Communion on special occasions, such as principal anniversaries, funerals of family members, on Christmas and Easter if the family attends Mass together, and other occasions of ecclesial or familial significance.

When, in exceptional circumstances, a mixed marriage is celebrated at the Eucharist, the Anglican or Protestant party to the marriage who has a serious spiritual need for the Eucharist may receive Holy Communion at the wedding Mass.

The Anglican or Protestant party may also receive the sacrament of penance from a Catholic minister before receiving Communion on these same occasions.

3. The Anglican or Protestant faithful who receive a sacrament from a Catholic minister when they cannot approach their own minister must be validly baptised, ask for the sacrament on their own, manifest catholic faith in the sacrament, and be properly disposed.

4. Doubtful cases are to be referred to the diocesan bishop (or his delegate).

PASTORAL COMMENTARY ACCOMPANYING THE POLICY

The Pastoral Commentary that accompanies the Policy consists of two main parts: Theological Principles and Canonical Notes and Pastoral Implementation. We give here the sections that concern interchurch couples and families.

‘Theological Principles’ contains a section on ‘Spiritual Need’. This states:

More than simply a passing desire or a response to a feeling of being excluded, spiritual need implies both “a need for an increase in spiritual life and a need for a deeper involvement in the Church and its unity.” (*Instruction on Admitting other Christians to Communion in the Catholic Church, 1972, IV.2*) Interchurch couples and families may experience spiritual need in certain circumstances. Being unable to share the Eucharist may lead to serious risk to the spiritual life and faith of one or both partners. It may endanger the integrity of the marriage bond or result in an indifference to the sacraments, a distancing from Sunday worship and so from the life of the Church.

(This section echoes that of the German bishops on the spiritual need of interchurch families, but does not include the pastoral questions that may help a minister to determine the need in particular cases. See parts 2 and 5 of the German guidelines.)

‘Canonical Notes and Pastoral Implementation’ contains two sections that refer to interchurch families; we give them both below.

Principles for the Application of the Policy

Two general principles should guide the application of this Policy: 1) the policy is to be interpreted broadly to favour

sacramental reception by those eligible; and 2) the Church does not demand more of non-Catholics than it does of Catholic people.

1) Although canon law requires a “grave need” for an Anglican or Protestant Christian to receive penance, Eucharist, or anointing of the sick from a Catholic minister, this “grave need” must be broadly interpreted in keeping with the standard canonical principle, “favours are to be multiplied, burdens are to be restricted.” This principle is clearly in evidence in the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* when it acknowledges that the non-Catholic party to a mixed marriage may be permitted to receive Communion at the wedding Mass and in exceptional cases afterward. Here the category of “grave need” was broadened by the Holy See to include the spiritual need of a Christian spouse who wants to participate fully in the Eucharist at his or her wedding Mass and other important occasions in the family’s life. All the terms of the *Policy* are subject to broad interpretation: “regular access to their own minister,” “serious spiritual need,” “manifest Catholic faith,” “proper disposition,” “occasions of ecclesial and familial significance”.

2) The second principle to keep in mind is that the Church does not require non-Catholics to have more knowledge of the sacrament, or more faith and holiness, than the Catholic faithful have. This principle is particularly pertinent in applying terms of the law which speak of the non-Catholic Christian “manifesting catholic faith” in the sacrament and having the “proper disposition”.

Mixed Marriage

A “mixed marriage” or interchurch marriage between a Catholic and a baptised non-Catholic normally should be celebrated at a liturgy of the Word. Since the sacraments of Eucharist and marriage are both signs of unity, this symbolism could be distorted when many people at a wedding cannot participate fully because they are not allowed by Catholic discipline to receive Communion. However, occasionally the non-Catholic party also wants a wedding Mass, not merely to please the Catholic party and family, but due to his or her own faith and eucharistic tradition. In such a case it may be appropriate to admit to Holy Communion at the wedding Mass the non-Catholic party who expresses a desire to receive it together with the Catholic party. The conditions for reception of the sacraments can be explained in advance of the wedding orally or by means of a pamphlet.

After the wedding, the policy permits the Anglican or Protestant party to a mixed marriage to receive Communion on “occasions of ecclesial or familial significance”. This indicates that the reception of Communion is not to be habitual, but that it may be done on other special occasions besides the ones given as examples in the *Policy*. Ultimately, the non-Catholic spouses themselves will determine the occasions of ecclesial and familial significance when they have a serious spiritual need for the Eucharist, excluding habitual reception. Those who want to receive the sacraments habitually in the Catholic Church should be invited to become Catholic.

The Notes for those who may benefit from the Policy contains a similar paragraph, as follows:

The Anglican or Protestant parties in interchurch marriages may receive Communion in a Catholic Church when they experience a serious spiritual need for it on occasions of ecclesial or familial significance, such as principal anniversaries, funerals of family members, on Christmas and Easter if the family attends Mass together, and other similar occasions. Ultimately, the non-Catholic spouses themselves determine what are the occasions of ecclesial or familial significance when they have a strong spiritual desire to receive Holy Communion. However, there should be a special significance to the occasion; it is not meant to be a routine practice. Those who wish to receive the sacraments on a regular basis in the Catholic Church should inquire about becoming a Catholic.

A CANONICAL COMMENTARY ON THE POLICY

We are greatly indebted to the Revd John M. Huels, OSM, Professor in the Faculty of Canon Law, St Paul University, Ottawa, for his commentary on the Canadian policy text, 'A Policy on Canon 844, 4 for Canadian Dioceses', which appeared in *Studia Canonica*, 34, 2000, pp.91-118. He has also written two more popular articles, printed in the Canadian journal *Celebrate!* The first introduced the policy (May/June 2000) and the second is entitled 'Sacramental Sharing in Mixed Marriages: the Policy for Canadian dioceses' (July/August 2000).

In his canonical commentary, Fr Huels points to the advantages for bishops of establishing a general policy. First, the bishop will not have to respond to individual requests for permission, but only for exceptional cases of grave need not foreseen by it. Second, there will be less variation in practice than where each Catholic minister interprets the norms of the 1993 Ecumenical Directory for himself. Third, it is an opportunity for teaching, since many, even Catholic clergy, are confused, some thinking that other Christians may never receive sacraments from Catholic ministers, others thinking that all may decide for themselves when they can receive. Catechesis should therefore accompany the promulgation of the Policy in each diocese.

In an interesting note on language, Fr Huels points out that the Policy speaks of cases of "grave need", not of cases of "grave and pressing need", as in the English translation of the Code approved by a number of episcopal conferences. The Latin phrase in c.844, 4 is *alia urgeat gravis necessitas*. For grammatical precision, the phrase should be translated in English: "if ... another grave need would urge it." He points out that "grave and pressing" sounds more restrictive than "grave". "English-speaking canonists and bishops need to be aware that, with this translation, they might be susceptible to understanding the *gravis necessitas* of c.844, 4 in a more restrictive way than is conveyed by the Latin."

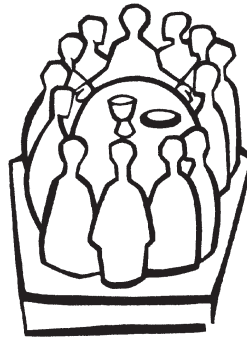
But we will look particularly at the second part of the article, the section on mixed marriages. The first permission given is that for special occasions of either ecclesial or familial significance. Two examples are given of occasions of familial significance: principal anniversaries and funerals of family members. Two examples are given of occasions of ecclesial

significance: Christmas and Easter. These are only examples of special occasions. He quotes the Pastoral Commentary: "Ultimately, the Christian spouses themselves determine the significant ecclesial or family occasions when they have a serious spiritual need for the Eucharist."

Spiritual need

Fr Huels points out that in speaking of "a serious spiritual need for the Eucharist", the Canadian document is consistent with previous documents of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Earlier the Secretariat had identified one kind of grave need for sacramental sharing as a "serious spiritual need", also called a "genuine spiritual need". He points out the difference here from other cases of need. We quote:

Unlike the other cases of necessity, the gravity of this case does not stem from the absolute inability of the non-Catholic parties to mixed marriages to approach their own minister; they could separate from their families and go to their own churches if they wished. Rather, the gravity of this case stems from the gravity of the spiritual need experienced by the non-Catholic's inability to approach their minister on this special occasion when attending Mass with the Catholic spouse and children. The SPCU described this spiritual need as "the need of growth in the spiritual life and the need of a more profound insertion into the mystery of the Church and her unity." The recipient of communion would not likely describe his or her spiritual need using this kind of language, nor is any articulation of the need required. It suffices that they experience a serious spiritual need. Provided they are made aware of this requirement, they themselves may judge when they are in serious spiritual need for the Eucharist, in accord with the Policy.



"They themselves may judge" is a phrase that will delight many interchurch families. There is a problem here however, in that some would say they experience a serious spiritual need each time they are at Mass with their spouse. This judgement of their need seems to be excluded by reference to "special occasions". Indeed, Fr Huels quotes *Familiaris Consortio*, in which Pope John Paul II says the Eucharist is "the very source of Christian marriage" by which "the Christian family finds the foundation and the soul of its communion and its mission". "By partaking in the eucharistic bread, the different members of the Christian family become one body, which reveals and shares in the wider unity of the church." Ideally, comments Fr Huels, the Christian family should be able to participate fully in the Eucharist every Sunday, but in a mixed marriage that is not possible. However, with this new Policy for Canadian dioceses, the family will at least be able to receive Christ's body and blood together on special occasions of familial or ecclesial significance.

However, Fr Huels does state in his second *Celebrate!* article: *This is not to say that it is impossible for the Anglican or Protestant spouse to receive holy communion every Sunday in a Catholic church, but only that it is not permitted under this second provision of the Policy. It could happen, however, that the baptised, non-Catholic, spouse has a grave reason, in accord with the first part of the policy, for receiving holy communion more often than special occasions, for example, if a*

minister of one's own denomination were not accessible on a regular basis.

It would seem that the point here is that there are exceptions when the other Christian spouse might receive communion regularly: if they have no access to their own minister. One could argue that, if they regularly attend the Eucharist with their Catholic spouse, they do lack access to their own minister; it is not so much physical impossibility but moral impossibility, due to the need to attend Sunday eucharist together as a family. A case could be made for this, and then it would be up to the couple to "judge for themselves", if such were diocesan policy.

However that may be, we hope that the experienced need of some interchurch families to be together often at the eucharist will be examined during the interim period when the Canadian dioceses are applying the present Policy, in the light of the strong expression that "*they themselves may judge*". This examination could well be made in the light of Fr Huels' reference to the gravity of the need. This does not stem from the *absolute* inability of the Anglican or Protestant partner to approach his or her own minister, but from the gravity of the spiritual need itself, in the context of a marriage relationship.

The Wedding Mass

Following the Pastoral Commentary on the distortion of the symbolism when many people at a wedding cannot participate fully because they are not allowed by Catholic discipline to receive communion, Fr Huels makes a strong case for celebrating the wedding outside mass. He points out that a priest will need to determine whether the non-Catholic truly wants the eucharist, and whether the non-Catholic guests will be comfortable at a Catholic eucharist at which they may not receive communion. Again we quote:

It will be necessary to educate priests in parishes on this point. Experience has shown that many priests celebrate the Eucharist routinely at mixed marriages while not giving communion to the non-Catholic party. It is now clear that the opposite ought to be the practice, that the Eucharist should only rarely be celebrated at a mixed marriage, but when it is done for a just cause there should be a greater openness to the non-Catholic's reception of communion. The implicit presumption in the Policy is that, when there is sufficient reason to celebrate the Eucharist, there likely is also sufficient reason to give holy communion to the non-Catholic party.

Here Fr Huels quotes from a document of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity: "Eucharistic Communion in the celebration of Mass is really the most perfect manner of participating in the Eucharist since this is fulfilling the words of the Lord: 'Take and eat.'" He continues:

The reverse could also generally be held: if there is not sufficient reason to give holy communion to the non-Catholic party, then there is also not likely to be a sufficient reason to have the wedding at Mass. Undoubtedly this will require considerable change in pastoral practice on the part of priests and in the thinking of the Catholic people. The celebration of the rite of marriage outside Mass should not be viewed negatively as some kind of deprivation of a right of the Catholic

party to a wedding Mass. Rather, the rite of marriage outside Mass should be presented positively as more ecumenically sensitive to the religious sentiments of the non-Catholic guests and the non-Catholic spouse.

In cases where the other Christian partner really wants a celebration of the eucharist, Fr Huels points out that there is already sacramental sharing occurring in virtue of the fact that any marriage between two baptised persons is a sacrament (c.1055, 2). "Thus, the admission of the baptised non-Catholic party to the Eucharist is, in effect, a strong symbol of the sacramental reality of the marriage."

Conditions for Admission

When Fr Huels comes to consider the conditions for admission to Catholic communion, there are some points of particular interest to interchurch families.

On *the inability of Anglican or Protestant faithful to go to a minister of their own community*, he says:

The 1993 Directory for Ecumenism employs a broad interpretation of the inability to go to a minister of one's community in its provisions governing the reception of holy communion by the non-Catholic party of a mixed marriage at the wedding Mass and on exceptional occasions during the marriage. With a mixed marriage, the impossibility is not due to the habitual physical or moral impossibility to go to the non-Catholic minister, but rather the immediate impossibility to go to that minister when one is celebrating one's marriage in a Catholic church or when one is participating in the Catholic Eucharist on another significant occasion during the marriage. Surely, it is physically impossible to go to the non-Catholic minister for communion at one's wedding or other important occasion when one is participating at Mass in a Catholic church! This is a good example of the standard canonical rule requiring broad interpretation of favourable laws.

Again, we would hope there might be further consideration of the significance of other occasions when the married partners are together at the eucharist.

Fr Huels points out that the requirement that other Christians be unable to go to a minister of their own community is ecumenically sensitive. It avoids the impression of proselytism by the Catholic Church. It also takes seriously the fact that God's grace operates through sacraments which the Catholic Church judges to be "invalid". To quote: *If the Protestant sacraments were inefficacious, it would be immoral for the Catholic minister to refuse the request of a Protestant for a sacrament in danger of death when his or her minister is available. Yet ... the requirement of c.844, 4 that the non-Catholic be unable to approach a minister of his or her own community, applies even if the person is in danger of death. On the basis of this requirement, one can only conclude that the Catholic Church implicitly considers the sacraments of ecclesial communities to be effective in preparing the dying person for eternal life, and thus not devoid of sanctifying grace.*

Fr Huels points out that one of the conditions for admission is that the Anglican or Protestant faithful are **to ask for**



communion on their own initiative. This does not mean, however, that they should not be informed of the possibility of admission; indeed the “Notes for those who may benefit from the Policy” have just this purpose. The Pastoral Commentary states that the Catholic minister may not invite other Christians to the sacraments *at the time of their celebration*, writes Fr Huels. *Nevertheless, at an appropriate time apart from the liturgical celebration, the Catholic minister may inform non-Catholics about the pertinent universal and particular law of the Catholic Church on sacramental sharing so that, if they fulfil the various conditions, they may approach the Catholic minister on their own volition. A good way to do this would simply be to give the pamphlet containing the Notes to persons who might be eligible, so that they can determine if they fulfil the conditions of the law. Then, if they believe they are eligible, they can take the initiative in requesting the sacrament from the Catholic minister.*

Another requirement for admission is that the Anglican or Protestant **manifests Catholic faith in the sacrament.** With regard to Catholics, says Fr Huels, canonical doctrine holds that sufficient faith can usually be considered implicit in the desire to receive the sacrament. However, something more is required from other Christians, who must *manifest Catholic faith.* He finds the way the Ecumenical Commission has handled this delicate matter in the Pastoral Commentary and The Notes admirable – “faithful to the law, pastorally workable, and ecumenically sensitive”. The faith requirement is simply stated in the Notes so that potential non-Catholic recipients can easily understand it: believers “should acknowledge that the sacrament is the body and blood of Christ given under the form of bread and wine. The believing Christian manifests faith in the Eucharist by responding ‘Amen’ to the minister who presents the sacred bread and saving cup.” *The presumption of the Commentary, comments Fr Huels, is that, once the non-Catholic faithful have read the Notes and/or have been instructed by the Catholic minister on the meaning of the sacrament, they manifest their acceptance of this Catholic faith in the sacrament in the very act of approaching the Catholic minister to receive the sacrament. This manifestation of faith additionally is made explicit verbally by responding “Amen” after the ministers’ presentation of bread and cup with words, “the Body of Christ” and “the blood of Christ”.*

On the face of it, he adds, the manifestation of faith required of non-Catholic recipients is exactly what is required of Catholic recipients. In effect, however, the non-Catholic Christian who has been explicitly instructed by the Notes and/or the minister before receiving the sacrament is giving a more demonstrable manifestation. ... If there is a doubt whether the non-Catholic truly shares Catholic faith in the sacrament, the minister should ask for a more explicit manifestation of faith. A suitable way would be to ask a question to which an affirmative response would be required, for example: “Do you accept the faith in the Eucharist as Christ instituted it and as the Catholic Church has handed it down?” A 1972 instruction of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity suggested this wording for a manifestation of faith.

A final requirement is that the Catholic or Anglican faithful **are**

to be properly disposed to receive the sacrament. Fr Huels comments that to receive holy communion fruitfully, the faithful must be in the state of grace, that is, free of grave sin. This is a requirement of the divine law and binds non-Catholic Christians as well. However, non-Catholics are not required to confess their grave sins in individual confession before they receive holy communion because that is a requirement of merely ecclesiastical law (from which even Catholics can be exempt in certain circumstances). Unless they wish to confess to a Catholic minister, non-Catholic Christians who are conscious of unforgiven serious sin should make an act of perfect contrition, privately expressing their sorrow and confessing their sins to God.

Conclusion

Fr Huels reminds his readers that the Policy is “experimental”, to be altered in the future as a result of pastoral experience, consultations, and further reflection. It is important that diocesan ecumenical officers and commissions should monitor the implementation of the Policy and solicit feedback. Due attention must be given to the norm of c.844, 5 requiring “consultation with at least the local competent authority” of the

Anglican and Protestant Churches. This might mean just sending documentation and requesting feedback, or it might involve a symposium or dialogue involving specialists in ecumenism to which the local Christian leadership or their representatives would be invited. When publicising the Policy care must be taken to avoid misrepresentation in the press so far as possible; it should be made clear that the bishop cannot go beyond what is permitted in the canon law. He may

determine cases of grave need, but has no authority to permit open communion or intercommunion.

Finally, says Fr Huels, the requirements for sacramental sharing of c.844, 4 are complicated. Perhaps that is why relatively few bishops and conferences of bishops have established a general policy on cases of grave need in which the sacraments can be administered to baptised members of ecclesial communities. In Canadian dioceses this lacuna in particular law and pastoral practice may now be filled thanks to the new Policy and its accompanying documentation.

In his *Celebrate* article, Fr Huels suggests that in dioceses where the Policy has not yet been implemented, views on its desirability need to be voiced “from below”. They should come not only from the diocesan ecumenical officers and ecumenical commissions and other official bodies, but also from individual clergy and lay faithful concerned about ecumenism and the pastoral welfare of all Christians who may be in grave spiritual need of the sacraments.

No other guidelines on eucharistic sharing, to our knowledge, have made it so clear that they are “experimental”. We shall look forward with great interest to seeing how the process of monitoring their implementation and assessing their pastoral value proceeds in Canada. We hope especially for developments that may recognise more explicitly the on-going need for eucharistic sharing in the case of some interchurch couples and families, and may try to see how this need can be met more fully.



THE JOURNAL

INTERCHURCH FAMILIES is a twice-yearly journal which discusses the theological and pastoral issues raised by the existence of interchurch families (especially families in which one partner is a Roman Catholic and the other a Christian of another communion). It shares the experience of these families with a wider public, and helps readers keep abreast of developments which concern interchurch families, in the context of the wider ecumenical movement.

Pastoral care

It is addressed to all who are or expect to be in any way responsible for the pastoral care of mixed marriages and interchurch families in all their variety.

Towards Christian unity

The journal is also addressed to all concerned with the movement towards Christian unity, for in interchurch families the pain of Christian division and the celebration of Christian unity is focused at its most local level. An interchurch family is a "domestic church", and interchurch families are the smallest units of "Churches Together".

The journal is published by the English Association of Interchurch Families, but it intends to serve the needs of English-speaking interchurch families and all who care for their welfare world-wide. It welcomes contributions and editorial help from all parts of the world.

The annual subscription (England, Scotland, Wales and N.Ireland) is £6 p.a. or £16 for three years; for the rest of Europe it is £7 p.a. or £19 for three years; for other parts of the world (sent airmail printed rate) it is £8 p.a. or £22 for three years. Subscriptions can be sent in sterling to the AIF London address given at the foot of the next column; in American or Canadian dollars to R and F Temmerman, 19 Stephen Street, Morden, MA, R6M 1C5 Canada; in Australian dollars to B and K Hincks, PO Box 66, Swansea, NSW 2281 Australia.

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THE ASSOCIATION

The Association of Interchurch Families (AIF) offers a support network for interchurch families and mixed marriages and a voice for such families in the churches. Most members are interchurch couples and families; some are individuals who wish to further the Association's work.

Mutual encouragement

AIF began in 1968 as a mutual support group, formed by couples who had found that the exchange of experience with others in similar situations could help each find its own way forward. There are local AIF groups throughout England. A national conference is held every year at Swanwick in Derbyshire.

An Association for others

The support network which AIF offers extends far beyond its own members. Many interchurch couples find information and a listening ear a great help in times of crisis. One of the Association's most important tasks is to build up a support network of informed people ready to respond to enquirers.

Commitment to change

AIF members are also ready to work for increased understanding by all churches of the pastoral needs of interchurch and mixed marriage families, at local, diocesan, national and international level, as their own circumstances allow. The Association is committed to the movement for Christian unity; interchurch families suffer because of Christian divisions, but they also have particular incentives and special opportunities to work for the healing of those divisions. AIF is a "body in association" with Churches Together in England, and members will work for unity within their own families and at whatever level they can.

The Association is a **registered charity** (no. 283811) dependent on members' contributions and the donations of others who support its work.

Presidents are: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Westminster, the Moderator of the Free Churches Council, Dr Kenneth Greet, Dr Ruth Reardon.

Members receive the Journal, *AIF News and Notes* and *The Interdependent* (written by and for interchurch children). Details of membership, resources (publications, leaflets, AIF video), and a constantly up-dated list of Local Contacts throughout England are available on request. Contact:

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AROUND THE WORLD

The Conference of Associations of Interchurch Families in Britain and Ireland includes the four English, Scottish and Irish sister-associations, who are together a "body in association" with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. AIF is also linked with other associations and groups of interchurch families around the world.

A constantly-updated list of contact addresses for English-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking interchurch families in different parts of the world is available on request to AIF-England at its London address.

A web-site for interchurch families worldwide is run by Ray Temmerman of Morden, Canada. It is to be found at <http://www.aifw.org>

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

Ireland

NIMMA annual conference
Draperstown, Northern Ireland
28-29 April 2001

Italy

17th Italian/French/Swiss meeting
Torre Pellice, Turin
6-9 July 2001

CANADA

International Conference
Living the Path to Christian Unity

United in Baptism and Marriage
Dr Eileen Scully, Canadian Council of Churches
John and Julie Scott,
Catholic/Evangelical, Colorado

Unity and Communion
Br Gilles Bourdeau, OFM, Canadian Centre for Ecumenism
Craig and Michele Buchanan,
United/Catholic, Montreal

The Path Travelled – Past and Future
Garland Pohl, US National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers
Martin and Ruth Reardon
Anglican/Catholic, England

EDMONTON, Alberta
1-6 August 2001

Britain

Christian Unity: Why?
Swanwick, Derbyshire
25-27 August 2001

Rome 2003

Second World Gathering/Rassemblement Mondial