

*We Receive You Into the Household of God:
The Importance of a Theology of the Church*

*NAAC Conference, 2016
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An overview of the two sequential plenary addresses

1st – a bit about the centrality of baptism and ecclesiology in worldwide ecumenical conversations, particularly with reference to the work of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches

2nd – ecclesiological questions become more complex, theologically, ritually, and ecclesially, when we move from questions of baptism alone to full rites of initiation in the catechumenate. Therefore, what is the working ecclesiology of your ecclesial communion (or denomination), what is the working ecclesiology of your catechumenal formation conversations?

3rd – ecclesiological models in conversation when focusing on initiation into the body of Christ

4th – second plenary address of these two: where do all these models and theologies lead us? This is the conversation on mystagogy and mission

Ecumenism and Ecclesiology

What a difference a century makes! Between the liturgical movement's ecumenical impact, beginning before the turn of the 20th century, to the establishment of the Church Unity Octave in 1908,¹ followed by the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference (the forerunner of the World Council of Churches) – we have been on an ecumenical role for 100 – 150 years now. As a matter of fact, we've been ecumenically focused long enough to have it fall apart several times – including the present stretch of time which many scholars call the "third winter of ecumenism".²

Amazing strides in ecumenical Christian relations and disheartening set-backs have marked the work of those who consider themselves ecumenists first and foremost. So, what has this to do with the catechumenate – the focus of our conference for the next few days? What has it to do with the focus of this particular talk on ecclesiology, the theology of church? I want to argue that it has everything to do with it. We gather here as an ecumenical group – having been shaped by different expressions of being church, by different cultures of church, by different understandings of what it means to be

¹ This was the Graymoor Anglican (Episcopal) initiative that was the predecessor of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity), begun by Fr. Paul Wattson, then an Episcopal priest, who together with a group of Episcopal nuns began a week of prayer dedicated to Christian unity. Eventually the community was received into the Roman Catholic Church, and the Friars of the Atonement became an RC men's community. Their apostolate is still ecumenism around the world.

² NCC's president Kathryn Lohre; John Gibaut "the winter of ecumenism" in *The Ecumenical Review* 65 (2013) 368; Irish Times, "the dog days for ecumenism", January 2016, and many more.

church. I hope that what fundamentally unites us as the Christed/Christened ones is our baptism - as baptized members of the body of Christ we have put on Christ, we are the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. It is this unity that allows us to pray as Jesus does in the gospel of John: “that they all be one so that the world may believe.” (John 17:21)

It is no wonder then that a primary focus of ecumenical conversations over the past 100 years, particularly in the work of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, has focused on recognizing and honouring a common baptism. From the annual publications focused on baptism as the foundation of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, to the widely known *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document of 1982,³ to the crucial 2011 publication *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*,⁴ the conversation continues to stress the essential recognition of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism...”, the scripture passage on which the entire 2011 document is founded. The introduction of *One Baptism* summarizes the text in this way:

[This study text] explores the close relation between baptism and the believer’s life-long growth into Christ, as a basis for the greater mutual recognition of baptism. It also addresses issues in baptismal understanding and practice which cause difficulty within churches and hinder the mutual recognition of baptism among churches today. It is offered in the hope that fresh perspectives will help the churches (a) to clarify the meaning of the mutual recognition of baptism, (b) to put the consequences of mutual recognition fully into practice, and (c) to clarify issues which still prevent such recognition.⁵

The focus and theological approach of the 2011 document is probably clear in the summary just read – baptism is not a one-off, it is not a single event from which Christians emerge ‘fully cooked’, it is rather part of a life-long process of growing into Christ. The hope was that this dynamic approach would be the “fresh perspective” that might bring the churches still outside the ‘common baptism fold’ into conversation.

Now, who is not agreeing to recognize baptism? Who is still re-baptizing baptized Christians? There are a number of churches with roots in the Anabaptist tradition – for whom a believer’s baptism is essential, and who would therefore not recognize infant baptism. There are also some Eastern Christian churches who for theological reasons – primarily ecclesiological and ministerial – do not recognize the baptisms done in other churches, often because of the internal integrity of baptism, chrismation and eucharist. The hope was, in this document, that the lifelong process of baptism would assist those who profess a believer’s baptism – that our whole life is a profession of faith, and that the processional model of baptism might also help with the other side of the spectrum by recognizing steps of initiation that ritually express and create the “life-long growth

³ Faith and Order Commission paper #111, also known as the “Lima Text.”

⁴ *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition. A Study Text*. Faith and Order paper No. 210. Geneva: WCC, 2011.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Introduction I, A, 1. <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/ii-worship-and-baptism/one-baptism-towards-mutual-recognition>

into Christ”, specifically mentioning the catechumenal process in the early church and in contemporary constructions of the same.

But the good news is the overwhelming majority of Christians do mutually recognize baptism – that is, they recognize the ritual of baptism done in other ecclesial communions as baptism. The other theological issues – non-liturgical issues - are more difficult to pin down. What does the mutual recognition of baptism mean? Again, the WCC document in question draws a direct connection between baptism and the theology of the church:

Baptism occurs in a particular church (with its own history of ecclesial relations and divisions), but brings persons into the unity of Christ’s body, which is one. With this paradox in mind, the following questions are asked: How does the celebration of baptism in your church make clear that baptism is into the whole body of Christ, and not simply into a local congregation and a particular denomination? How does your church’s understanding of membership reflect this understanding of baptism as entry into the one body of Christ?⁶

In other words, the answer to this question of the meaning of recognizing a mutual baptism is similar to the second question above – what are the consequences of this recognition? In order to mutually recognize valid and licit baptism, efficacious baptism, baptism in water and in the name of the Trinity, one must generally recognize the legitimacy and the authenticity of the church in which that baptism took place. If that is not the case, baptism becomes about an individual Christian, individual salvation, and either congregationalism or baptism in the abstract. The paradox – of this church for the whole church – is a dynamic tension that affects individuals and communities and the whole body of Christ. The Faith and Order document goes on at length about the complexities of recognizing churches (or not), but in the end, there are two primary issues to which they arrive:

1. We cannot talk about “the church” and its effect on and for the world without this common baptismal recognition – the one body of Christ is one in this one baptism. Although not part of the WCC discussion, in an increasingly pluralistic world, this unity of being as the basis “for” the world seems even more important.
2. We cannot talk of baptism without talking of the theology of church – into what are we baptizing? The Faith and Order document spends some time reflecting on the use of the word “membership” – a word, they feel, is a cultural concept by which human beings join a human institution. Baptism is divinely initiated – and of a different order than “membership”.

⁶ *One Baptism*, 16.

Baptism and Initiation

But, at this NAAC conference – we are not speaking primarily of infant baptism, or even of adult baptism as a stand-alone sacrament, but rather of the catechumenate which is a series of initiatory events interspersed with different aspects of formation and catechesis. The second presentation today (Tuesday) by Dan Benedict will focus on these stages and ritual moments and make sense of the description above if this material is all new to you, but suffice it to say here that in spite of the WCC document mentioned above, it is one thing to be in agreement over baptism – meaning that we all acknowledge and recognize each other’s baptismal practices as baptism into the body of Christ; it is quite another thing to profess that same commonality about the full rites of initiation and ecclesiology.

I suspect all of you know your history of the catechumenate, so I need not rehearse all of that here, but it is good to remember two opposite lessons from the early church patterns which we have inherited, adopted, adapted, and revived: first, there is not a single pattern – great variety existed in the order of the primary ritual events: in many practices, the first anointing was exorcistic, with an additional chrismation later; in some places the anointing (the Christing) came first – or even replaced the water bath as the primary rite; in other places the pneumatological anointing (the anointing of the Holy Spirit) followed the central water bath, still others had three anointings – exorcistic, a post-baptismal anointing, and then yet another anointing done by the bishop. In a number of churches the baptism of the whole body of the individual was followed by a washing of the feet – but different churches interpreted the meaning of the baptismal footwashing in different ways. In addition there were items of clothing to be put on (you have put on Christ), candles given, promises made, prayers pronounced - all of these patterns are well attested in the first 5 centuries of Christian liturgical tradition. The second point is that all of these different patterns of ritual initiation found their culmination in the breaking of the bread, the reception of the eucharist – first communion. This was the climax of the rites of initiation – both initiatory and repeatable throughout the life of the new Christian and the continuing tradition of the early church.

This surprising consistency – enduring for centuries – tells us something both about the individual’s journey into the body of Christ as well as the ongoing identification of the church in its constant remaking. As small streams of liturgical practice flowed into larger and diverse rivers of sources leading to contemporary practices and interpretations, the same impetus toward the table remains visible. *From the first century*: “And let no one eat or drink from your eucharist except those baptized in the name of [the] Lord, for the Lord has likewise said concerning this, ‘Do not give what is holy to the dogs.’”⁷ *From the second century*, “After thus baptizing those who have believed and given their assent, we escort them to the place where are assembled those whom we call brothers and sisters, to offer up sincere prayers in common for ourselves...at the conclusion of prayer we greet one another with a kiss. Then, bread and chalice containing wine mixed

⁷ *The Didache*, 9.5, in Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003) 23

with water are presented to the one presiding over the brothers and sisters.”⁸ *From the third century*, “the flesh is washed that the soul may be made spotless; the flesh is anointed that the soul may be consecrated; the flesh is signed that the soul too may be protected; the flesh is overshadowed by the imposition of the hand that the soul also may be illumined by the Spirit; the flesh feeds on the Body and Blood of Christ so that the soul as well may be filled with God.”⁹ *From the fourth century*, “As soon as they come up from those sacred waters all present embrace them, greet them, kiss them, congratulate and rejoice with them, because those who before were slaves and prisoners have all at once become free – invited to the royal table. For as soon as they come up from the font, they are led to the awesome table which is laden with all good things. They taste the body and blood of the Lord and become the dwelling place of the Spirit...”¹⁰ *From the sixth century*, “...the Hierarch dips him three times, invoking the threefold Subsistence of the Divine Blessedness, at the three immersions and emersions of him that is being perfected...they lead him again to the Hierarch, who when he has sealed the man with the most divinely operating Chrism pronounces him to be from now on a partaker of the most divinely perfecting Eucharist.”¹¹

We could repeat this pattern through centuries of Christian tradition and find similar statements – initiation, in all its pluralistic wonder in the early and early medieval church, finds its summation in bread and cup, in the celebration of the Eucharist and/or reception of communion. Even in the second millennium of Western (Latin) Christianity, the delay of the post-baptismal chrismation because of the perceived necessity of episcopal confirmation in some geographical areas often meant the delay of the reception of communion. Here the temporal framework shifted, with a shortening length of time between birth and baptism, and a prolongation of time between baptism and the completion of the rites of initiation.¹² But even those substantial changes in the timing of the rites of initiation generally did not change the ultimate position of communion reception. Even as late as the *Sarum Rite* (from the latest manuscript, the *Manual of Rouen*, 1543), the presence of a bishop at baptism meant that all three rites of initiation could be observed together: “If a bishop is present he [the newly baptized] must immediately be confirmed and next communicated, if his age require it, the priest saying: the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your body and your soul unto eternal life.”¹³

The catechumenate, the rites of initiation as a series of rites and formation, finds its ritual apex in the eucharist. And like baptism, the catechumenate, a fuller series of rituals and catechesis, is threefold within a variety of patterns:

⁸ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 65, in *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy* (hereafter DOBL), ed. E.C. Whitaker (revised and expanded Maxwell E. Johnson). (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003) 3.

⁹ Tertullian, *De resurrectione carnis*, 8, in Johnson, *DOBL*, page 11.

¹⁰ John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 27 (*Stavronikita Series*, No. 2), in Johnson, *DOBL*, page 47.

¹¹ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 2:7, in Johnson *DOBL*, page 61.

¹² See Chapters 7 & 8 of J.D.C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West* (London: SPCK, 1965).

¹³ *The Sarum Rite*, in Johnson, *DOBL*, page 302. This section is taken from my “Baptismal Ecclesiology without Baptism?: Conflicting Trends in Contemporary Sacramental Theology” article, first presented at Yale Divinity School, and later published in *Drenched in Grace*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013) 80-110.

it is
 formation in faith,
 Christian initiation,
 ongoing participation in the life of the Christian community.¹⁴

But in spite of the similarity of aim between what we are now calling baptism and the catechumenate, those rites of initiation – for Western Christians often named baptism, confirmation, eucharist – bring other dimensions to the conversation.

In other words, while I suspect that all of us gathered at this NAAC conference agree to baptism mutually recognized as the efficacious ritual whereby individuals become part of the body of Christ, and therefore, that the churches through which they enter the body of Christ are also real churches – fully part of the body of Christ, we may not all agree on the next steps. We may not have the same understanding about the centrality of chrismation or confirmation, we may not agree with or to intercommunion, we may belong to ecclesial communions or denominations that do not accept a common table for all the baptized. We may, in addition, have different understandings of how these ritual steps relate to each other. The Faith and Order Commission's *One Baptism* document recognizes this when it says of different Christian churches:

Theologically and liturgically, membership appears to be “incomplete” prior to admission to the eucharist, yet some baptized are barred from the eucharist because they have not reached a certain age or because they are not yet confirmed.¹⁵

When we move to the catechumenate – the variable process for the unbaptized – the questions around ecclesiology become more complex. Sometimes these are questions of ecclesiology – a theology of church – but other times they are questions of polity – canon law. Ideally canon law is theology, but the reality is not always so! And when we are constructing a program of rituals and catechesis for those who are already baptized (either uncatechized baptized or those from very different traditions) – they are, of course, never catechumens, but in this parallel program for the already baptized – whatever we name it - ecclesiology is also central. What is the polity of this ecclesial communion? What is different with regard to preparation for marriage, ordination? Who is re-confirmed, who is not?

In the very practical ministry that you all do, there is an intermingling of ecclesiology and polity and often the issues are just as important, if not more so, for the non-catechumens, those already baptized into the body of Christ, then for the non-baptized. So, what is the operative ecclesiology (or ecclesiologies) that help make sense of this more complex set of initiatory rites?

¹⁴ This threefold distinction is found throughout the WCC *One Baptism* document, as well as summarized in many other writings on the catechumenate or rites of initiation.

¹⁵ *One Baptism*, paragraph 64, page 12.

Ecclesiological Models

There have been different trends in interpreting what the church means in the past 60 years, and a multitude of different 'models' by which to emphasize a particular aspect of the church. Having said this, when I have done adult education sessions in parishes on ecclesiology, I ask the people gathered to write down their first response to the question (without thinking too much about it), "what is church?" I have to say I am usually disappointed as the answer is often 'the building', 'my friends', 'a support group', "a social group", and the worst – 'a group of like-minded people'.¹⁶ While the theological imagination generally expands as we move through the session, I hope your parishes and catechumens yield richer starting places than that!

The most fruitful categories for helping people imagine the church to be something that is more than the sum of its individual members is to start with biblical ecclesiologies and move to creedal ecclesiologies. The categorizations of the 1970s and 1980s are still helpful, and for specifically Anglican parishes, I will often include the articulations of a state church which shaped the understanding of the church for several centuries¹⁷ (which I will not review here). In parish adult education, and here as well, I will conclude this overview with the three dominant theologies today: baptismal, communion, and Eucharistic, as they relate particularly to our growing sense as catechumenal communities.

To briefly summarize these: the biblical ecclesiology most prevalent is, hands down, the image of the body of Christ (from the Apostle Paul in particular, among other places found in I Corinthians 12), with its essential dimension of diversity – diversity of being, diversity of roles, and its necessity of all – each different element - to make a functioning and effective body. Imagine a homogeneous body – it would not be a body, but simply a pile of spleens! Diversity is not just a nice option, it is essential! Other biblical images for the church include the "People of God" which is articulated in the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* and borrowed from there into many other churches; "a royal priesthood" and "a holy nation" have been used increasingly in the 20th century, and the model of church as pilgrim from the second letter of Peter, also raised up in *Lumen Gentium*.

The ancient and ongoing creedal ecclesiology, the four marks of the church found in the Nicene Creed, has been the topic of spiritual reflection for hundreds of years: the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. This approach is also fruitful for talking about how the biblical images combine with the liturgical and practical through Christian history. In the US Episcopal Church's catechism, these are described as:

Why is the Church described as one? A. The Church is one, because it is one Body, under one Head, our Lord Jesus Christ. Q. Why is the Church

¹⁶ See Rowan Williams on the issues of cultural assimilation of churches, where the church becomes simply an aggregate of "affinity groups": "...there is a form of common human life that 'means' or communicates the meanings of God, and it is a form of life in which unchosen solidarities are more significant than 'elective affinities'". "Sacraments of the New Society" in *On Christian Theology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000.

¹⁷ See summary in my *Sacramentality Renewed*, pages 134-140.

described as holy? A. The Church is holy, because the Holy Spirit dwells in it, consecrates its members, and guides them to do God's work. Q. Why is the Church described as catholic? A. The Church is catholic, because it proclaims the whole Faith to all people, to the end of time. Q. Why is the Church described as apostolic? A. The Church is apostolic, because it continues in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles and is sent to carry out Christ's mission to all people.¹⁸

One very creative approach to models of the church that emerged at the end of the 1970s and has been updated more than once, is Avery Dulles' *Models of the Church*¹⁹, which in its 5 models presents ideas that are sufficiently concrete and distinct to actually be helpful to people. Dulles wrote the book as an ecumenical experiment, to overcome the polarities of Catholic versus Protestant ecclesiology. He says that "this book attempts another variety of comparative ecclesiology. From the writings of a number of modern ecclesiologists, both Protestant and Catholic, I have sifted out five major approaches, types, or, as I prefer to call them, models."²⁰

Dulles' models are:

1) institution – a model of church that emphasizes the visible organizational structures, outward expressions of faith and ethics, and a discernable hierarchical leadership in order to provide continuity and authority. Whether people can articulate it in these words or not, this is often a working model of church that many people have. The church is the clergy, it is the building, it is the structure, it is the authority that maintains the church-it's what I can see! For some people coming into the church or long in the church, this is very comforting. It is of course very disturbing when stability is the chief virtue and the church changes – one reason many people leave. This model is equally the one against which many people rebel – the reason they leave.

Dulles' second model (2) is "the church as mystical communion" – which he articulated to be the exact opposite of #1, and which is very similar to his third model (3) "the church as sacrament".

Mystical communion as model lifts up the relationship between the internal and external aspects of faith

"a communion which is at once inward and external, an inner communion of spiritual life (faith, hope, charity) signified and engendered by the external communion in the profession of the faith, discipline and the sacramental life."²¹

The church as sacrament is described by Dulles as a participatory communion in Christ in which Christ represents God (here the whole Trinity) and the Church

¹⁸ 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, page 854.

¹⁹ Expanded edition. New York: Doubleday, 2002. This latter version includes Dulles' 6th model, which will be reviewed in the second of these two presentations.

²⁰ From the introduction to his *Models of the Church*, original edition (New York: Random House, 1974) 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 41-42, quoting Yves Congar, *L'Église de S. Augustin à l'époque modern* (Paris: Cerf, 1970) 44.

represents Christ, which picks up on what is known as *ressourcement* of early church theology. Henri de Lubac, a leader in this 20th century movement has this to say about church as sacrament:

the church presents Christ not only ‘in the full and ancient meaning of the term, [but she also] makes him present. She not only carries on his work, but she is his very continuation, in a sense far more real than that in which it can be said that any human institution is its founder’s continuation.’²²

Dulles’ fourth model (4) is “the church as herald” which shifts the models from a primary focus on what the church is to what the church does: the “mission of the church is one of proclamation of the Word of God to the whole world.” In this model to proclaim with “integrity and persistence” is the summation of what the church should be about, “all else is secondary...the church is essentially a kerygmatic community.”²³

Finally, Dulles’ fifth model (5) is “the church as servant”, which is also primarily about what the church does. Dulles describes the place of privilege which had overtaken the church as servant of God and of the world, arguing that as

‘Jesus came not only to proclaim the coming of the kingdom [but also] to give himself for its realization,’ so this church must also announce that same kingdom not only with words but also actions, ‘particularly...in her ministry of reconciliation, of binding up wounds, of suffering, service, of healing.’²⁴

While the ‘place of privilege’ was probably more noticeable in the 1970s and 80s than in 2016, having just come from a conference of church musicians two weeks ago, I was struck by the overwhelming triumphalism that coloured that gathering – I think at least the illusion of privilege is still there, if not concretely there in some parts of the US.

We will return to a few of these concepts tomorrow, but to round out our romp through contemporary ecclesiologies related to the catechumenate today, let’s turn to the three that are in the forefront of conversations today: baptismal, communion, and eucharistic ecclesiologies.

Baptismal ecclesiology: I might begin by talking about the controversial conversation in my own Anglican communion related to baptismal ecclesiology – particularly highlighted in the Episcopal Church because of a sentence in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, “Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body the Church.”²⁵ In conversations with one of the authors of the BCP (traditionally, liturgical books are anonymously compiled – but the group is widely known!) this was not exactly what they were saying, but it is what was written. The intra-Anglican firestorm has been lit up by Colin Podmore, an English Anglican who has vigorously critiqued this sentence as a radical break from long church tradition and specifically from Anglican tradition,

²² Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism* (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1950) 29.

²³ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁵ *1979 Book of Common Prayer*, “Holy Baptism”. (NY: Church Publishing Inc., 1979) 298.

with its lack of eucharistic summation,²⁶ and has become known as the BACSI controversy (“Baptism as Complete Sacramental Initiation”) Who needs ecumenical differences when we can simply fight amongst ourselves!? But baptismal ecclesiology has been very much in the forefront in the United States and in Canada, and has had impact in a number of newer liturgical books.

It is a venerable Christian tradition to shape one’s identity, one’s arguments, against a counter argument – a polemical articulation. Part of baptismal ecclesiology’s contemporary origins were, of course, polemical, intended to challenge a view of the church perceived as clerical and rigidly hierarchical, where, either deliberately led to it or not, its members perceived ordination as elevating “the status of the ordained above the laity.”²⁷ Louis Weil called for a return to an understanding of church in which all the baptized, not just those ordained, understood themselves as sharing in the priesthood of Christ. Faithful to scripture, to tradition, to ecumenical dialogue and developments in light of the liturgical movement and its fruitfulness in the documents of Vatican II, a return to baptism as the foundational sacrament of identity, rather than to ordination, seemed far more faithful to the early church than a later hierarchical ecclesiology where “every aspect of the church’s life [was understood] through the prism of holy orders.”²⁸ It is difficult to argue with an understanding of church based on “the priesthood of all believers” that returns all the baptized to that fundamental sacrament which brings them into the body of Christ and calls them to follow Christ as disciples. The controversy is not in the articulation of this helpful ecclesiology, but rather in some of the odd directions it has taken since the 1979 prayer book. How does this theology fit with the catechumenate? The obvious answer is the baptismal focus – it is baptism which not only incorporates us into the body of Christ but baptism that makes demands of us. Having put on Christ, we are now to be Christ for the world. This ecclesiology would seem particularly appropriate in the period leading up to the rites of initiation, as well as the basis for raising up lay ministry in the church.

Communion ecclesiology: I need to be clear (because of a common misunderstanding, particularly among Protestants), that this is not about Holy Communion, about receiving communion in a eucharistic sense, but about communion in the broadest sense-being in communion! In the words of Denis Doyle, communion ecclesiology is a description of church that attempts

to move beyond the merely juridical and institutional understandings by emphasizing the mystical, sacramental, and historical dimensions of the church. It focuses on relationships, whether among the persons of the Trinity, among human beings and God, among the members of the Communion of Saints, among members of a parish, or among the bishops dispersed throughout the world. It emphasizes the dynamic interplay between the Church universal and the local churches. Communion

²⁶ Colin Podmore, “The Baptismal Revolution in the American Episcopal Church: Baptismal Ecclesiology and the Baptismal Covenant” *Ecclesiology* 6 (2010) 8-38.

²⁷Louis Weil “Baptismal Ecclesiology: Uncovering a Paradigm” *Equipping the Saints. Ordination in Anglicanism Today*. (Dublin: Columba, 2006) 25.

²⁸Weil, “Baptismal Ecclesiology: Uncovering a Paradigm,” pages 27-28.

ecclesiology stresses that the church is not simply the receiver of revelation, but as the Mystical Body of Christ is bound up with revelation itself.²⁹

Doyle gets at the historical appeal (present in early church before divisions in the popular understanding), and works against the institutional, external model of church. It is really a description about relationships – beginning with God, who is, in Godself, pure communion (and therefore we are most in the image of God together, not individually), in human-divine relations, in the communion of saints (so the living and the dead), and the various levels of manifestations of church. Finally, the church is part of Christ – and therefore part of the ongoing revelation of Christ in the world. With regard to the catechumenate there are many appealing things about communion ecclesiology – its ecumenical origins, its counter to an institutional model, its corporate stress, and the mystery that is the church without any chance of church being a social club or affinity group.

Lastly in these three current conversations: eucharistic ecclesiology, an articulation that also finds a renewal (like communion ecclesiology) in the *ressourcement* theology of the 20th century. This is also a theology that is rooted in Eastern Christianity. Quoting Russian Orthodox theologian, Constantine Andronikof:

The expression ‘eucharistic ecclesiology’ implies a definition of the Church and, in light of that definition, the principle for studying its nature and its life. According to Orthodox doctrine, the term establishes to some extent an ontological identity between church and Eucharist, according to the most general substantial, and undisputed definition of the church in the scripture: the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.³⁰

What Andronikof (and Nicolas Afanassieff before him) in the East, as well as many Western Christian scholars are getting at is the essential (ontological – the nature of being) quality of the Eucharist. What does the eucharist have to do with the church? Everything. So from Eastern Orthodox theology, Afanassieff’s bumper sticker theology is “where the eucharist is, there the whole church is.”³¹ Here the relationship to communion ecclesiology and the connection between the local and the universal church becomes obvious. If you recall the WCC’s document with which we began this presentation, it included the paradox of baptizing into the local but for the universal church. The Eastern Christian theological starting point is often that the local church contains the universal, whereas the Western Christian theological starting point is often that the universal contains the local. But Afanassieff takes it a step farther and says where the eucharist is celebrated, it is the whole church: local and universal, in earth and in heaven, the living and the dead – all joined, all one, all present.

²⁹ Denis Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000) 12.

³⁰ Constantine Andronikof, “Eucharistic Ecclesiology,” in *Encyclopedia of Christianity Online* (Brill Online, 2015).

³¹ Nicolas Afanassieff, “Una Sancta” *Irénikon* 36 (1963) 459.

It is interesting to think of this eucharistic definition of church in the East compared to the Western Christian bumper sticker regarding eucharist and church. Culled from the many writings of Henri du Lubac, theologian of the 20th century and part of the aforementioned *ressourcement* movement of finding theology that works in the writings of the early church, du Lubac writes “the church makes the eucharist and the eucharist makes the church.”³² Both East and West, both Afanassieff and du Lubac, with their extensive reflections and their oft-quoted bumper sticker theology, are at something very important. The eucharist is not something done in the church, or by the church, it is the church. The church is refound, renewed, reconstituted in the eucharist – harkening to the wonderful sermon of Augustine of Hippo who says to the neophytes, the newly baptized,

"You are the body of Christ, member for member." [1 Cor. 12.27] If you, therefore, are Christ's body and members, it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord's table! It is your own mystery that you are receiving! You are saying "Amen" to what you are: your response is a personal signature, affirming your faith. When you hear "The body of Christ", you reply "Amen." Be a member of Christ's body, then, so that your "Amen" may ring true!³³

For the catechumenate, this approach to what the church is, does, means has many implications, particularly in our earlier reflection on the rites of initiation that find their culmination in the eucharist. It is the church, the body of Christ, who together (the “we” of Christianity) offer the eucharist to God because of what has been offered to us. The eucharist is the meeting – God acting on us and the church, Christ’s Body, responding.

This overview of a few ecclesiologies: biblical, creedal, models, baptismal, communion and eucharistic, is a beginning for the articulation of church and to enter the mystery of what our catechumens enter: into what are we initiating people? What is this household of God? None of these ecclesiological theologies is an answer – it is good to remind ourselves that the catechumenate is not after an answer – this is a mystery not to be solved but to be drawn into. And the mystery is not something other than reality – it is the most profound dimension of reality.

So I end this session with another question for you: with what words will you invite those who have been found by God and now seek to enter more deeply into the mystery of the body of Christ?

³² This is a composite of two phrases of du Lubac’s, although it is often treated as a direct quote in translation from du Lubac’s French writing. See *Méditation sur l’Église* (Paris: Aubier, 1953) 113.

³³ Sermon 272, Easter.