

Theological and Pastoral Reflections on Eucharistic Sharing in Interchurch Marriages in the Context of *Amoris Laetitia*

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The two consecutive Synods of Bishops called by Pope Francis in 2014 and 2015 directly culminated in the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love). The general assembly of the synod which met in October 2014 deliberated on the theme "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization," whereas the general assembly of the synod which met in October 2015 discussed the theme, "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World." Thus, for the first time in the history of the Church two synods were convoked in consecutive years with almost the same theme.

Profound teachings and deep insights on the existential situation of the family as well as the consequent

pastoral imperatives are elaborately dealt with in this document. It touches upon almost every aspect of family life with its complexities and enumerates with precision and clarity the ever growing challenges of pastoral outreach in a turbulent society. From the vast materials presented we pick up in this article only one theological and pastoral issue, that is, 'Sharing of the Eucharist in Interchurch marriages.'¹

Amoris Laetitia in no.247 says, "Issues involving mixed marriages require particular attention. Marriage between Catholics and other baptized persons 'have their particular nature, but they contain numerous elements that could well be made good use of and developed, both for their intrinsic value and for the contribution that they can make to the ecumenical movement.' For this purpose, 'an effort should be made to establish cordial co-operation between the Catholic and non-Catholic ministers from the time that preparations begin for the marriage and the wedding ceremony' (*Familiaris Consortio*, 78). With regard to sharing in the Eucharist, "The decision as to whether the non-Catholic party of the marriage may be admitted to Eucharistic communion is to be made in keeping with the general norms existing in the matter, both for Eastern Christians and for other Christians, taking into account the particular situation of the reception of the sacrament of matrimony by two baptized Christians. Although the spouses in a mixed marriage share the sacraments of

baptism and matrimony, Eucharistic sharing can only be exceptional in each case according to the stated norms" (The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 25 March, 1993, 159-160).²

From the diocesan registers we come to know that there is a marked increase of the inter-church marriages in South India. My enquiries in southern dioceses of Tamilnadu made show that the number of these marriages is on the increase with every passing year. Also it is revealed from my enquiry that atleast in a few marriages between Catholic and non-Catholic partners of inter-church marriages, conducted in the Catholic Churches the non-Catholic couples made a request for the reception of Holy Communion at their wedding Mass. The response of the pastors to their request was positive only in one or two cases and for the rest it was negative. In this regard, *Amoris Laetitia* to such cases gives a response in no: 247. Keeping this in mind, we try to analyze, in this article, the different reflections of theologians and the concerned reasons for their reflections on the Eucharistic sharing with the members of the churches that mutually recognize the sacrament of baptism. This article is divided into two parts. In the first part we discuss the obstacles to Eucharistic sharing with non-Catholic Christians. In the second part, we examine the theological reasoning favoring Eucharistic sharing with non-Catholic Christian in order to propose a

better pastoral recommendation for the inter-church couples who are in serious spiritual need.

I. Obstacles to the Sharing of the Eucharist

Of the many doctrinal hurdles to the Eucharistic sharing with non-Catholic Christians, we hereby deal with only two, namely: lack of oneness in ecclesial community (Unity of Church) and lack of oneness in faith (Unity of Faith).

Oneness in Ecclesial Community (Unity of the Church)

The Vatican II document *Unitatis Redintegratio* and the post-conciliar documents make clear that the doctrinal principles of oneness in ecclesial community and oneness in faith in the Eucharist are the very important principles of sharing the Eucharist. As the 1993 *Ecumenical Directory* states that those who share the oneness of ecclesial life and oneness of faith are permitted to have access to the Eucharistic Communion.³ The document *In Quibus Rerum Circumstantiis* holds: "The Eucharist really contains the very foundation of the being and the unity of Church."⁴ Therefore, according to the Catholic Church, the oneness of ecclesial community is a vital dimension of the Eucharistic sharing. Under this heading, we make a theological inspection on two important aspects of the Eucharist and on the question of the lack of ecclesial unity.

Eucharist Signifies and Effects

The theologians' argumentations on oneness in ecclesial community mainly take roots from the two basic

aspects of Eucharist as stated by the Vat. II's decree on Ecumenism. According to the decree on Ecumenism, the two basic principles of Eucharist are (1) it signifies the oneness of ecclesial community, (2) it effects grace. J.M.R. Tillard emphasizes the sign aspect as a prime principle of the Eucharist. For him, the absence of the sign aspect is a sin against the Church. He continues that a sin against the Church is a sin against faith. Tillard expresses that the Eucharistic celebration is a lie before God if it is celebrated without ecclesial communion.⁵

To celebrate the Eucharist is to live the Eucharistic faith is his focal point,⁶ He also spells out that the efficacious aspect of the Eucharist gives non-Catholic Christians only 'fraternal communion,' which is only a mutual acceptance in spite of differences. Hence, he urges all the Christians to possess the 'objective communion' that makes oneself a new creation by Eucharist.⁷ In the opinion of Tillard, though, as a means of grace, the Church dispenses with the impediment to non-Catholics on certain occasions only be exceptional, otherwise one cannot speak of Eucharistic sharing without ecclesial communion. Tillard also emphasizes the ecclesial oneness by his principle of two yeses: the 'global yes' and the 'doctrinal yes'. He explains that the global yes is the confessional yes in which one professes the Church unity.⁸ He makes a strong statement that the Church cannot lose its identity of totality. Tillard underscores the sign aspect as a priority for Eucharistic

sharing. He observes that non-Catholic Christians lack the ecclesial unity.⁹

Avery Dulles speaks of the sign and the efficacious aspects of Eucharist in a more balanced manner. While exploring the two aspects, he differs from Tillard in his approach. Dulles stresses that the Eucharist stands as the high point of ecclesial life. He affirms that if the Eucharist is not a sign it cannot be a means of grace. He combines both the aspects of sign and efficacy. He is convinced that these two aspects are inseparable. For him, in the case of churches that are not fully in communion with one another, the sign value and the efficacy value of Sacraments tend to be impaired by the lack of ecclesial unity. However, Dulles does not say that it is an absolute bar for exceptional sharing of Eucharist with non-Catholic Christians.¹⁰

Another notable theologian, Michael Lawler, gives a broader explanation to the sign and efficacy aspects of sharing the Eucharist with non-Catholic Christians. His arguments are mostly in favour of the interchurch partners. He interprets that the Eucharist not only signifies the ecclesial unity but also causes it instrumentally. He continues to explain that the full and ultimate communion achieved in marriage between a non-Catholic and a Catholic spouse and the communion achieved between them and the Catholic Church, can be signified in the Eucharistic sharing instrumentally. Hence, he opines that the communion between the interchurch partners can be also

caused, effected, enhanced, deepened and broadened in a shared Eucharistic communion.¹¹ Luis Bermejo, in agreement with Lawler, prefers to say that Eucharist is more than a sign. He underscores that the Eucharist also effects the grace of unity.¹² Though Lawler and Bermejo maintain that the unity is effected in the interchurch marriage they do not assert that the ecclesial unity is effected fully in the interchurch marriage. Hence, they also, like Dulles, accept that the lack of ecclesial unity generally prevents the non-Catholics to receive the Holy Communion. Unlike Dulles, Lawler seems to understand more the ecclesial unity that exists in the interchurch marriages.

Is Lack of Ecclesial Unity a Total Obstacle?

From the above-mentioned reflections, we become fully aware of the doctrinal barriers for sharing the Eucharist with the non-Catholic Christians. It is obvious that the non-Catholic Christians manifest the lack of ecclesial unity. Our question is, how far the lack of ecclesial unity prevents the non-Catholic from sharing communion in Catholic Church? In the opinion of Dulles, the lack of ecclesial unity is not an absolute bar for non-Catholic Christians to share the Eucharist in the Catholic Holy Mass. He argues that there is also the possibility for Catholic Church to fall short of the ideal of the unity of the Church, it may also lose the perfect union with the Sacrament of the Eucharist.¹³ However, Dulles supports

only for the occasional Eucharistic sharing with the non-Catholic Christians under the specific conditions and in certain special cases only. Like Dulles, Tillard suggests that the Eucharistic sharing is feasible with non-Catholic Christians occasionally under the specified conditions.

According to Lawler, the lack of ecclesial unity may exist in any Church. He perceives that the deficiency in the ecclesial unity need not hamper the Eucharistic sharing with the non-Catholic Christian who are in serious spiritual need. Quoting article 4 of *Unitatis Redintegrato*,¹⁴ Lawler mentions that even the Council acknowledges that the Catholic Church may fall short. Thus, he concludes that there is no full guarantee for the Catholic congregation which believes that it exists in full communion to be actually so.¹⁵ For Tillard and Dulles, it is clear that without the ecclesial unity the sharing of Eucharist is possible only occasionally with non-Catholic Christians in certain special cases. Whereas Lawler declares that due to the marital unity of the interchurch partners the ecclesial unity may be effected instrumentally. Hence, for the interchurch partners the lack of ecclesial unity need not be an stringent obstacle.

Oneness in Faith (Unity of Faith)

The 1993 *Ecumenical Directory* states that the basic requirement for the non-Catholic Christian to receive the Sacrament of Eucharist is that he or she should profess the Catholic faith in the Sacrament of Eucharist and be

properly disposed.¹⁶ The theologians we deal with in this section concentrate on two doctrinal elements related to the oneness of faith are: the real presence in the Eucharist and the sacrificial character of the Eucharist.

Real Presence in the Eucharistic Sharing

Hastings cautions that it is disgraceful to make the Eucharist simply a sign of Christian good fellowship. In his opinion, essentially there is oneness in faith between all genuine Christians, but what is more important is the expression and the formulation of their faith. In other words, he expects substantial unity in the formulations of the Eucharistic belief as a must for sharing the Eucharist. He continues to stress that the importance is not only to believe in the real presence in the Eucharist as a Catholic does but also to express it as the Catholics do.¹⁷ Dulles suggests that the correct worshipful attitude is more important than the exact theological expression. He also claims that the 'right disposition' of the non-Catholic to receive Eucharist is a basic faith expression. However to interpret too rigorously and meticulously the 'right disposition' is also not a correct attitude. Therefore, he proposes that the instruction of the ecumenical documents concerning right disposition to share the Eucharist should be balanced in favour of those who feel spiritually united to the Catholic Church and to its leaders and to recognize the real presence in the Eucharist as Catholics do.¹⁸ Thus, Dulles tries to balance his position in between the doctrine

and the complicated situation of the believers in this regard. While evaluating the Windsor Statement,¹⁹ Dulles comments that even though the Windsor Statement comes to a certain agreement regarding the issue of the real presence in the Eucharist, there is no full consensus between the Anglican and the Catholic so far.²⁰

In Lawler's opinion, one who accepts the essential element of the real presence of Christ in Eucharist is manifesting the Catholic faith. Lawler doesn't seem to emphasize the faith but only the belief in the real presence in the Eucharist. Further, Lawler notes the crucial distinction between the substance of the faith and the way in which it is expressed. He remarks that no one even among all the Catholics could be found to have full expression of faith in the Eucharist. So, he shows that the perfect manifestation of the oneness in faith on the Eucharist is not easily possible to all.²¹ From the above discussion on the faith in the real presence in the Eucharist, we learn that judging the correct manifestations of oneness in faith is not so easy.

Sacrificial Character of the Eucharist

Camillus Hay explains that the Catholics stress that the Holy Mass is a true and proper sacrifice that represents the sacrifice on the cross. On the contrary, the Protestants view is that the Lord's supper is nothing more than a commemorative meal. This difference of opinion in the sacrificial nature of Eucharist is a hindrance to sharing

the Eucharist with non-Catholic Christians.²² Tillard explains that the doctrinal agreements with regard to the sacrificial character do not liberalise the official teaching of the Church in any way but tries to deepen its understanding. Hence until full harmony is attained, the sharing of Eucharist with the non-Catholics cannot be extended beyond this limit.²³ Is there full consensus with regard to sacrifice? Dulles answers no. He evidences that the Windsor Statement of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission (1971) did not unequivocally call the Eucharist sacrifice. Dulles indicates that there is no full consensus because many Protestants, especially those who are in the evangelical tradition, deny that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice except in some wide and metaphorical sense.²⁴ As we have seen in the problem of the real presence in the Eucharist, in the problem of the sacrificial nature also the dialogues and agreements have not removed the obstacles for sharing the Eucharist with non-Catholic Christians so far.

Practical Reasons

Though the theologians argue that the doctrinal reasons are the primary barriers to Eucharistic sharing of the non-Catholics in the Catholic Church there are other reasons also from the practical point of view. As for the theologians, scandal is also a reason that they do not encourage the sharing of Eucharist with the non-Catholics.

Scandal

Dulles declares that the restriction of Eucharistic sharing is really needed in the case of non-Catholic Christians. He explains that there is possibility for cheapening the sign value of the Eucharist if we do not limit it under specific conditions in special cases. This cheap treatment of the sign value of the Eucharist may be a scandal to the Catholic believers. This may disturb the intensity and purity of the faith of the Catholics. Furthermore, this scandal may rupture the intimate unity of the believers.²⁵ Hastings states that the spread of the Eucharistic sharing, if it does not consider the unity of Church, may cause confusion among the people who profess the link between the Church and Eucharist. If we do not prudently judge the individual cases for Eucharistic sharing of the non-Catholic Christians it will be entailed a great danger and a spiritual harm. And this will be a scandal to the Catholics.²⁶ But contrary to the opinion of Dulles and Hastings, Lawler explicates that without making a scandal to the Catholic public we can help the interchurch couples for more access to Eucharistic sharing in certain occasions. He suggests that by pastoral explanations all the scandals can be removed. He further emphasizes the responsibility of the pastors regarding this matter. He suggests that the explanations, given from pulpit, in the classroom or in a bulletin can put the scandal to rest.²⁷

II. Reasons in Favour of Eucharistic Sharing

There are theological arguments which support sharing the Eucharist with the non-Catholic partners. These viewpoints developed by the theologians in favour of sharing Eucharist with non-catholic partners mainly take roots from the theology of unity in baptism, unity in marriage and the Christian unity.

Unity in Baptism

Many theologians argue that by the sacrament of baptism itself the baptized Christians are entitled to receive the Eucharist. Camillus Hay states that the mutual acknowledgement of the one baptism between Catholic and non-Catholic Churches is now becoming a pressing argument for sharing the Eucharist with non-Catholic Christians. He argues that the baptism is oriented to Eucharistic fulfillment and involves a right of the baptized person to the Eucharist.²⁸ In her argument, Ruth Reardon points out the importance of common baptism. She holds that since the baptism of non-Catholic Christians is recognized as valid baptism, the non-Catholic Christians also are baptized into Christ and in the Church of Christ. Hence she shows that the unity of the Church in the Church of Christ is already there from the sacrament of baptism. In that way, the common baptism points the way for the Eucharistic sharing at the same table.²⁹ Lawler emphasizes that all baptized Christians are in the Church

of Christ. He argues that baptism is no longer looked upon as an exclusively confessional matter in the divided Christian Churches. No one is baptized exclusively into the Catholic Church or the Presbyterian Church; one is baptized into the one, holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ. While each and every Christian is incorporated into the church of Christ through faith and baptism in a specific Christian denomination, baptism is never to be thought of as incorporating them into only his/her denomination. Though each local church or denomination is wholly church, none of them is the whole Church.³⁰ For him, the baptismal unity manifests the validity of other Sacraments to the people who are baptized in the Church of Christ. Thus, he concludes that by this union of baptism the interchurch couples reflect the unity in Christ's Church.³¹

Unity in Marriage

One of the important theological factors supporting the interchurch non-Catholic partner in sharing the Eucharist from the Catholic Church is the couple's unity in marriage. As a result of the sacramental bond of the interchurch marriage the interchurch family becomes a domestic church. In this section, we discuss the theological enterprise of sacramentality in the interchurch marriage and the character of the domestic church in the interchurch family.

Sacramentality of Interchurch Marriages

Lawler clarifies that the Second Vatican document *Gaudium et Spes*³² enables us to understand that marriage is a community of life and love, founded in a mutual and permanent covenant by which a Christian man and a woman give and accept one another to establish an intimate, lifelong partnership. He continues to explain the Christian marriage in two levels. First, at the foundational level, there is a reflection and representation of the community of life and love between Christ and his Church. He observes that in the Christian marriage the spouses are not just husband and wife covenanted to one another but they are also a church in microcosm covenanted to their Lord.³³ Again Lawler argues that the husband and wife becoming one-body must strive for full unity. When the couples do not attain full unity their marriage remains 'at the best an inadequate symbol' of the one-body unity between Christ and Church. In that way it is imperfectly sacramental. Therefore, Christian marriage is essentially an eschatological symbol. This covenantal union between Christ and Church is 'already' but 'not yet'.³⁴ Ladislav Örsy extends his support in favour of interchurch partners and argues that though they are 'interchurch couples' their marriage is the 'symbol of the unbreakable bond between Christ and his Church'. Therefore, there is oneness. Recognising the sacramentality of the interchurch marriage he asks why should the domestic church be divided in the

reception of bread and wine of life that nourishes all Churches?³⁵ Ruth Reardon expresses that the interchurch partners are brought sacramentally into the one-flesh relationship that represents a close communion of love that it can be taken as an image of the relationship of love between God and his people, between Christ and the Church.³⁶

Interchurch Family - Domestic Church

Ernest R. Falardeau says that there is a growing emphasis today on society and the family as relationship. Similarly, the Church is understood as a family and the family as the domestic church. Hence, we need to emphasize the Church as relationship much more than as an institution. He continues to say that the Church is obviously an institution. But the more it acts like a family, the more it will succeed in being truly Christian and point to the way to love. So, interchurch couples symbolize and exemplify the Church, as it is one but divided.³⁷ He also ascertains that the family is the domestic church. At the heart of his theology of the domestic church lies the claim that the Church does not exist except in the family. He explicates well that there is a bond between each individual and family so also there is a bond between each family and the Church. Hence, the notion of the interchurch family as a domestic church begins to highlight the idea that interchurch couples and the Church are interconnected, interrelated and interdependent. His simple logic is that

the Eucharist makes the Church. The family is the domestic church. Therefore, the Eucharist makes the domestic church.³⁸

Promotion of Christian Unity

Lawler mentions that interchurch partners are witnesses for ecumenical unity. They bear witness to the divided Christian Churches. They bear constant witness to the fact that the things that divide them are not nearly so important as the things uniting them. They bear concrete witnesses in their lives to the fact that mutual love, trust, respect and the passionate desire to be united enable them to live and grow together in the midst of deep differences. Thus, they become signs and instruments of ecumenical unity.³⁹ Hence, interchurch couples by sharing the Eucharist can very well be 'catalysts for Christian unity'. Falardeau holds that all ecclesiology today will and must be based on this foundation of the Church as communion (*Koinonia*).⁴⁰ In the development of ecumenism, the Eucharistic sharing can be 'productive'. He continues to affirm that as long as the Church is a pilgrim people we have to move from one step to the next. Also, he proposes different experimentations in the process of growth. In his perspective, if journey to unity is to be by stages, there must be a willingness to allow trial and error.⁴¹ He envisages that the current step of Christian unity may lead to another step of the Church unity. In agreeing with Falardeau, Gerard Austin also argues, from the ecumenical

point of view. He says that the Eucharistic sharing may cause confusion but waiting for perfect unity before inviting others to the table may in the long run block the desired unity.⁴² Falardeau asserts that the interchurch family is the testing ground for ecumenical spirituality and comprehensiveness. He continues to maintain that as long as there is no place within the Church for diversity, it can only remain a closed shop. As the Church recognises other Christians as brothers and sisters in the Lord, it becomes truly ecumenical and Christ like.⁴³

CBCI Ecumenical Document

Coming to the Indian context, The Ecumenical Document CBCI commission for Ecumenism and Dialogue, number 55 states “the Catholic Church, like other religious bodies, recommends strongly to its members to marry within the communion of faith i.e., members of the same faith community. For the unity of faith can undoubtedly be a cementing factor in the union of the couple and their eventual children and enhances of a harmonious spiritual growth for all the members of the family.”

In number 56 it is stated; “However, 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. The Catholic Church authorities generally study each application carefully and if there are

reasonable grounds to hope that the marriage will be successful and blessed by God, willingly give the permission requested.”

With regard to sharing the Eucharist with the non-Catholic partner of the interchurch marriage no.66 states: “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. In such cases the norms given above about Eucharistic sharing (nos. 42-51) should be adhered to. When the other party is a member of an Oriental church, the celebration and sharing of 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 Reformation, if she or he manifests a real faith in the Eucharist and in the real 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 on such an auspicious occasion. To deny it would indeed cause surprise and even be a scandal.”

Also no 67 recommends "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 it is not the customary practice in the parish, in any of the ways permitted in the Catholic Church."⁴⁴

Serious Spiritual Need

More than the above-noted theological grounds, the spiritual need of the interchurch partners seems to be an urgent and immediate supportive ground in this regard.

Micheal Lawler argues that the interchurch partner's spiritual need cannot be satisfied only occasionally. In some cases, it is a permanent and serious spiritual need. Hence, they need to be given not only an exceptional sharing of communion but ongoing sharing of communion is important in order to build up their Christian family together. He says that it is not an 'individual need' in interchurch family but the sharing of Eucharist in the interchurch family is 'interspousal need'. He states that the marriage is not a one-off wedding; it is a partnership of the whole of life. The unique (one-off) occasion confuses wedding and marriage, legal ceremony and intimate life long partnership. If married people allow the one-off, unique event interpretation to stand unchallenged there can be not only exceptional but ongoing sharing of communion.⁴⁵ According to Falardeau what the 1993 *Directory* speaks of us the 'grave and pressing need' is not a blanket permission for all to come. Falardeau

attests that the position of the bishops of Kentucky (USA) regarding the Eucharistic sharing has included many situations in the list. He indicates also the list contains that the persons who are involved in interchurch marriages and receive the Eucharist as part of their normal religious practice. Falardeau opines that the bishops of Kentucky (USA) understand the 'grave and pressing need' as a condition in which being deprived of the Eucharist would, in the judgement of a reasonable person, causes someone to experience a significant sense of deprivation. This obviously means more than casually wanting to receive the Eucharist. Also Falardeau states that the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Sante Fe extends the grave and pressing need for other situations such as sick and dying, at weddings and funerals, at first communions, at ecumenical events and at retreats. But Falardeau affirms this list should be still extended.⁴⁶

Lawler exposes that all the theologians do not interpret the exceptions and conditions of sharing the Eucharist with non-Catholics in the same way. Some interpret rigidly sticking to the letter of the official documents of the Church. Some interpret more broadly. While criticizing the document of the bishops of Great Britain and Ireland on Eucharistic sharing, Lawler says, families in interchurch marriages may experience serious spiritual need and in certain cases may be admitted to receive the Eucharist. His questions

are how to assess the serious spiritual need? and who is to assess the serious spiritual need? He continues to express that determining the objective criteria for serious spiritual need is extremely difficult. This may be possible by the minister. This may become clear only by pastoral discussion. The open pastoral negotiation by the pastor with the interchurch couples may very well find a solution for this problem in each individual case and to help the interchurch partners in their serious spiritual need.⁴⁷

In conclusion, from the theological investigation on Eucharistic sharing with non-Catholic partners, we come to know that the need of the non-catholic partner to receive Holy Communion is a serious spiritual need. Hence as per the guidelines of CBCI Document on Ecumenism and Dialogue, our pastoral recommendation paves a way for special cases under specific conditions of the inter-church partners who are in serious spiritual need to be allowed to receive Eucharist on their wedding day for their greater spiritual joy. However, further discussion is required to determine more precise criteria for doing so. Also, continued theologico-pastoral reflection and discussion are to be undertaken to explore the possibility of offering Eucharistic sharing to the non-Catholic partners of inter-church marriages, exceptionally, in individual cases and under specified conditions, on special occasions such as their wedding anniversaries and jubilees, in order to

enhance a continued harmonious spiritual growth and greater spiritual joy for the members of the family.

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Endnotes

¹ Together with the term 'interchurch marriage', there are two others in the current literatures: namely, 'mixed marriage' and 'ecumenical marriage'. According to the understanding of the Catholic Church, 'mixed marriage', in a broader sense, means a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic or marriage between a Catholic and a non baptized person. However, in a more restricted sense, 'mixed marriage' refers to a sacramental union between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic Christian. In this article, in order to recognize the uniqueness of the partners and to differentiate the identity of the person of other denomination, we use the term 'interchurch marriage' between partners of the Catholic Church and of the non-Catholic Churches that mutually recognize the sacrament of baptism.

² Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2016, no. 247.

³ The Pontifical Christian Unity Council, "The 1993 Directory for Ecumenism," *Origins* 23, (1993), 128-159, 129.

⁴ Secretariat for the Promotion of the Unity of Christians, *In Quibus Rerum Circumstantiis*, AAS 64 (1972) 518-25; English Translation, "Instruction Concerning Cases When Other Christians May be Admitted to Eucharistic Communion in the Catholic Church," *Information Service* 18 (1972) 3-6, no.1.

⁵ J.M.R. Tillard, "One Church of God: The Church Broken in Pieces", *One in Christ* 17 (1981) 2-12, 0.

⁶ J.M.R. Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. R. C. De Peaux, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992, 310.

⁷ J.M.R. Tillard, "One Church of God," 3-4. He says that the fraternal communion is not authentic unless it shows forth a deeper communion, that is objective communion. According to Tillard, 'fraternal communion' is nothing other than the communion of men and women who incorporates themselves into Christ. But the 'objective communion' not only incorporates Christians into Christ but also leads to new life by the ecclesial communion.

⁸ Ibid., 10-11. According to him in the 'global yes' whatever may be the form, all Christians are united. It shows the communion of the Church not only totally broken. But it is broken. Hence, the broken communion with the ecclesial communion blocks the Eucharistic sharing. So, he suggests that in order to build up the one Church of God (*unica ecclesia*) the Christian may convert himself to transcend the truth of 'first yes' to 'second yes'.

⁹ J.M.R. Tillard, *Church of Churches*, 310.

¹⁰ Avery Dulles, *The Resilient Church: The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation*, New York: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1978, 155-156.

¹¹ Michael G. Lawler, "Theological and Pastoral Reflection on Interchurch Marriages," *INTAMS Review* 6 (2000) 199-211, 211.

¹² Luis M. Bermejo, *Body Broken and Blood Shed*, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash Anand, 1986, 324.

¹³ Avery Dulles, *The Resilient Church*, 155-156.

¹⁴ "For although the Catholic Church has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all means of grace, yet its members fail to live by them with all the fervor that they should. As a result

the radiance of the Church's face shines less brightly in the eyes of our separated brethren and of the world at large and the growth of God's kingdom is retarded."

¹⁵ Michael G. Lawler and Thomas. J. Shanahan, *Church: A Spirited Communion*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995, 117.

¹⁶ The Pontifical Christian Unity Council, "The 1993 Directory for Ecumenism, "no.131.

¹⁷ Adrian Hastings, "Intercommunion," *One in Christ* 7 (1971), 14-27, 16.

¹⁸ Avery Dulles, *The Resilient Church*, 159-160.

¹⁹ Windsor Statement is an agreement statement on Eucharistic sharing, made between Anglican and Roman Catholic on Eucharist at Windsor in England on December 31, 1971. Like this Windsor agreement there are recent agreements also on Eucharistic sharing between Catholics and Protestants, Catholics and Anglicans, Sec, Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer and William G. Rusch (eds). *Growth in Agreement II, Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level 1982-1998*, Faith and Order Paper Series, 2 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000).

²⁰ Avery Dulles, "Eucharistic Consensus," *Commonweal* (1972), 447-450, 449.

²¹ Michael G. Lawler, "Theological and Pastoral Reflections," 210.

²² Camillus Hay, *The Eucharist in the Church*, Croydon: Spectrum, 1972, 51.

²³ J.M.R. Tillard, "Sacrificial Terminology and Eucharist," *One in Christ* 17, 1981, 306-323, 322.

²⁴ Avery Dulles, *The Resilient Church*, 166.

²⁵ Avery Dulles, *The Resilient Church*, 156.

²⁶ Hastings, "Intercommunion," 27.

²⁷ Michael G. Lawler, *Ecumenical Marriage and Remarriage Gifts and Challenges to the Churches*, Mystic, CT: Twenty Third Publications, 1990, 92.

²⁸ Camillus Hay, "Intercommunion: A Roman Catholic Approach," 3 35-378, 364.

²⁹ Ruth Reardon, "The Association of Interchurch Families: Looking Back and Looking Forward," *INTAMS Review* 6 (2000) 183-191, 184.

³⁰ Michael G. Lawler, "Theological and Pastoral Reflections," 200.

³¹ Michael G. Lawler, *Ecumenical Marriage*, 11.

³² *Gaudium et Spes*, 48. "The intimate partnership of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws: it is rooted in the contract of its partners, that is, in their irrecoverable personal consent."

³³ Michael G. Lawler, *Ecumenical Marriage*, 24.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 50.

³⁵ Ladislav Örsy, "Interchurch Marriages and the Reception of the Eucharist: Present and Future," *One in Christ* 33 (1997) 31-34, 31.

³⁶ Ruth Reardon, "One Bread and One Body: A Response from an Interchurch Family point of View," *Interchurch Families* 7 (1999) 10-15, 10. 'One Bread and One-Body' is a document jointly published by the Catholic Bishops of Great Britain and Ireland on 1

st October 1998.

³⁷ Ernest R. Falardeau, "The Church, the Eucharist and the Family," *One in Christ* 33 (1997) 20-30, 20.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

³⁹ Michael G. Lawler, *Ecumenical Marriage*, 2.

⁴⁰ Ernest R. Faldeureu, "The Church, the Eucharist," 22-23.

- ⁴¹ Ernest R. Falardeau, "Food for the Journey: EDEO-NADEO Study on Eucharistic sharing: An Analysis," *Ecumenical Trends* 14 (1985) 161-165, 162-163.
- ⁴² Gerard Austin, "Is Ecumenical Understanding of the Eucharist Possible Today?," *The Jurist* 48 (1998) 668-691, 691.
- ⁴³ Ernest R. Falardeau, "Growing as Domestic Church through the Eucharist," 24.
- ⁴⁴ CBCI commission for Ecumenism and Dialogue, *Guidelines for Ecumenism: Towards an Ecumenical Life style*, New Delhi, 2000, 78-85. It is an ecumenical document published by the CBCI Ecumenical and Dialogue Commission in 2000. This document consists of four parts; 1. Doctrinal and theological foundation 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. Under the subdivision in part four, Mixed Marriage nos. 55-79 deal with inter-church marriage.
- ⁴⁵ Michael G. Lawler, "Theological and Pastoral Reflections," 208-209.
- ⁴⁶ Ernest R. Falardeau, "The Church, the Eucharist," 27.
- ⁴⁷ Michael G. Lawler, "Theological and Pastoral Reflections," 208-209.