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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND THE LOCAL CHURCHES

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Abstract. In the relationship between the universal Church and the local Churches, two false options are generally excluded.

The first underlines that the universal Church is the simple result of a federation of already existing local Churches. The second emphasizes that the local Church is simply an administrative subdivision or part of the universal Church. Though the universal Church is ontologically prior to the local Church, as the letter *Communio nis notio* claims, yet the local Church is the concrete manifestation of the universal Church in a determined time and space, as the universal Church exists “in and from” the local Churches. The terms in the formula *in quibus et ex quibus* are equally essential as is the relationship between them.

Key words: universal Church; local Church; *in quibus et ex quibus*; ecclesiology; *Communio nis notio*.

The question is about mutual references between the universal and the local dimension of the Church.¹ There is an urgent need to examine this problem which

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¹ We should note that the traditional Roman Catholic ecclesiology hardly considered the question of the local Church in modern era preceding the Vatican II and consequently the question of the relationship between the universal Church and the local Church didn't arise. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, a theology of the local or particular Church was almost unknown in the West, with the exception of Dom A. Gréa in the period after the First Vatican Council and then, afterwards, with the theology of Yves Congar, Henry De Lubac and Karl Rahner, in the period preceding and after Vatican II (Adrien GRÉA, *De l'Église et de sa divine constitution* (Paris, 1907), vol. I; Yves

doubtless constitutes *punctum dolens* of the contemporary theological debate. The settlement of proper reports leads to possible unhealthy variety, which could lead to shake the mutual *communio* of local Churches, and also to the wrong comprehended and exaggerated centralism, destroying originality and the subjectivity of these Churches. The presentation of mutual relations in the theological dimension will inspire the practical realization on the pastoral level. We can say with Walter Kasper that among catholic theologians the relationship between the universal Church and the local churches is a burning question today.²

In the history of the Church there have always been certain misunderstanding with regard to the nature of the relationship between the universal and local Churches either giving undue superiority to the universal Church to the detriment of the role of the local Church or emphasising the pre-eminence of the local Churches impoverishing the concept of the universal Church. There is an ecclesiology “from above” which we can call as a “descending” vision, according to which the relationship between the universal Church and the local Churches is that of a whole to its parts.

It implies philosophically that the whole is conceived as a *totum potestativum* in which lower realities participate in the nature possessed in full by some prior and superior reality. Organisationally means that all authority resides in the central organ or bureau from which it is distributed out into field-offices. Theologically signifies that it amounts to a “Christomonist” view of the Church, according to which Christ’s authority is shared in first and fully by Pope and then distributed by him to the others (bishops), by whom it is in turn distributed among others (priests and deacons).³

CONGAR, “Théologie de l’Église particulière”, in *Mission sans frontières*, ed. A.M. Henry (Paris, 1960), 15-61; Henri DE LUBAC, *Méditation sur l’Église* (Paris, 1953); Karl RAHNER, *Saggi sulla Chiesa* (Roma, 1969). Generally, theologians often use the term “local Church” and “particular Church” alternately. There are those who use the adjective “particular” when they want to emphasise the static, sociological, institutional and communitarian aspect of the reality of the Church. Others, instead, use the adjective “local” when they mean to underline the dynamic, liturgical, territorial aspect of the event. Particular Church, etymologically, recalls an ecclesiology in which the dioceses were considered administrative parts, subdivisions of the universal Church. Local Church, instead, recalls the idea of the divine force of salvation, concretized in a particular place. Particular Church is above all a juridical term, utilized in a discourse which refers to the Church of Rome and other Churches, while the “local Church” is above all a theological term and says what is real about the Church. In this article, the term “local Church” is preferred. This expression can be applied to a number of realities, such as, a single diocese or a group of dioceses of the same region, nation or rite. Cf. Leon SIWECKI, *Ecclesia universalis – Ecclesia localis. Teologiczne relacje w posoborowej eklezjologii włoskiej* (Sandomierz, 2008), 35-45; 138-166.

² Walter KASPER, “On the Church – A Friendly Replay to Cardinal Ratzinger”, *The Furrow* 52(2001), 323.

³ Joseph KOMONCHAK, “The Church Universal as the Communion of Local Churches”, *Concilium* 146(1981), 30.

In this view which espouses a “society model of the Church”, universalism of the Church was misinterpreted as centralism and consequently the universal Church was thought to be the Church of Rome and the relationship between them becomes the relationship between that Church and the other Churches, almost as if the Church of Rome were not itself a local Church. In fact, Vatican I had this view at its background. But the concept of the Church as communion on which is based Vatican II clears such misunderstandings and throws sufficient light on the exact nature of the relationship between these two realities. It is the communion which binds together the local Churches among themselves and with the Roman Pontiff through the bishops, thus forming the communion of the Churches. The communion is the distinctive and constitutive mystery of the Church.⁴

Actually one talks about three unspecified conceptions of relations between universal and local Church. The first thesis finds the trend to exaggerated centralism. The second meanwhile leads to miscomprehended particularism without communion, which consequently is the source of isolation. The third, takes into account the development in the direction of periphery and vice versa, according to dynamism of ecclesial dialogue and mutual exchange (Rome ought to be more present in Paris, Buenos Aires etc., whereas local Churches should be more present in Rome, which is achieved for example through the apostolic pilgrimages of popes).

1. THE MUTUAL INTERIORITY

According to the council documents, the universal Church and the local Church are not two distinct or parallel or opposite realities, materially different, but they are two dimensions formally constitutive of the one Church of Christ, as it is affirmed in *Lumen gentium* 23, that the universal Church exists in and from the local Churches.

⁴ J. Komonchak, applying the notion of the Church as communion holds that the whole is not conceived prior to the parts, but the one whole is constituted by, in and out of the realisations of its many constituents. As he himself puts it: “All the intrinsic and distinctive elements that constitute the reality are realised individually, and the relationships that make the individual realisations a single whole are grounded in a common participation in one reality constitutive of them all. Philosophically, the relationships are mutual mediations and the whole is co-constituted. Organisationally, the various bonds among the individual realisations, including the central and the unifying authority, derive from, express, and serve the common and prior participation in a single reality. Theologically, this view is associated with a pneumatological or Trinitarian view of the Church, according to which each local self-realization manifests the full spiritual reality of communion in Christ’s Holy Spirit” (“The Church Universal as the Communion of Local Churches”, 30).

Therefore one cannot be understood without essential reference to the other. In the communion ecclesiology, the universal Church is conceived as embracing all the local Churches without absorbing or taking away their individual identity.

Some authors see in this mutual inclusion a reflection of the circuminsession of the three divine persons in the one nature of God; the mutual indwelling (*perichoresis*) of the three divine persons.⁵ This doctrine, elaborated by oriental Fathers of the Church (for example: G. Nazianzus, J. Damascene) should illuminate the relation of the one Church with other various Churches. This mutual interpenetration, the “mutual interiority, a kind of osmosis”⁶ between the Churches is expressed in two methods. The first way emphasises that between the two dimensions of the one Church there exists an intrinsic and sacramental connection of realisation and representation. The second one accentuates that between them there exists a relationship of communion.

There exists a mutual interiority as between a “whole” and a “part”, as the letter of the Congregation indicates: “In order to grasp the true meaning of the analogical application of the term *communio* to the particular Churches taken as a whole, one must bear in mind above all that the particular Churches, in so far as they are <part of the one Church of Christ>, have a special relationship of <mutual interiority> with the whole, that is, with the universal Church, because in every particular Church <the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active>”.⁷ This mutual interiority makes one to understand that the “local” and “universal” are not contradictory in quantitative sense, as both refer to the mystery of Christ in its fullness.⁸

⁵ For example: Yves CONGAR, “La Tri-unité de Dieu et l’Église”, in Yves CONGAR, *Essais œcuméniques: Le mouvement, les hommes, les problèmes* (Paris, 1984), 297-312; Wolfgang BEINERT, “Die Una Catholica und die Particularkirchen”, *Theologie und Philosophie* 42(1967), 1-21. Walter Kasper develops this relationship between the Trinity and the Church saying: “In the Trinity, the threeness of the persons neither abolishes nor constitutes the unity of their natures, but is their specific mode of being, so that one divine nature exists only in the relation between the Father, Son and the Spirit. Analogously, the one Church exists only in local Churches and is formed from these. Just as the trinitarian creed is the concrete form of Christian monotheism, so the communion of the individual Churches is the concrete form and realisation of the one universal Church” (Walter KASPER, “Theology and Church” [New York, 1989], 160).

⁶ COMMISSIO THEOLOGICA INTERNATIONALS, *Themata selecta de ecclesiology occasione XX anniversarii conclusionis concilii oecumenici Vaticani II* (07.10.1985) (Città del Vaticano, 1985), *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 9(1668-1765).

⁷ CN 9.

⁸ E. Corecco underlines: “Il principio dell’immanenza reciproca, e perciò di inseparabilità, degli elementi costitutivi, della struttura costituzionale della Chiesa, così come emerge in modo paradigmatico nell’immanenza dell’universale nel particolare e del particolare nell’universale, forma l’essenza stessa della nozione di <communio>” (“Ius universale – Ius particolare”, in *Ius in*

As a consequence, the universal Church is not a reality separate from the local Churches, but is the communion of the local Churches. The mutual interiority or the reciprocity of presence between the universal and the local Church highlights further the apostolicity of the latter. At the same time, the Congregation points out that both the local Churches and the universal Church are understood in the light of a relationship that cannot be compared to that which exists between the whole and the parts in a purely human group or society.⁹ The relationship, according to the Congregation can be summed up saying that every local Church is truly Church, although it is not the whole Church; at the same time the universal Church is not distinct from the communion of local Churches, without however being conceived as their mere sum.

The relationship of resemblance¹⁰ between the universal and local Churches is expressed in the formulations “particular Churches are formed in the image of the universal Church”¹¹ and “the particular Church must represent the universal Church as perfectly as possible”.¹² It is the consequence of the mutual interiority existing between the universal and the local Churches. Formed at the image of the universal Church, the local Church has the fullness and the universal Church exists in fullness in all the local Churches. It doesn’t mean that the local Church is only a reproduction of an “ideal” Church, but as the universal is realised in the local Churches, the local Churches are in the image of the universal Church when there is agreement with and reception of that which constitutes the communion of Churches.

The local Church is also the “operative” image of the universal Church as it concentrates itself the operation of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments of the universal Church. This resemblance consists above all in the position of the bishop in his local Church in a manner that is analogous to the position of the Pope with regard to the universal Church.

The Church as communion logically leads to the difficult question of the relationship between the universal Church and the local Church. In the framework of the ecclesiology of communion, this problem finds a solution in the formula of *com-*

vita et in missione Ecclesiae. Acta Symposii internationalis Iuris Canonici occurrente X anniversario promulgationis CIC [Città del Vaticano, 1994], 555).

⁹ CN 9.

¹⁰ This relationship T. Citrini names as “relationship of resemblance”: “Un terzo rapporto, di somiglianza, è indicato dall’inciso <formate ad immagine della Chiesa universale>. Qui il riferimento alla Chiesa universale è esplicito, e dall’andamento del testo sembra indicare una somiglianza nell’unità, fondata sull’analogia delle funzioni papali e di quelle episcopali” (“Appunti a margine del Vaticano II”, *Vita e pensiero* 54[1971], 7).

¹¹ LG 23.

¹² AG 20.

munio Ecclesiarum/corpus Ecclesiarum. Though this term is used by the Council only once, nevertheless, is a main principle of the Church's constitution and one of the fundamental concepts of the ecclesiology of Vatican II¹³, which under influence of the ecclesiology of communion made a radical shift from an almost exclusive focus in the universal Church to a perspective encompassing the local Churches so as to form the *communio Ecclesiarum*. The concept of *communio Ecclesiarum* adds a new dimension to the relationship between primacy and collegiality and has important implications for the local Church. The communion of the Churches isn't some merely pragmatic organisational principle, but it pertains to the reality of the Church as a mystery. This "essential mystery" of *communio Ecclesiarum* is developed further with the expressions "the Church in and formed out of the Churches" (*Ecclesia in et ex Ecclesiis*) and "the Churches in and formed out of the Church" (*Ecclesiae in et ex Ecclesia*). This formula is the *locus theologicus* of the relationship between the universal Church and the local Churches.¹⁴

2. THE PRIORITY DEBATE

The question of the priority of the universal Church or local Church has been one of the hottest topics after Vatican II. Principally, the statement of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the letter *Communio notio* from 1992 began particularly the lively, multifaceted discussion on the subject of the mutual relations between the universal Church and the local One. Among the many facts connected with the theology of the local Church, the crucial is the rootedness of its mystery in the immanent relations with the universal Church and his ontological and temporal priority. *Communio notio* points out: "the universal Church cannot be conceived as the sum of the particular Churches, or as a federation of particular Churches. It is not the result of the communion of the Churches, but, in its essential mystery, it is a reality *ontologically and temporally* prior to every individual particular Church." This statement from the number ninth of the letter called out hot discussions among theologians.

Various theologians have put forth various reasons for the ontological and temporal priority of either one or the other. The universal Church has pre-eminence and absolute ontological priority because only the universal Church is comprehensive,

¹³ AG 19: "Intima permaneat ecclesiarum novellarum communio cum tota Ecclesia [...]". LG 23 uses the term *corpus Ecclesiarum*. There are also indirect references to this concept of *communio Ecclesiarum* in UR 14; SC 13, 26, 41; LG 13, 15, 18, 26.

¹⁴ L. SIWECKI, *Ecclesia universalis – Ecclesia localis*, 204-226.

including the Church in heaven, and the local Church depends on the universal Church. The universal Church is the exemplary, efficient and final cause of the local Church. The universal Church precedes the local Churches temporally. Christ founded only the universal Church and not the local Churches. Only the universal Church can be the universal sacrament of salvation, is assured of being indefectible and infallible and holy.¹⁵ While we find a number of theologians who defend the priority of the universal Church, by comparison, explicit assertions of the priority of the local Church in a certain aspects are harder to find.¹⁶ Several theologians speak about the mutual interpenetration and simultaneity.¹⁷

The open debate between Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger¹⁸ and Cardinal Walter Kasper¹⁹ on the question of priority of the universal Church has once again brought to the limelight the theological differences that exist among theologians on the interpretation of the Council's understanding of the relationship between the universal Church and local Church. The two theologians agree on the Church as a mystery hidden in God from eternity, pre-existing in the Old Israel according to the Fathers. Ratzinger uses this pre-existing mystery to assert the ontological priority of the universal Church, while Kasper asserting pre-existing mystery must be of the whole Church (universal and local), not just one aspect of the Church (universal), therefore denies the ontological priority of the universal Church. Both grant that the universal Church exists <in and from> the local church, and the local churches exist <in and from> the universal Church. Kasper's fear is that Ratzinger's universal Church is a logical construct, an abstraction, existing apart from the historical reality. Ratzinger's fear is that Kasper's emphasis on the empirical church reduces ecclesiology to sociology.²⁰

¹⁵ See for example: J. Ratzinger, A. Cattaneo, J.C. Groot, P. Rodríguez, J.R. Villar, P. Yet, R. Lanzetti, A.M. Sicari, A. Bandera, W. Bertrams, C. Colombo. Cf. L. SIWECKI, *Ecclesia universalis – Ecclesia localis*, 285-332.

¹⁶ Cf. A. Antón, E. Bueno de la Fuente, S. Dianich, B. Forte, J. Komonchak.

¹⁷ Cf. P.R. Granfield, S.K. Wood, G. Chantraine, R. Marlé, J.M.R. Tillard, P. Fietta, G. Mazzoni.

¹⁸ Joseph RATZINGER, "L'ecclesiologia della 'Lumen Gentium'", *L'Osservatore Romano* (4.03.2000), 6-7; "A response to Walter Kasper: The Local Church and the Universal Church", *America* 185(19.11.2001), 7-11; *Kościół. Pielgrzymująca wspólnota wiary* (Kraków, 2005), 120-126.

¹⁹ Walter KASPER, "Zur Theologie und Praxis des bischöflichen Amtes", in *Auf eine neue Art Kirche Sein: Wirklichkeiten-Herausforderungen-Wandlungen*, Festschrift für J. Homeyer, ed. W. Schreer (München, 1999), 32-48; "Das Verhältnis von Universalkirche und Ortskirche: Freundschaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit der Kritik von Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger", *Stimmen der Zeit* 12(2000), 218: 795-804.

²⁰ Cf. Kilian McDONNELL, "The Ratzinger/Kasper debate: The universal Church and local Churches", *Theological Studies* 63(2002), 227-250.

3. *ECCLESIA IN ET EX ECCLESIIIS*

One must underline that the insistence on the importance of the local Churches is one of the fruits of the ecclesiology of communion. The local Churches aren't field offices of a giant multi-national corporation, but local realisations of the one Church of Christ. The formula *in quibus et ex quibus una et unica Ecclesia catholica existit* brought by the Council made it clear that the local Church is a constitutive dimension and concrete realisation of the one Church of Christ, endowed with all the means of salvation.²¹

This formula avoids the conceptions like the principle of "autocefalia" which insists only on the *in quibus*, basing on the philosophical principle of *universalia ante res* and in which the universal Church loses its identity; and the monistic conception of the Church as a unique mondial diocese which insists only on the *ex quibus*, basing on the philosophical principle *universalia post res*.

Relationship of inherence (*in quibus*) means that the *mysterium Ecclesiae* is concretised in the local Churches, as LG 26 affirms: "This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called churches in the New Testament. For in their locality these are the new People called by God, in the Holy Spirit and in much fullness." Therefore the local Church is not a simple representation of the universal Church, but it is the universal Church which lives and functions in a determined place and community of faithful. The local Church, then, can be said to be the visible form of the universal Church. We can say that as the soul is present in all and every part of the body, the Church is present in its fullness in each and every local Church. It also means that there is no universal Church except in and through the self-realizations of the local Churches.

The formula *in quibus* also indicates that the local Church as such has no proper substance different from that of the universal Church and that it is the particularized universal Church. Therefore, there exists only one Church and being a local Church would mean above all making present the universal Church in a concrete local situation. The universality of the Church is always a concrete universality which exists only through its particularity. The local Church is the actualisation and incarnation of the universal Church.

²¹ While A. Longhitano calls these relationships as "relationship of inherence", and as "relationship of origin" respectively, W. Aymans considers them as intrinsic and extrinsic elements of *communio Ecclesiarum*. Cf. Adolfo LONGHITANO, "Le chiese particolari", in AA.VV., *Chiesa particolare e strutture di comunione* (Bologna, 1985), 28; Winfried AYMAN, *Diritto canonico e comunione ecclesiale. Saggi di diritto canonico in prospettiva teologica* (Torino, 1993), 17.

Since the one and unique mission of the Church in Word and Sacrament is realized concretely in the local Churches, the universal Church can be said to be in the local Churches. The mutual interiority between the universal and local Churches is expressed to a highest degree and the universal Church is rendered present fully in the local Church in the celebration of the Eucharist, because wherever the valid Eucharist is celebrated, the Church is present in her fullness. That is why, *Communio notio* declares: “Unity, or communion, between the particular Churches in the universal Church, is rooted not only in the same faith and in the common Baptism, but above all in the Eucharist and in the Episcopate. It is rooted in the Eucharist because the eucharistic Sacrifice, while always performed in a particular community, is never a celebration of that community alone. In fact, the community, in receiving the eucharistic presence of the Lord, receives the entire gift of salvation and shows, even in its lasting visible particular form, that it is the image and true presence of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church”.²²

In the council documents one can very well observe the intimate bond between the bishop with his presbyters and the Eucharistic celebration.²³ The bishop who presides over the Eucharist in his local Church joins his local Church to the others in communion because he shares a collegial bond with the other local bishops and with the Pope. Every valid celebration of the Eucharist, consequently, expresses this universal communion with Peter and with the whole Church or objectively calls for it.

Various theologians underline the constitutive dimension of the Eucharist in *communio Ecclesiarum*. They speak of a Copernican revolution, since from now it is no longer the local Church which rotates around the universal, but the one Church of God in Jesus Christ which is found present in each celebration of the local Church by the incessant action of the Holy Spirit. The Church herself becomes in the fullest sense an “event” only in the local celebration of the Eucharist. In other words, the local Church as *koinonia* of faith, love and hope, the Church where each bishop presides, is not simply a part of the Church of God. It is the Church of God in one of her manifestations in the here and now. The Eucharistic synaxis brings about the emergence of the Church of God in this place and in this historical situation.²⁴

²² CN 11.

²³ LG 26; SC 41, 42; PO 5, 6.

²⁴ Cf. Emmanuel LANGE, “L’Église locale et l’Église universelle”, *Irénikon* 43(1970), 490; Karl RAHNER, *The Episcopate and the Primacy* (New York, 1962), 26-27; Jean-Marie TILLARD, *The Bishop of Rome* (London, 1982). At the same time, one has to take into account the warnings of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith against an erroneous understanding of this Eucharistic ecclesiology which claims that where the Eucharist is celebrated, the totality of the mystery of the Church would be made present in such a way as to render any other principle of

The Letter *Communio nis notio* asserts: “the unicity and indivisibility of the eucharistic Body of the Lord implies the unicity of his mystical Body, which is the one and indivisible Church. From the eucharistic centre arises the necessary openness of every celebrating community, of every particular Church; by allowing itself to be drawn into the open arms of the Lord, it achieves insertion into his one and undivided Body. For this reason too, the existence of the Petrine ministry, which is a foundation of the unity of the Episcopate and of the universal Church, bears a profound correspondence to the eucharistic character of the Church”.²⁵ In other words, the Eucharistic celebration makes the mystery of the Church present in its totality in so far as it accepts and lives fully all the principles of unity and ecclesial universality which the eucharistic celebration requires, including the episcopal principle of the apostolic succession. In consequence, it emphasises that every legitimate Eucharistic celebration requires the constitutive structure of the Church as the organically structured priestly body, and therefore, the bond of communion of the local Church with the bishop and of the bishop with the episcopal college.

As the universal Church is constituted by a multitude of faithful and bishops with the Pope as the centre of unity, so also the local Church is formed by a multitude of faithful and presbyters with the bishop as the centre of unity. In each local Church, the bishop is the centre of ecclesial communion. In virtue of the legitimacy of his consecration and canonical mission, he makes his local Church share in the organic and structural reality of the ecclesiastical communion of the universal Church around the Pope its visible head and in this way, he represents his local Church. Bishop is also the principal means of communion between the other local Churches. As members of the episcopal college, the bishops are at the service of the universal Church and as heads of the local Churches and by virtue of their hierarchical communion with the head and members of the episcopal college, they serve as bridges between the universal and local Churches.²⁶

The formula *ex quibus* – the relationship of origin indicates that the universal Church is not only concretised in the local Churches, but also formed out of the local Ones. The formula “from which” also indicates that even though the Church

unity or universality inessential. It points out also other conceptions which present this particular view of the Church in an even more radical form, going so far as to assert that gathering together in the name of Jesus (Mt 18: 20) is the same as generating the Church; which consider that the assembly, which in the name of Christ becomes a community, would hold within itself the powers of the Church, including power as regards the Eucharist; which hold that the Church would arise “from the base” (cf. CN 11).

²⁵ CN 11.

²⁶ Cf. LG 23.

of Christ is fully manifest in the local Church, yet the communion of all local Churches adds a dimension of perfection or fullness, that is lacking in any given local Church.

The formula *ex quibus* doesn't mean that the universal Church is a mere sum or federation of the local Churches. One local Church as such doesn't exhaust all the manifestations of universal Church. Every local Church can make the universal Church visible, only when it presents the universal Church as constituted by all the local Churches. That means that no local Church can exist isolated from the other local Ones. Therefore, it calls for a communion among all the local Churches.

4. *ECCLESIAE IN ET EX ECCLESIA*

In a desire to give more importance to the local Churches, there is a tendency to assert that every local Church is a subject complete in itself, and that the universal Church is the result of a reciprocal recognition on the part of the local Churches. Pope John Paul II warns against this tendency saying: "In deepening the concept of the local Church, or better the particular Church, theologians should avoid, however, those one-sided and untenable emphases by which the Church would be originally and primarily the local Church".²⁷

The letter *Communio innotio* also condemns this ecclesiological unilateralism as an insufficient understanding of the concept of communion. It goes on to say that in the history when a local Church has sought to become self-sufficient and has weakened its real communion with the universal Church and with its living and visible centre, its own freedom in the face of various forces of enslavement and exploitation.²⁸

We can say that the local Church is wholly Church, but it is not the whole Church. The universal Church is manifest in the local Church, but because such a manifestation involves concrete, particular distinctiveness the local Church cannot be equated with the universal Church. It is true that the universal Church takes flesh and blood through the local Churches, but "the universal Church cannot be conceived as the sum of particular Churches, or as a federation of particular Churches".²⁹ To the question in what way is then the universal Church both immanent and prior to every individual local Church, *Communio innotio* answers saying that it is the universal Church that gives birth to the local Churches as her daughters and

²⁷ JOHN PAUL II, "Ai Vescovi della Campagna ricevuti in visita ad limina (11.12.1986)", in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX/2 (1986) (Città del Vaticano, 1986), 1917-1923.

²⁸ CN 8.

²⁹ CN 9.

thus she becomes the mother and not the offspring of the local Churches. The letter *Communio nis notio* argues further that the Church is manifested, temporally, on the day of Pentecost in the community of the one hundred and twenty gathered around Mary and the twelve apostles, the representatives of the one unique Church and the founders-to-be of the local Churches.³⁰

The letter, therefore, categorically excludes the idea that there was a local Church of Jerusalem, and from that other local Churches were gradually formed, and eventually grouping together, consequently formed the universal Church. According to *Communio nis notio*, the Church of Jerusalem which was “locally” limited was not a local Church in the current sense of the word, but the universal Church itself and the mother of all the local Churches. Then, the universal Church is considered in a more concrete way and at the time of Pentecost there is no mutual interiority between universal and local Church, as these two dimensions are not yet distinct. The letter explains this fact concisely: “From the Church, which in its origins and its first manifestation is universal, have arisen the different local Churches, as particular expressions of the one unique Church of Christ. Arising within and out of the universal Church, they have their ecclesiality in her and from her. Hence the formula of the Second Vatican Council: The Church in and formed out of the Churches is inseparable from this other formula “the Churches in and formed out of the Church”.³¹

Consequently, while performing the sacraments, the minister administers them not as a minister of the local Church but as a minister of the universal Church. As regards the effects of the sacraments too it is the universal Church which is referred to, as the *Communio nis notio* points out: “Every member of the faithful, through faith and baptism, is inserted into the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. He does not belong to the universal Church in a mediate way, through belonging to a particular Church, but in an immediate way, even though entry into and life within the universal Church are necessarily brought about in a particular Church”.³²

It is the universal Church which possesses the Word of God, the depository of faith as well along with the sacraments. When it comes to the level of operation in time and space, the local Church administers the sacraments and proclaims the Word of God in a particular place and time. Consequently, the local Churches can teach the entire doctrinal patrimony of the Church and can administer all the sacraments, but cannot determine their essential elements nor fix up the universal norms.

³⁰ CN 9.

³¹ CN 9.

³² CN 10.

The ontological and chronological priority of the universal Church over every individual local Church is not in contradiction to the concept of *communio Ecclesiarum*, but rather shed light on the mutual interiority. Both the universal Church and the local Church would be an abstraction, if the ontological priority of the universal Church and the importance of the local Churches for making present the universal Church aren't recognised.³³ We can say that there is one Church, as there is one God. But the expression of this one Church is the communion of many local Churches.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The relation between the universal Church and the local One cannot be considered in quantitative aspects, but in qualitative. The relief of the principle of "locality" in expressing the nature of the local Church doesn't result from usual and obvious practical sense. This principle possesses her value from the ecclesiological perspective, because it appears as the criterion which fulfils better the requirements of the guarantee so that the local Church is potentially open on the receiving of variety of offices, charismas and the forms of the apostolic life. It concerns therefore the "disposability", the "ability" of the local Church in giving substance to the manifold elements which build, each according to the own way, Christ's Church realizing him in the dimension of unity and catholicity.

The mutual immanence of universal Church and local One does not exclude the possibility of investigation about ontological and the temporary anteriority of the universal Church, because it relates to genesis, so to say, the initial moment, while the other level is the analysis of the condition of the realization *communio Ecclesiarum*. On the base of a conducted analysis, it seems that some theologians don't take into account the above demarcation. In consequence, it leads not necessarily to justifiable disputes and to demonstration of the supposed incoherence among theses of anteriority and the mutual penetration and immanence. Therefore, it seems the just ascertainment that the letter *Communio notio* touching the ontological-temporary anteriority of the universal Church joins it with the origin of the Church, whereas not with her realization in the history.

³³ Cf. A.M. SICARI: "Le Chiese particolari segnano dunque l'affiorare <qui e ora> della Chiesa universale, senza cui questa cadrebbe nell'astrazione. Ma se non fosse proprio la Chiesa universale a generare quelle particolari – con un <prima> materno, che è ontologico e storico assieme – queste ultime sarebbero ancor meno di una astrazione: sarebbero una menzogna" ("Chiesa universale e Chiese particolari", *L'Osservatore Romano* [18. 06.1992], 6).

Thus, it is hard to accept the thesis that ontological-temporary anteriority constitutes the withdrawal from the council perspective, as some theologians suggested. In the divine plan of the salvation the expression “universal” possesses absolute supremacy before the “local”. Christ came to unite the sons of God and reconciled the whole fallen mankind with God the Father. When the fullness of time came, the Holy Spirit was given to every believers. The Church becomes *de Trinitate*, in this context of general reconciliation and unity. The whole mankind is the addressee of the Gospel of the salvation and that is why in this perspective, the “primacy” belongs in the undisputed way to the “universality”. From the second view, the Church of Christ manifests itself in the world in the concrete dimension, place. The Upper Room was such, where apostles and the first believers in risen Christ were gathered to receive the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2: 1-13), through which it was completed the process of the foundation of the Church which contains Christ’s whole event, having conceived from the incarnation up to the glory of the heavens. Therefore, in the perspective of historical facts one can attempt about the certain acknowledgement of “primacy” of the “local” dimension over “universal”, without any treatment of the locality with the true catholicity of the Church.

The vision of the Church as *communio Ecclesiarum* as presented in the Council documents avoids both the monochromatic totalitarianism, which tends to neglect the importance of the local Churches, and the chaotic anarchy which is the consequence of overemphasise on the local Churches to the detriment of the universal Church. By giving due importance to both the universal Church and the local Churches, the concept of the Church as *communio Ecclesiarum* paves the way for the unity and better co-operation.

The expression *communio Ecclesiarum* and *corpus Ecclesiarum* treated together, they let speak in the adequate way about the communion of Churches. We can say that the first notion expresses external element, second meanwhile this internal. These both qualifications aim to the interior, to the complement, to equilibrium in the understanding of the Church. The external element accentuates the unity of the Church which constitutes the principal task and the object of the belief. The internal element however shows on the mystical reality of the Church, constituted first of all by the Eucharist.

Giving an absolute value to *in quibus* would break up the universal Church into fully autonomous local Churches and it would amount to an idea only; on other hand, according absolute value to *ex quibus* would result in a sociological concept of the universal Church, a super-diocese of world-wide dimensions, which would practically ignore the theological reality and mystery which ought to be present and realized in each local Church.

Reports of two expressions *in quibus* and *ex quibus* stay in the dialectical tension, taking into account often the left behind Council statement, that the local Churches are “formed according to the universal Church.” Namely, while the last statement seems to show on a certain priority to the universal Church, then however formula *in quibus et ex quibus* seems to admit it to local Churches. This problem is reflected in the parallel questions about the relations between the whole college of bishops and the individual bishop, about whether episcopal consecration first introduces one into the episcopal college or constitutes him head of the local Church.

The constitutive elements, principles of the Church we can generally enumerate: the call of God, the Word of Christ, the grace of the Spirit, the Eucharist, the apostolic ministry. All of these ground and generate the communion that is the distinctive and constitutive mystery of the Church. Where all of these are present, there is the Church, not simply a “part” but the full reality of the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. For the same reason, the universal Church is not the sum total of all the local Churches. In terms of spiritual reality, then, nothing is realised on any wider or higher level of the Church’s life than is realised in the local Church. And what happens in the local Churches is an event which is universal, catholic, in its innermost dimensions.

The mutual relations between the universal Church and the local One have three-aspectual character. First of all, they realize between the universal Church and the local One, then in the opposite direction: between the local Church and the universal One, and also takes into account the dependence within the totality of local Churches. Their mutual penetration is the characteristic aspect of those relations what was considered in our analysis. About the subjectivity of local Churches being not only *patrimonium* of the belief, but also exposing his expressive wealth of the cultural heritage testifies already the apostolic period. The diversity has been considered as the internal, precise quality of the heritage of the faith. The after-apostolic Churches testify that the ecclesial experience among Churches is characterized by authentically subjective relations. Described relations placing themselves successively in a wide and uniting contexts show on the clear principle of coexistence and mutual reception between Churches.

The particularity of Churches, to testify the about the universal Church, requires the complementary and diverse *praxis*. And here we meet with question, one of the most discussed in the present reflection. It concerns the function which the local Church plays in the face of the universal One. If in formulating the doctrine of collegiality and his concrete realization in the post-Council period was the talk of co-presence of two kinds of ecclesiology (one which goes out from the universal Church, second meanwhile from the local Church), how some theologians

underline, and begins to question the principal function of the local Church. In this context the question is what value and meaning have the Synods of bishops, the Conferences of episcopates, pastoral and diocesan councils within the decision of the universal Church? How in these cases is realized the theology of communion, according to what principles a bishop is chosen, how proceeds the visits *ad limina*, in which mode they are specified through local Churches?

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RELACJA MIĘDZY KOŚCIOŁEM POWSZECHNYM A KOŚCIOŁAMI LOKALNYMI

Streszczenie

W relacji między Kościołem powszechnym a Kościołami lokalnymi zasadniczo wykluczone są dwie fałszywe opcje. Pierwsza podkreśla, że Kościół powszechny jest prostym rezultatem federacji już istniejących Kościołów lokalnych. Druga wskazuje, że Kościół lokalny jest po prostu jednostką administracyjną lub częścią Kościoła powszechnego. Chociaż Kościół powszechny ma pierwszeństwo ontologiczne przed Kościołem lokalnym, jak wskazuje list *Communiois notio*, to jednak Kościół lokalny jest konkretną manifestacją Kościoła powszechnego w określonym czasie i przestrzeni, ponieważ Kościół powszechny konstryuuje się z Kościołów lokalnych oraz jest w nich obecny. Terminy w formule *in quibus et ex quibus* są równie istotne, jak i ich wzajemne odniesienia.

Słowa kluczowe: Kościół powszechny; Kościół lokalny; *in quibus et ex quibus*; eklezjologia; *Communiois notio*.