

KS. LEON SIWECKI

TRINITY AND CHURCH
IN THE LIGHT OF VATICAN II'S
CONSTITUTION *LUMEN GENTIUM*

TRINITY AND CHURCH IN THE LIGHT OF VATICAN II'S
CONSTITUTION *LUMEN GENTIUM*

A b s t r a c t. The whole itinerary of the Vatican II's dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* on the Church is permeated with a trinitarian outlook. The Church has her origin in the Father's eternal plan of salvation. She not only is the result of his paternal love but also finds in the beatific communion with the Father her destiny and goal (LG 2). The universal project of Father's salvation is realized by the Son who enjoys unconditional primacy within that plan (LG 3). Originating in the mystery of Father's eternal plan of love and born of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, the Church cannot live without the life given to her by the mission of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Church, whose origin is in the Father's love which comes into effect through the paschal mystery of the Son, is vivified and renewed by the Spirit (LG 4). The Church is thus the work of the Trinity. This is the fundamental understanding of the Church in *Lumen Gentium*. The Church of Vatican II is the "*Ecclesia de Trinitate*". The Church is "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit".

Key words: Trinity, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Church, ecclesiology, *Lumen Gentium*.

Among the various mysteries of Christian faith, the principal and the most fundamental is the mystery of the Holy Trinity, which deals with the intimate nature of God. "These three Persons are one God and not three gods, for the three are one substance, one essence, one nature, one Godhead, one infinity, one eternity and everything in them is one where there is no opposition of relationship" – formulates clearly the Council of Florence (DH 1330). The mystery of the Trinity is not just one among other mysteries but the fun-

damental one, from which all other mysteries have their origin. The dogma of the Trinity is the root and summit of all the Christian mysteries.

To say on Church means that all our efforts to comprehend the reality of the Church can bring about an understanding that is necessarily inadequate and incomplete. It will always remain for us a supernatural reality. This also means that the Church should not be considered isolated from the other mysteries of Christian faith. It should be studied together with other mysteries of faith with which it is intimately connected.

Trinity, Church are each in different ways mysteries, among others, of the Christian faith. The triune nature of God is the mystery *sensu stricto* and therefore, sheds light on the mystery of the Church. Therefore, the Church cannot be understood or explained if not in the light of the mystery of the Trinity. But we have to pose significant questions: to what extent can reflection about the Trinity be applied to ecclesial life? What are the correspondences and the limits of this analogy? One must always remember that the mystery of the Trinity can be found only in the deity itself, not in the creature. We have to remember of the statement of Card. Joseph Ratzinger who urges caution at the outset of every attempt to conceive the Church in correspondence with the Trinity¹. But our own times have seen an increased reflection on the trinitarian dimension of the Church².

¹ J. R a t z i n g e r, *Sulle principali obiezioni sollevate contro la Dichiarazione „Dominus Iesus”*, „L'Osservatore Romano” (8.11.2000), p. 4.

² See, for instance: H. M ü h l e n, *Una mystica persona: Die Kirche als das Mysterium der heilsgeschichtlichen Identität des Heiligen Geistes in Christus und den Christen: Eine Person in vielen Personen*, Munich 1968; G. von L a r e n t z a k i s, *Trinitarisches Kirchenverständnis*, in: W. Breuning (ed.), *Trinität, Aktuelle Perspektiven der Theologie*, Freiburg 1984, p. 73-96; A. F a l l i c o, *Eucaristia, communio trinitaria e comunione ecclesiale*, Torino 1986; B. F o r t e, *La Chiesa icona della Trinità. Breve ecclesiologia*, Brescia 1984; B. F o r t e, *La Chiesa della Trinità. Saggio sul mistero della Chiesa comunione e missione*, Cinisello Balsamo 1995; L. S a r t o r i, *Trinità e Chiesa*, „Credere Oggi” 6(1986), n. 4, p. 71-81; H.J. P o t t m e y e r, *Kirche des dreifaltigen Gottes*, „Wort und Antwort” 29(1988), p. 83-86; H.J. P o t t m e y e r, *Auf dem Weg zu einer trinitarischen Ekklesiologie*, „Analecta Cracoviensia” 25(1993), p. 391-396; G.L. M ü l l e r, *Das trinitarische Grundverständnis der Kirche in der Kirchenkonstitution „Lumen Gentium”*, „Münchener theologische Zeitschrift” 45(1994), p. 451-465; S. B a r l o n e, *La Chiesa, Dono del Padre e dono della Trinità*, Napoli 2000; T. D o l a, *Kościół sakramentem Trójjedynego Boga*, „Roczniki Teologiczne” 43(1996), 2, p. 67-78; R. K a r w a c k i, *Communio eklezjalna jako misterium osobowej jedności z Trójcą Świętą*, „Collectanea Theologica” 73(2003), 4, p. 65-74; K. W o j t k i e w i c z, *Trójca Święta jako zasada życia chrześcijańskiego*, Szczecin 2005, p. 292-383; S. J a ś k i e w i c z, *Eschatologiczny charakter Kościoła pielgrzymującego w posoborowej eklezjologii włoskiej*, Radom 2013, p. 145-152.

We have to be conscious that the reality of the creatures can never correspond completely to the reality of the Trinity. So it is only natural to ask about the legitimacy of a possible correspondence. We shall simply say that the Trinity is and remains always a mystery and therefore all our attempts at comparisons are legitimate only to a certain limit. There are correspondences between the Trinity and the Church, and it is precisely because of this that we talk of an analogy.

In this article, at the beginning it will be shown that the Council's teaching about the Church is permeated with a trinitarian outlook. Next, the presentation will focus primarily upon *Lumen Gentium*, paragraphs 2-4, which consider the Church precisely in her relation to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, respectively. The Father plans to assemble in the Holy Church all those who would believe in Christ: Church of the Father (LG 2). Jesus Christ inaugurates the Kingdom of heaven on earth and reveals to us the mystery of that Kingdom present in Church: Church of the Son (LG 3). The Holy Spirit sanctifies the Church: Church of the Holy Spirit (LG 4). At the end, we will evaluate the trinitarian dimension of the Church in the light of Vatican II's Constitution.

1. TRINITARIAN PERSPECTIVE

If we look back at the Council after 50 years it seems that the "leitmotif" for the Council's idea of the Church could best be described with the word "*communio*" although this might not have been recognized immediately. We can define the self-understanding of the Church as it emerged in Vatican II as "Sacrament of communion with God". She is the communion of the faithful: united by the Holy Spirit, joined to Christ, called together with the whole creation to the Kingdom of God the Father. The Church is seen as expressing here and now in a sacramental way the mystery of the communion of the Trinity. Walter Kasper underlines: "The mystery of the Church consists in the access we have to the Father in the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, so that we may share in God's divine nature. This communion of the Church is made possible and sustained through the trinitarian communion of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Finally, the Church as communion, as Vatican II said following up what the martyr bishop Cyprian said, is participation in the

trinitarian *communio* itself. The Church is in the same way the icon of the community of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”³.

The central theme of Vatican II was the Church. Angel Antón underlines that the Church, in search of a new awareness of herself and of new contacts with other Churches, with non-Christian religions, and with the modern world, is at the very centre of the ecclesiological doctrine of Vatican II⁴. From the outset the Council was characterized as the Council of the Church. It was “a council of the Church on the Church and a council of ecclesiology, with such a concentration on the theme that no other council has given till now” – accentuates Karl Rahner⁵.

No other council has so profoundly gone into the question of the nature of the Church. The undertaking of the council was definitely not very easy. The dominant view in catholic theology of recent centuries was characterized by what Yves Congar called “Christomonism”⁶. Hitherto, the ecclesiology of the Church has been heavily Christological. The expression indicated the special attention given to the Christological aspects of the Church and consequently to her visible and institutional dimension. H. U. von Balthasar admits

³ W. K a s p e r, *The Church as Communion*, “New Blackfriars” 74(1993), p. 235.

⁴ Cf. A. A n t ó n, *Ecclesiologia postconciliare: speranze, risultati e prospettive*, in: R. Latourelle (ed.), *Vaticano II: Bilancio e prospettive venticinque anni dopo (1962-1987)*, Assisi 1987, vol. I, p. 362.

⁵ K. R a h n e r, *Das neu Bild der Kirche*, “Geist und Leben” 39(1966), p. 4: “Dieses Konzil war also ein Konzil der Kirche über die Kirche. Ein Konzil der Ekklesiologie in einer Konzentration der Thematik, wie es bisher in keinen anderen Konzil der Fall war”.

⁶ Y. C o n g a r, *Saggi ecumenici. Il movimento, gli uomini, i problemi*, Roma 1986, p. 82; *La Parola e il Soffio*, Roma 1985, p. 144; *Ecco la Chiesa che amo*, Brescia 1969, p. 22; *Pneumatologie ou «Christomonisme» dans la tradition latine?*, “Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses” 45(1969), p. 394-416. In other place Congar writes: „a una visione principalmente giuridica, e per ciò stesso a dominante puramente cristologica, si è sostituita una visione della chiesa come comunione di persone e comunione di chiese locali, in una prospettiva trinitaria. Parlare di «ristomonismo» per il Vaticano II, in particolare per la *Lumen gentium*, o dire che vi è soltanto una «spolverata» di Spirito Santo, farebbe supporre che non si sono letti i testi o si sono letti con occhio pervenuto” (*Implicazioni cristologiche e pneumatologiche nell’ecclesiologia del Vaticano II*, in: G. Alberigo [ed.], *L’ecclesiologia del Vaticano II: dinamiche e prospettive*, Bologna 1981, p. 109). Therefore, Congar accepts, with due reservation, this tendency called *Christomonism* expressed by N.A. Nissiotis (*Rapport on the Second Vatican Council*, “The Ecumenical Review” 2[1966], s. 190-206; *Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology*, “Oecumenica. Annales de recherché oecuménique”, Neuchâtel 1967, s. 235-251) and O. Clement (*Ecclésiologie orthodoxe et dialogue oecuménique*, „Contacts” 42[1963], s. 91-106).

that there has been a “forgetting of the Spirit” which is not typical of the authentic tradition of the Church⁷.

We may just underline that the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, promulgated by Vatican II is the most important document from the ecclesiological point of view. This Constitution begins with a description of the Church as the revelation and realization of the mystery of God’s hidden plan of salvation. The pre-eminence and the importance that this document has with regard to other documents of Vatican II is reflected in the comment of Gérard Philips: “This is rather the vitally important centre to which the other decrees must be referred, and they must all be read in the light of the mystery of the Church”⁸. The document on the Church was to become the principal document of the Council. The declared intention of the Council was to state, in a way more understandable to the faithful and to the world, the nature and mission of the Church.

Therefore, the originality and newness of Vatican II’s Constitution on the Church is its treatment of the relation between the Church and the trinitarian mystery⁹. Vatican II has insisted on situating the Church in the history of salvation, the history of the progressive manifestation of God and his plan of love. Many of its documents begin by assigning the Church to its place in the economy of salvation, itself flowing from the intra-trinitarian life of God. The history of salvation is the history of the progressive revelation of the Trinity. The trinitarian foundation of the Church which the Council brought to our attention is revealed in the three major images: People of God, Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit¹⁰.

The insistence on this trinitarian reaffirmation by the Council is all the more important, because it could have easily dispensed with such a treatment, the Council being of a pastoral character and not willing to be a dogmatic

⁷ H.U. von Balthasar, *Le Saint-Esprit, L’inconnu au delà du Verbe*, “Lumier et Vie” 67(1964), 13, p. 115-126.

⁸ G. Philips, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, History of the Constitution*, in: H. Vorgrimler (ed), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, London–New York 1967, vol. I, p. 105.

⁹ In treating of the Church in the light of the Trinity, Vatican II has not presented anything new but has merely brought back the Scriptural and traditional doctrine of the Cappadocians, St Athanasius, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, of whom the Council makes abundant use in its documents.

¹⁰ Evidently, these three images of the Church are not to be considered in isolation from one another but in a mutual reference to one another and in the light of the self-communication of the trinitarian God.

council¹¹. The faith in the trinitarian God, in fact, pervades all the major documents of the Vatican II. The problems of the sanctity of the Church, ecumenism, eschatology and the Marian Mystery attain their final clarification in the mystery of the Trinity. Vatican II's teachings on the Church are permeated with a trinitarian outlook¹². The Church of Vatican II is the "*Ecclesia de Trinitate*".

In this context the basic phrase of *Lumen Gentium* teaches us, that the Church is a people called together out of the unity of the Persons of the Trinity: "Thus the universal Church appears as <a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" ("*Sic apparet universa Ecclesia sicuti <de unitate Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti plebs adunata>*") (LG 4b)¹³. The Latin preposition "de" expresses simultaneously the ideas of imitation and participation. Therefore, the first idea indicates that the unification of the people of God is a prolongation of the unity between the three divine Persons. The second one shows that the unity of the Church is not comprehensible apart from the unity of the Trinity.

The fundamental intention of the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium* is manifested in the title itself. There is the concrete schema which shows the real nature of the Church in the light of the economy of salvation which proceeds from and tends toward the Trinity. We should keep in mind that although the *Lumen Gentium* attributes to God Father the creation of the world and the elevation of human beings to the supernatural level, to the Son the redemption and to the Holy Spirit sanctification, in reality, it is the whole Trinity: all the three Persons of the Trinity who create, govern and sanctify all being.

¹¹ Cf. A. S t a g l i a n ò, *Il Mistero del Dio Vivente. Per una teologia dell'Assoluto trinitario*, Bologna 1996, p. 449-450: "Il concilio Vaticano II, conformemente al suo indirizzo pastorale, non ha dedicato al tema trinitario una riflessione particolare, né trattando formalmente il dogma della Trinità, né esponendone la dottrina, ma ha concepito la Chiesa <trinitariamente>, quale popolo di Dio adunato nell'unità del Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo". Nella Trinità la Chiesa si specchia, scoprendo le sue radici ultime".

¹² For example: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (2; 5-6); *Dei Verbum* (2); *Ad Gentes* (2-4).

¹³ This text is based on the quotation from Saint Cyprian (*De Domenica Oratione* 23: PL 4,553). In this footnote we have also references to Saints Augustine and John Damascene. The text from St. Augustine (*Serm.* 71,20,33: PL 38,463 n.), referred to here, says that the communion of the unity of the Church of God, outside which there is no remission of sins, is the proper work of the Holy Spirit, while of course, the Father and the Son are cooperating, because the Holy Spirit himself is in a certain way the communion of the Father and of the Son. The text of Saint John Damascene (*Adv. Inconcl.*, 12: PG 96,1358D), referred to here, says that in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, we believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, *Lumen Gentium* does not speak of a perichoretic relationships within the Trinity, precisely because the main focus of the document was the Church and not the doctrine of the Trinity.

The specificity of the life of the Church is therefore seen in the communion that reigns in the divine life, which thorough Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit unites all men to the Father and among themselves. This communion of the divine life forms mankind into a people of God gathered in unity which is the participation in the unity of God Father, the Son and the Spirit. Trinitarian communion becomes the basis of ecclesial communion. The unity of the Church is to be thus modelled on the unity of the Trinity. The unity of God is a perichoretic unity. This is implied when the Council in *Lumen Gentium* 23 speaks of the role of the bishops in the universal Church and the local Churches.

The first chapter of the *Lumen Gentium* speaks of the mystery of the Church and immediately after, in the prologue, describes the Church as “sacrament: “Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission” (LG 1). Obviously, the fundamental sacrament is always Christ. The church is sacrament in as much as she is united to Christ¹⁴. As Christ is the Sacrament of God so the Church is seen as the Sacrament of Christ. She makes him present and tangible in this world until he comes again. The Church here signifies and effects the unity of all humankind with one another and with God in Jesus Christ since she is “sign and instrument” that really contains the grace it confers¹⁵.

¹⁴ Cf. A.H.C. V a n E i j k, *The Church: Mystery, Sacrament, Sign, Instrument, Symbolic Reality*, “Bijdragen” 50(1989), p. 178-202. The Latin word *sacramentum* is the translation of the Greek word *mysterion*. The two terms have shades of difference in meaning: *mysterion* underlines the content of salvation history which is God and his salvific plan. The term *sacramentum*, in the other hand, indicates more the instrument, the sign that reveals content. This one as applied to the Church appears twice, besides LG 1, in the *Lumen Gentium*: LG 9 and 48. In LG 1, it is introduced with a limitation “*veluti*”, or in other words, Church is “like” a sacrament. In LG 9, is seen in the citation of St. Cyprian where the term refers to some concrete signs which express the mystery of unity which is fulfilled in the Church as the reflection of the divine unity: “*inseparabile unitatis sacramentum*”. In LG 48, the term is introduced in the treatment of relation between the pilgrim Church and the celestial Church.

¹⁵ J.M.R. T i l l a r d, *Église et salut. Sur la sacramentalité de l'Église*, “Nouvelle Revue Théologique” 116(1984), p. 658-685.

The term mystery as applied to the Church affirms that the Church is the instrument by which God realizes his plan of salvation, that is, the participation of human beings in the divine life of the Trinity, by virtue of baptism. The Constitution, therefore, speaks of the Church from the point of view of faith. It describes the Church, above all, as an object of faith¹⁶.

2. A PLAN BORN IN THE FATHER'S HEART

The Church has its origin in the salvific will of the Father who wants all humankind to be saved in his Son Jesus Christ. The Father wills that all people be saved so he freely created the world and called human beings to share in his life. After the fall of Adam, he still offered the possibility of salvation in Jesus Christ. All those who believe in Christ he called together as his people, the Church. The Council attributes the origin of the Church to the gratuitous action of the Father.

Thus the Second Vatican Council says: "The eternal Father, by a free and hidden plan of His own wisdom and goodness, created the whole world. His plan was to raise men to a participation of the divine life. Fallen in Adam, God the Father did not leave men to themselves, but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in view of Christ, the Redeemer <who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature> (Col 1, 15). All the elect, before time began the Father <foreknew and pre-destined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren> (Rom 8, 29). He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era of time the Church was constituted and, by the outpouring of the Spirit, was made manifest. At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion, when, as is read in the Fathers, all the just, from Adam and <from

¹⁶ Cf. C. M o e l l e r, *History of Lumen Gentium's Structure and Ideas*, in: J.M. Miller (ed.), *Vatican II, An Interfaith Appraisal, International Theological Conference, University of Notre Dame: March 20-26, 1966*, Notre Dame-London 1966, p. 124.

Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church” (LG 2).

The Vatican II text shows that the mystery of the Church cannot be fully comprehended if we separate it from the plan of God the Father, that is, participation in the divine life, which takes on a concrete form, even though preparatory, with the election of the “People of God” of the Old Testament and is perfected in the new “People of God”, the Church, which is the instrument of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The text speaks of the economy of salvation, the plan of salvation of the Father, in which the Church finds its place, its foundation and eternal principle. By inserting the mystery of Church in the totality of the eternal divine plan of salvation, *Lumen Gentium* 2 presents the Church as “*finis salutis*” and is considered as the “*ecclesia ab Abel*”, which implies communion of grace in Christ, the only Mediator, whose influence encompasses time and space¹⁷.

The plan of the Father is directed to all humankind, so that may share in his divine life. The divine plan of salvation has various phases: beginning from the stage of election to its eschatological consummation at the end of time. According to *Lumen Gentium*, this plan which is eternal, free, mysterious, wise and good involves elevating men to the participation in the divine life. This divine plan of salvation brings all men into conformity with the image of God’s Son; gathers all believers in Jesus Christ into a community so that they may be finally gathered together with the Father “in the universal Church”. The council speaks of the all-embracing “universal Church”, which already exists, of which all the just men from Abel to the last of the elect will be part, and which will be gathered to the Father.

Those whom God called He predestined from all eternity, those whom He called He justified, and those so justified He glorified. Those whom God called form the Church which was foreshadowed from the beginning of the world, prepared for in the history of Israel, established in the Son, manifested through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Church is then of the Father because it is willed by Him from eternity in the absolutely gratuitous plan of His love for men. It exists as a community of salvation which includes all the just, from the first to the last, in history.

In other words, the preparation of the Church began with the call of Israel as God’s people. God manifested his power to stay in the life and history of

¹⁷ Cf. F o r t e, *La Chiesa icona della Trinità*, p. 17; *La Chiesa della Trinità*, p. 69.

Israel. To Israel God promised a Messiah and prepared his people for his mission. The people of God in the Old Testament were a preparation for the new people of God of the New Testament, the Church. Hence the Church has its origin in the Father because he willed the Church from all eternity from his fountain-like love which the Father now poured out on humankind in his Son. The mission of the Son will be to carry out the salvific plan of the Father¹⁸.

Lumen Gentium 2 enumerates in the course of the economy of salvation, in accordance with the Patristic tradition, at least five moments of the Church in which she is “present in figure” in creation, is “prepared” in the history of the first alliance, is “established” with Jesus Christ, is “made manifest” at Pentecost and will be “brought to completion” in the parousia¹⁹. Everything began with the Father and ends with the Father. The Father sent the Son, and the Son sent the Spirit. This is how God came to us. And it is in the inverse way that we shall reach the Father: the Holy Spirit leads us to the Son, and the Son to the Father.

Summarizing, Vatican II thus recognizes with absolute certainty the “paternal” origin of the Church. This conviction of the Council is visible in the whole document. It affirms the final destination of the Church: the Father. The basis and the root of the origin of the Church is the design of God the creator, who calls man to the supernatural life and reveals himself to men. Such a design is realized through the event of incarnation and through the effusion of the Holy Spirit. The Church therefore is born of an absolutely gratuitous divine election and decision. This is the great revelation of “the mysterious design which for ages was hidden in God” (Eph 3,9).

¹⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasises: “The remote preparation for this gathering together of the People of God begins when he calls Abraham and promises that he will become the father of a great people. Its immediate preparation begins with Israel’s election as the People of God. By this election, Israel is to be the sign of the future gathering of all nations. But the prophets accuse Israel of breaking the covenant and behaving like a prostitute. They announce a new and eternal covenant. (Christ instituted this New Covenant)” (n. 762).

¹⁹ Cf. S. B a r l o n e, *La Chiesa, Dono del Padre e dono della Trinità*, Napoli 2000, p. 16.

3. THE CHURCH INSTITUTED BY CHRIST JESUS

The mission of the Son is the execution of the plan of the Father. The Father sent the Son in order to bring men into a relationship of communion with himself and of men among themselves. In other words, Jesus Christ is to reconcile all things in himself with the Father²⁰. In the universal plan of God's salvation, Christ enjoys an absolute primacy. The just are elected and predestined in Christ in order to form a community which is the Church.

The Constitution *Lumen Gentium* 3 presents the Church as the fruit of redemption and as the instrument of Christ which makes present eternally the redemption of Christ: "The Son, therefore, came, sent by the Father. It was in Him, before the foundation of the world, that the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons, for in Him it pleased the Father to re-establish all things (cf. Eph 1,4-5 and 10). To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He brought about redemption. The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world. This inauguration and this growth are both symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of a crucified Jesus (cf. Jn 19,34), and are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to His death on the Cross: <And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself> (Jn 12, 32). As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which <Christ our Passover was sacrificed> (1 Cor 5, 7) is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on, and, in the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 10,17) is both expressed and brought about".

The text considers the mission of the Son and his centrality in the plan of God. It passes on to the work of the Son, which is related to the Kingdom of God and the Church. The text passes on to the dynamic and sacramental aspects of the Church which grows continually, and grows in the celebration

²⁰ Thus *Ad gentes* says: "However, in order to establish a relationship of peace and communion with himself, and in order to bring about brotherly union among men, and they sinners, God decided to enter into the history of mankind in a new and definitive manner, by sending his own Son in human flesh so that through him he might snatch men from the power of darkness and the Satan (cf. Col. 1,13; Acts 10,38) and in him reconcile the world to himself" (AG 3).

of the Eucharist. It comes to an end with the idea of the universal primacy of Christ.

The role of the Son is central in the plan of salvation. Christ came to proclaim the kingdom of the Father and to call men to repentance. He began his public ministry by saying: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel" (Mk 1,15). All those who believed in him through his words and miracles formed the foundation of the new Israel in the Spirit, the new people of God.

In Jesus Christ, the universal dimension of the plan of the Father is revealed. By reaffirming the salvific will of the Father, the Council gives continuity to its reflections on the trinitarian foundation of the Church. The sending of the Son is in accordance with that eternal salvific plan of God. It is the love of the Father which is the starting point of the mission of the Son. It is the Father's love in which he predestined us to be his adopted sons, thanks to our union with the Son.

Therefore, in the Son, God definitively entered into human history. This is in virtue of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those who were justified in the Old Covenant were justified by virtue of the redemption wrought by Christ. Christ is the centre and goal of human history. He will draw all men to himself after his death and resurrection. Thus the Second Vatican Council says: "All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains" (LG 3).

The Kingdom of God is present in the Church "*in mysterio*", that is, the mystery is revealed and is hidden at the same time²¹. The mystery of Christ will reach its fulfilment by the power of God that is present and acting in the Church. We can say that there is a dialectical identity between the Church and the Kingdom. The Church is the historical anticipation or the historical concretization of God's ultimate plan with humankind and creation as a whole. She is the "already of the not yet", meant to be the concrete realization of God's Kingdom now and sent for the witnessing of the Kingdom present and the proclamation of it to all nations and the whole world. The Church is not identified with the Kingdom of God. It is the sacrament of the Kingdom of God in the eschatological phase of sacred history which began with Christ, the phase which brings about the Kingdom of God. Her mission is to serve the Kingdom and not to take its place. Vatican II states clearly: "the

²¹ Cf. *Catechism*, n. 763.

Church, equipped with the gifts of its Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom. While it slowly grows, the Church strains toward the completed Kingdom and, with all its strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with its King” (LG 5).

We must, however, constantly realize that the nature and mission of the Church is always to be understood in relationship and subordination to the Kingdom of God. The Church owes its existence to the Kingdom of God and both conceptions belong closely together, so that it is hardly possible to reach a clear understanding of the nature of the Church without relating it to the basic New Testament conception of the Kingdom of God.

The Second Vatican Council explains that the origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ on the cross. Therefore in bringing out the connection between the death of Jesus, the salvific character of the Eucharist and the beginning of the Church, the Council highlights the paschal mystery as the decisive event in the birth and life of the Church. The blood and water indicate mysteriously that the sacraments of the Eucharist and baptism acquire their full meaning and value from the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The Constitution returns many times to the idea that the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist signify and create the unity of the faithful which constitute a single body of Christ. *Lumen Gentium* 7 asserts: “In that Body the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified. Through Baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ: <For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body> (1 Cor 12, 13). [...] Really partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another”.

However, the death of Christ on the cross affects the past, present and future history of humankind. The Church prolongs and realizes the consequence of Christ’s death in the celebration of the Eucharist. Accordingly Philips writes: “The exaltation of the Saviour on the cross is not simply an event of the past. His death was a propitious sacrifice and liberation, as the Pauline quotation underlined: <Because Christ, our Paschal is immolated>

(1 Cor 5, 7). Now, this sacrifice is perpetual, and every time we celebrate on the altar the work of our redemption is fulfilled”²².

The Church continues to celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass, in order that the redemptive act of Christ might be perpetuated in time as the Church journeys towards the final consummation of all things in Christ. The Son of God by his incarnation already enters into communion with all humankind. By his preaching he proclaimed the kingdom of God of which the Church is but a mystery. Jesus Christ called men into a life of communion with the Father. It is important to note that the Council presents the mystery-sacrament dimension of the Church which is to be found in the paschal mystery from which the Church was born²³. The Eucharist, the Body of the only Christ, implies the unity of the mystical Body which is the invisible Church. Every Eucharist is connected directly with the unity of the episcopate under the leadership of Peter, the bishop Rome. The mystery of the Church is most perfectly realized in the sacramental dimension.

Vatican II’s understanding of the Church as a communion that is born from, and lives by, participation in the paschal mystery of Christ enables a new awareness of the absolutely unique way in which the unity of the Catholic Church subsists in and out of the local Churches. The notion of the universal Church as the communion of the Churches, modelled on the communion that exists in the Trinity, has contributed to a fuller theological understanding of the ministry of Peter. Since the Church is a reality of communion with Christ, there can be one and only one Church throughout the world, since the Lord is one. For this reason, every local Church, as a manifestation of the one and only Church must remain in the unity of the universal Church.

4. THE CHURCH REVEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Christian community at its earliest stage regarded itself as the fulfilment of the eschatological expectation promised through the prophets and brought about by Christ. The realization and understanding of who they were came to the early community through the experience of the outpouring of the

²² G. P h i l i p s, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero*, Milano 1975, p. 83.

²³ L. S a r t o r i, *La «Lumen gentium»*, Padova 1994, p. 37.

Holy Spirit who was seen as the gift of the risen Lord. Since the Church came into existence through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it would be better to start with this fact and to unfold any ecclesiology from the Holy Spirit. Such a procedure would lead more easily to the realization that the Church is ultimately grounded in the Trinity itself. The incarnation, the salvific mission of Christ, the passion and resurrection cannot be understood without the presence of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that we have to substitute Christocentrism with a Pneumatocentrism.

The Holy Spirit was sent by the Son and the Father to proclaim the salvific mission of the Son and to the expansion of the Church in history. In other words, to guide the Church so that in the course of history the universal salvific mission of Jesus Christ may reach all peoples. It is on the day of Pentecost that the Church is publicly presented, with the descent of the Holy Spirit²⁴. The Constitution insists on the fact of the mission of the Spirit on Pentecost to emphasise the importance that it has for the Church and to underline the stable and permanent character and the sanctifying mission of the Church. The pneumatology of the *Lumen Gentium* is clearly ecclesiological and in fact all the references to the Holy Spirit in the texts relate in some way or other to the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Church.

The Second Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium* 4 speaks of the mission of the Holy Spirit in the Church beginning from the day of Pentecost: "When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth (cf. Jn 17,4) was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father (cf. Eph 1,18). He is the Spirit of Life, a fountain of water springing up to life eternal (cf. Jn 4,14; 7,38-39). To men, dead in sin, the Father gives life through Him, until, in Christ, He brings to life their mortal bodies (cf. Rom 8,10-11). The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple (cf. Cor 3,16; 6,19). In them He prays on their behalf and bears witness to the fact that they are adopted sons (cf. Gal 4,6; Rom 8,15-16 and 26). The Church, which the Spirit guides in way of all truth (cf. Jn 16,13) and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with His fruits (cf. Eph 1,11-12; 1 Cor 12,4; Gal 5,22). By the power of the Gospel He makes

²⁴ J.M.R. Tillard, *Corps du Christ et Esprit Saint. Les exigences de la communion*, "Irénikon" 63(1990), p. 163-184.

the Church keep the freshness of youth. Uninterruptedly He renews it and leads it to perfect union with its Spouse. The Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord, «Come!» (Rev 22,17)”.

There are a few points that the Council speaks of in this text: the mission of the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost; the Holy Spirit who vivifies the Church; the indwelling of the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful; the Holy Spirit as the one who leads and unifies the Church with his diverse gifts; the Holy Spirit as animating and renewing the Church.

The Holy Spirit is sent to sanctify and form men into communion with the Father. The Pentecost event foreshadowed the universal communion of all humankind in the Church (AG 4)²⁵. The mission of the Spirit, although connected with that of the Son are not the same. Each one has his own proper mission which does not becloud that of the other. Therefore, C. Scanzillo writes: “The mission of the Spirit is a true and proper mission that cannot be reduced to that of the Word incarnate. The Spirit is the other Paraclete, a distinct person, although in strict relationship with Christ”²⁶.

The Holy Spirit is the protagonist of the trinitarian mission in the Church. By the power of the Holy Spirit all peoples are able to participate in Christ’s redemptive work. The action of the Holy Spirit is both vivifying and unifying in the Church. The Holy Spirit rejuvenates the Church, continually, renewing it and he makes it one in fellowship and ministry²⁷. He thus continues the mission of Christ in the Church and in the world, dwelling in the hearts of the faithful and adorning them with his gifts both hierarchical and charismatic. The Spirit does not cease to direct the Church as it moves to the final consummation of all things in Christ. Therefore, the Holy Spirit will bring to fulfilment the new era of the history of Salvation²⁸.

Some theologians in search of a deeper appreciation of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Church have formulated thesis that the Church is a sacrament of the Holy Spirit. That would mean: as the “already” of the “not yet”, the Church signifies the new creation, the world to come which is the work of

²⁵ References to the promise of sending the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and the Church are copious in the writings of John, Luke and especially in the Acts (for example: Lk 24,49; Jn 14,16-17; 15,26).

²⁶ C. S c a n z i l l o, *La Chiesa: sacramento di comunione*, Roma 1987, p. 52.

²⁷ Cf. J.H. W r i g h t, *The Church: Community of the Holy Spirit*, “Theological Studies” 48(1987), p. 25-44.

²⁸ Cf. *Catechism*, n. 768.

the Holy Spirit²⁹. Her mission is to release the end-time Spirit, who is operative in her as the future of the world, with the intention of leading creation into its final destiny. This aspect brings out the universality of her mission. The Church has to prepare the world into the new creation, to discover where the Spirit is operative in the world and to be open to the signs of the times. Even though the Council was particularly Christological and at first sight it might seem that the role of the Spirit is not one of the central points emphasised by the Council, a Pneumatological dimension is not entirely missing in the Council documents. The Council, we might point out, emphasised the importance of both Christology and Pneumatology which are situated within the rhythm of Trinitarian life. Pneumatology is about the very existence of the Church; is an ontological category in ecclesiology. The action of the Spirit is not outside or against the Christ event. It is not possible to separate Christ from the Spirit, neither in the Eucharist nor in the Church.

5. CONCLUSIONS

There has been an enormous interest in the Church, particularly in the years prior to Vatican II. The highlight of this ecclesial interest was the Council itself with the important document *Lumen Gentium*. The Council was very much concerned about presenting us with an image of the Church which could serve as a kind of reference point in order to grasp her identity and her mission in the world today. The Council did not define the Church in clear concepts. However, the Council Fathers were very much concerned to correct a Church image that was conceived generally as being too rigid and in many ways out of touch with the reality of the present world. *Lumen Gentium* meaning "Light for the Nations" (although this metaphor refers here to Christ) envisions the Church as being light to all nations.

One of the rediscovered ecclesiological dimensions of the Church is its trinitarian origin. Vatican Council II with its patently patristic ecclesiology, brought to the fore once again the trinitarian origin of the Church. It clearly shows that the Church is bound up with the Trinity as its origin and source of growth. Thus the Church is the work of the Trinity. The doctrine of the

²⁹ W. K a s p e r, G. S a u t e r, *Kirche, Ort des Geistes*, Freiburg 1976, p. 13-35.

Trinity has definitely entered the ecclesiological world to illumine the nature of the Church and Church unity and the way in which that unity is to be conceived and implemented.

All the teachings of Vatican II on the mystery of the Church carry with them the “seal of the Trinity”. The intimate nature of the Church finds its eternal origin, its exemplary form and its finality in the mystery of the Trinity. All the aspects of the Church must be scrutinized in the light of this mystery of mysteries. In the Church everything takes place “in the name and honour of the indivisible Trinity”. Vatican II was concerned with presenting not a Trinity *ad intra* but a Trinity *ad extra*. The emphasis is on the “economic” Trinity. In fact, current thinking about Trinitarian theology is marked by an “ascending” movement to the immanent Trinity from the economy, from the revelation that has occurred in the history of salvation to God “in himself”. This way of adopting the “economy” as a starting-point does not mean to lose sight of, or to abandon, the reality of God “in himself”. On the contrary, the point is precisely to attain to the inner reality of God on the basis of his self-revelation.

The Council offers a functional Trinity, a Trinity in relation with the instrument of salvation which is the Church. The ecclesiology of Vatican II is Pneumatological, just as it is Christocentric and ultimately Theocentric. The three aspects are inseparable and their logical sequence invariable, but each of them brings the whole Church into view.

The mystery of the Trinity, according to the Bible, is not the incomprehensible intimate life of God, but the mystery of the progressive revelation and progressive insertion of God in history. It is in this context of the history of salvation that the Council treats the Church. The Council, in line with the biblical message, speaks of the distinctions and successions of the divine Persons, but without going into discussing the immanent Trinity, but rather concentrating on the economic Trinity, that is, presenting the Trinity as the progressive self-manifestation of God in history.

The Fathers of the Council present the origin of the Church according to the biblical perspective. In other words, the origin, preparation and birth of the Church is presented in terms of the progressive self-revelation and realization of God’s eternal plan in the history of humankind as we know it from the Scriptures. Therefore, the preparation of the Church is also the revelation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in human history. No other council has tried to present the Trinity in the way it was presented by Vatican II. There lies, perhaps, the originality of the Council. Vatican II has given us, for the first time in the history of ecclesiology, a doctrinal principle by which

it is possible to think of an ecclesiology, totally trinitarian. The Council recognizes the Trinitarian ontology of the Church.

In view of the preparation and birth of the Church one can say that the Church is both within and outside history. The Church is not outside or parallel to human history because of its visible historical reality in time. In time and space the Church is called to be the sign and instrument of union between God and humankind. It is called to be the instrument of God's salvation in the world. It is also equally true that the Church is outside human history because of its trinitarian origin. It is present as the Kingdom of God in mystery. The Church in history has to be faithful to God who has revealed himself in history. It has to be faithful to man and faithful to its mission in the world. It has to be faithful to God who has already intervened, still intervenes and will intervene since the history of salvation continues.

The trinitarian origin of the Church has made it possible for us to situate the origin of the Church within the salvific plan of God in salvation history starting with the history of creation, the coming of Christ into the world and the sending of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. The Church born of the communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in history is by nature a communion. And it has been entrusted with the mission. Its mission is to bring all peoples into communion with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It accomplishes this mission in communion. We can therefore conclude that the Church as communion is founded on the Trinity. Trinitarian perichoretic communion is the model for ecclesial communion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A n t ó n A., Ecclesiologia postconciliare: speranze, risultati e prospettive, in: R. Latourelle (ed.), Vaticano II: Bilancio e prospettive venticinque anni dopo (1962-1987), vol. I, Assisi 1987, p. 361-388.
- B a l t h a s a r H.U. von, Le Saint-Esprit, L'inconnu au delà du Verbe, "Lumier et Vie" 67(1964), 13, p. 115-126.
- B a r l o n e S., La Chiesa, Dono del Padre e dono della Trinità, Napoli 2000.
- C o n g a r Y., Saggi ecumenici. Il movimento, gli uomini, i problemi, Roma 1986.
- C o n g a r Y., La Parola e il Soffio, Roma 1985.
- C o n g a r Y., Ecco la Chiesa che amo, Brescia 1969.
- C o n g a r Y., Pneumatologie ou «Christomonisme» dans la tradition latine?, "Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses" 45(1969), p. 394-416.

- D o l a T., Kościół sakramentem Trójjedynego Boga, „Roczniki Teologiczne” 43(1996), 2, p. 67-78.
- F a l l i c o A., Eucaristia, communio trinitaria e comunione ecclesiale, Torino 1986.
- F o r t e B., La Chiesa icona della Trinità. Breve ecclesiologia, Brescia 1984.
- F o r t e B., La Chiesa della Trinità. Saggio sul mistero della Chiesa comunione e missione, Cinisello Balsamo 1995.
- J a ś k i e w i c z S., Eschatologiczny charakter Kościoła pielgrzymującego w posoborowej eklezjologii włoskiej, Radom 2013.
- K a r w a c k i R., Communio eklezjalna jako misterium osobowej jedności z Trójcą Świętą, „Collectanea Theologica” 73(2003), 4, p. 65-74.
- K a s p e r W., The Church as Communion, „New Blackfriars” 74(1993), p. 232-244.
- K a s p e r W., S a u t e r G., Kirche, Ort des Geistes, Freiburg 1976.
- L a r e n t z a k i s G. von, Trinitarisches Kirchenverständnis, in: W. Breuning (ed.), Trinität, Aktuelle Perspektiven der Theologie, Freiburg 1984, p. 73-96.
- M o e l l e r C., History of Lumen Gentium’s Structure and Ideas, in: J.M. Miller (ed.), Vatican II, An Interfaith Appraisal, International Theological Conference, University of Notre Dame: March 20-26, 1966, Notre Dame-London 1966, p. 123-152.
- M ü h l e n H., Una mystica persona: Die Kirche als das Mysterium der heilsgeschichtlichen Identität des Heiligen Geistes in Christus und den Christen: Eine Person in vielen Personen, Munich 1968.
- M ü l l e r G.L., Das trinitarische Grundverständnis der Kirche in der Kirchenkonstitution „Lumen Gentium”, „Münchener theologische Zeitschrift” 45(1994), p. 451-465.
- P h i l i p s G., Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, History of the Constitution, in: H. Vorgrimler (ed), Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, vol. I, London-New York 1967, p. 105-137.
- P h i l i p s G., La Chiesa e il suo mistero, Milano 1975.
- P o t t m e y e r H.J., Kirche des dreifaltigen Gottes, „Wort und Antwort” 29(1988), p. 83-86.
- P o t t m e y e r H.J., Auf dem Weg zu einer trinitarischen Ekklesiologie, „Analecta Cracoviensia” 25(1993), p. 391-396.
- R a h n e r K., Das neu Bild der Kirche, „Geist und Leben” 39(1966), p. 4-24.
- R a t z i n g e r J., Sulle principali obiezioni sollevate contro la Dichiarazione „Dominus Iesus”, „L’Osservatore Romano” (8.11.2000), p. 4.
- S a r t o r i L., Trinità e Chiesa, „Credere Oggi” 6(1986), n. 4, p. 71-81.
- S a r t o r i L., La «Lumen gentium», Padova 1994.
- S c a n z i l l o C., La Chiesa: sacramento di comunione, Roma 1987.
- S t a g l i a n ò A., Il Mistero del Dio Vivente. Per una teologia dell’Assoluto trinitario, Bologna 1996.
- T i l l a r d J.M.R., Église et salut. Sur la sacramentalité de l’Église, „Nouvelle Revue Théologique” 116(1984), p. 658-685.

- T i l l a r d J.M.R., Corps du Christ et Esprit Saint. Les exigences de la communion, "Irénikon" 63(1990), p. 163-184.
- W o j t k i e w i c z K., Trójca Święta jako zasada życia chrześcijańskiego, Szczecin 2005.
- W r i g h t J.H., The Church: Community of the Holy Spirit, "Theological Studies" 48(1987), p. 25-44.
- V a n E i j k A.H.C., The Church: Mystery, Sacrament, Sign, Instrument, Symbolic Reality, "Bijdragen" 50(1989), p. 178-202.

TRÓJCA I KOŚCIÓŁ
W ŚWIETLE KONSTYTUCJI *LUMEN GENTIUM*
SOBORU WATYKAŃSKIEGO II

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Konstytucja dogmatyczna o Kościele *Lumen gentium* przyczyniła się do pogłębienia analizy trynitarnego charakteru Kościoła. Relacja owa dotyka nie tylko natury początku Kościoła, ale odnosi się również do jego permanentnej struktury, zgodnie z twierdzeniem patrystycznym *Ecclesia de Trinitate*. Jego struktura jest *de unitate Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti plebs adunata* (LG 4). *Ecclesia de Trinitate* wskazuje nie tylko na fakt, że Kościół rodzi się z tajemnicy trynitarnego Boga, lecz także przypomina, że jego natura jest przeniknięta Trójcą. Życie oraz posłannictwo Kościoła można ująć, w sposób analogiczny, w perspektywie życia wewnątrztrynitarnego. Tym samym Kościół stanowi owoc Boskiego planu zbawienia. Bierze początek z odwiecznej i szczodroblivej miłości Ojca (LG 2). Owa miłość objawiła się i zrealizowała poprzez wcielenie, śmierć i zmartwychwstanie Syna (LG 3) oraz poprzez nieustanną i ożywiającą obecność Ducha Świętego (LG 4). Należy jednak rozważnie wyrażać owe istotne relacje, unikając „nieuzasadnionych” i wymuszonych odniesień struktury Kościoła do natury Boga Trójjedynego. Warto bowiem pamiętać, jak przypominał Kard. Ratzinger (OR 8.11.2000), o ostrożności wobec rozprzestrzeniającej się tendencji, która bezpośrednio transponuje tajemnicę trynitarną na strukturę Kościoła.

Słowa kluczowe: Trójca Święta, Ojciec, Syn, Duch Święty, Kościół, eklezjologia, Vaticanum II, *Lumen Gentium*.