

TOWARDS THE CELEBRATION OF A PACIFIC LOVE-MEAL

Theo Aerts

Father Theo Aerts is a Roman Catholic priest from Belgium. He was Protector of "Ecumenical Studies" at the University of PNG, in Port Moresby. However, health concerns resulted in his return to Belgium a couple of years ago.

In certain Christian matters, the churches in the Pacific are faced with a dilemma. Some of them feel that, at the end of an ecumenical gathering, the celebration of the eucharist should be evident. This was already the opinion of some 50 American Jesuits, who met in early October, 1969, in North Aurora, Illinois – and some people would accept that this is now a foregone conclusion.

However, there are others, like the late Catholic Bishop of Tonga, and chairman of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), Patelesio Finau, who see that this goal is still to be achieved, and believe this will be possible at the dawn of the year 2000. Even Pope John-Paul II, in his 1994 encyclical about *The Coming of the Third Millennium*, has said that the present time "demands of everybody . . . the promotion of fitting ecumenical initiatives, so that we can celebrate . . . [the year 2000], if not completely united, at least much closer to overcoming the divisions of the second millennium" (n. 34).

If I am correct in reading "the signs of the times", I would like to propose a position between these extremes, and suggest that it would be a feasible goal to devise "a Pacific-style *agape*", involving all the churches. Some opposing groups will object that "we eat already all the time together", so that this last form of common meal would be no achievement at all. I, for one, would think that the Christian component could well be heightened, inspired by Paul's distinction between "eating" and "thanking" (1 Cor 11:25; found in the inverse order in Luke 2:20), and concentrating on the meal aspect. This paper is low-key, and attempts to chart some developments.

1. Various Scriptural Interpretations

Is the goal, set out by bishop Finau, some six years ago, still realistic today or not? Do we, indeed, want to achieve a united stand on the matter? And is it really necessary to have a common eucharist? Is that our only goal for the year 2000?

To answer this question, we may first have a look at the variety of eucharistic rituals, which are observed by the churches. As we all know, there are various competing terms in use. Without mentioning some of the more denominationally-coloured names (such as “the blessed sacrament”), we can mention a few:

- Breaking of the bread
- Supper of the Lord
- Table of the Lord
- (Holy) eucharist
- Communion service
- (Holy) mass

All these expressions are loaded terms, having behind them a long history. And, even where the same idioms are used, the same terms no longer mean the same thing for various churches – if they ever did mean the same thing. Perhaps it is worthwhile to go to the roots – the New Testament itself – because the various existing eucharistic rituals found around “the Last Supper” are not clear replicas of what the New Testament tells us. Instead, they were developed from different components in various passages of scripture.

1. Adherence to Jesus’ example and command (“Take, eat, drink” – Matt 26:27; “do this . . .” – 1 Cor 11:24-25)
2. Memorial of the death of the Lord (“As often as you eat . . .” – 1 Cor 11:26)
3. Sacrifice of expiation for us, and for our sins (“For many until forgiveness of sins” – Matt 26:28)

4. Fellowship meal among Jesus' disciples (cf. earthly meals in the Jesus "brotherhood" *passim*)
5. Renewal of the covenant with God forever ("the new covenant in My blood" – Luke 22:20; also Heb 8-9)
6. Real presence of the Lord (in the eucharistic elements) ("This is My body . . . My blood" – Matt 26:26, 28)
7. Thanksgiving ("He thanked [God]" – Matt 26:26-27)
8. Pascal celebration (cf. Luke 22:15; also "Christ our Passover" – 1 Cor 5:7)
9. Sacrament of unity ("a communion with . . . Christ" – cf. 1 Cor 10:15-17)
10. Effective sign of grace given, or a "sacrament" (cf. church councils)
11. Mass as mission (cf. modern theologies)
12. Anticipation of the eschatological meal in heaven ("I will not drink . . . until . . ." – Matt 26:29; also John 6:54)

I, for one, do not believe that *all* these aspects have the same weight in the New Testament, nor that *all* must be represented in the churches' celebrations of the Lord's Supper. Neither am I convinced that *only* what some people see as the one and main part in the ritual should decide about the understanding of what other Christians derive from Jesus' word and example.

To clear the ground, then, we might address, first, some broader issues, such as a typology of the churches (section 2), and then address a wider range of theological concerns, i.e., in matters of Christology and Ecclesiology, and also a particular area of the holy signs among Christians, baptism (section 3).

2. Main Types of Churches

In a way, the New Testament is so rich that people differ in singling out what, to them, seems to be the most important texts and themes. As regards the greater Christian denominations, presently active

in the Pacific, I would like to distinguish at least three different models of churches:

a. No Sacraments

Some churches (perhaps on the basis of Gal 5:1) deny the necessity of any scripturally-based rites and actions, which signify, and confer, divine grace. Maybe this is not a fair description of these groups of believers, since we have already given them the term “church”, which seems to be a loaded term (including some kind of approved, and transmitted, ministry) – so they, themselves, might rather prefer to be designated as “ecclesial communities”. This view could also affect such more-specific terms, as “holy signs”, or “sacraments”.

Without intending to single out as non-sacramental, other hues of Christians, we would think that the Salvation Army heads the bill. They do have their organisational forms, graded after modern military ranks (not unlike, a Salvation Army officer told me, bishops, priests, and deacons among the Catholics). They also have their rites and rituals, centred around the “articles of war”, the allegiance to “the flag”, etc. But they do not practise any form of baptism or eucharist.

b. Bible-based Signs

Other churches accept some basic scriptural signs, such as those used for entrance into the church, and for expressing fellowship. Both signs go back to Jesus’ explicit commandment. He commanded His followers to “go and baptise” (Matt 28:19), and about the need “to be reborn by water and the Spirit” (John 3:5), and so they administer baptisms. Jesus also commanded “do this in memory of Me” (1 Cor 11:24) and said that “as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you commemorate the Lord’s death” (1 Cor 11:26), and so they keep celebrating “the Lord’s supper”.

However, some churches interpret the words of Jesus quite differently. Thus, baptism can be administered by a bath (immersion in water), by a pouring out of water (a ritualised washing), or, also, by a sprinkling. For the United church, such a sprinkling is not “a scattering in drops” (cf. English dictionaries), but rather a kind of “designating”, or

“marking”, a new adherent (as long as *water* is used, in whatever quantity).

Again, for those who follow the United church practice, bread and wine are only culturally-determined signs, which, in the Pacific, are better replaced by other elements (such as taro pieces, tapioca cakes, sweet potato, or green coconut, kava juice, lolly water, Coca-Cola, or just plain water) – as long as one *eats and drinks*.¹

c. Sacraments

The Christian term “sacrament” was initially very wide (indicating possibly a few dozen things), and is nowadays distinguished for the “sacramentals”. For us, “sacraments” are signs, which signify, and give grace. Several churches (Catholics, Orthodox, and Lutherans) have basically the same understanding of the sacred signs. Anglicans, and the majority of Lutherans in Papua New Guinea, would side with Roman Catholics, while their evangelical, or pietistic wing, would see themselves differently. Thus, I believe, the majority of Papua New Guinean Christians would not allow any other elements to be used in their liturgy, except natural elements as water, wine, and bread.

For the said churches, this is a most serious matter of conscience, based upon the explicit commands, and (for the eucharist) also the example, of the Lord. Of course, the earthly Jesus has given other commands (e.g., “If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you, too, must wash one another’s feet” – John 13:14). This occurs, even among Catholics, although the common church tradition has never included the practice of the washing of the feet, or any other practice, as an essential sign of being a Christian.

Now, some churches have gone still further by tying the eucharist down to “true, natural wine”, and to (unleavened) “bread or wheat” (cf. Roman Catholic Code of Canon Law, cn. 924). For centuries already, some churches have included such a eucharistic understanding in a wider system, counting up to seven recognised sacraments. Some Christians,

¹ John Garrett, and John E. Mavor, *Worship: the Pacific Way*, Suva Fiji: Lotu Pasifika Productions, 1973, p. 19; M. Nduvi, “Why not *Fufu* and Palm Wine for Communion?”, in *Post-Courier*, August 7, 1981, pp. 26-28.

like the Lutherans, grant a special place to the “confirmation” of young adults, but without seeing it as a sacrament.

One meets, in our view, a tripartite division among different churches, and, perhaps, this division could be further simplified to only two poles: the *sic et non*, or “yes/no” dichotomy of ancient logic, and the binary choice of “off/on” of modern technology. Thus, one could assign to some churches a rather vertical outlook, and to other churches a rather horizontal one. Hence, the major Christian rite of the eucharist is either a meal of the Lord, or a gathering among Christians.

- a. A meal of the Lord Jesus,
held in “the House of God” (with its “altar”),
being the privileged place for all the “sacraments”,
presided over by specially-appointed persons (“ordination”),
or
- b. A communion among Christians,
possible in any fitting gathering place,
which is rather the place for preaching (with a “pulpit”),
possibly done by anybody from among the people present.

We may ask, then, with the present state of affairs in mind, is any real progress towards a common understanding of the eucharist really thinkable, particularly in the Pacific world? Although, in Papua New Guinea, the group of Catholics and Anglicans is numerically greatest (well over one-third of the population), the number of Christians in the whole Pacific area is dominated by the Bible-based signs type. They are the successors of the heirs of the London Missionary Society tradition, who arrived in the Pacific 200 years ago (Tahiti, 1797-1863). There is probably no great difficulty for this group of churches to ask their “ecclesiastical relations” to join them for a shared “communion service”.

However, what about an agreement with other types of churches? Is this “Bible-based signs” format of the eucharist to be imposed upon the “sacramentalists” as well? How far does the respect for religious freedom, and the conscience problems of certain believers, go? As is well known, there are Christians, who have doubts about “valid ordinations” in certain churches, and who do not accept women’s

ordination (because they feel it contrary to scripture, and not a valid development of Christian doctrine). Is the opposite move not infringing on the human right of religious freedom (cf. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948), and would not an imposed “eucharist” precisely destroy the kind of Christian unity, which it is intended to bring about?

We cannot forget to take account of the “religious allegiances”, which are surely different in Sydney, Suva, or among the Simbu. Catholics might represent a sizeable portion of people in Papua New Guinea, but not, I believe, in the circumscription of the PCC as a whole, and so this Council may not be burdened by the constraints existing for Catholics. Hence, provided that something drastic is not going to happen before the year 2000, the PCC can always opt for a United-church-type of “communion service” as the best that still can be achieved, even though the sacramentalist churches would be unable to share in the so-desired common celebration.

3. An Attempt to Widen the Theological Horizon

We would believe that, even if the eucharist (under whatever name) is seen as the pinnacle of religious expression among Christians, quite a few concerns enter the scene to shape one’s theological mind. Maybe this wide spectrum of varying, and sometimes conflicting, views on many points is not always realised.

Presently, I would like to draw attention to the big range, in which our one faith is expressed. To apply this insight to the eucharist, I want, first (in what follows), to draw attention to three specific areas affecting our Lord Himself, His church, and, as a particular parallel, the gate to new life in Christ, baptism.

a. Names of Jesus

Even if the World Council of Churches (WCC) agrees to “confess the Lord Jesus as God and Saviour, according to the scriptures”, there remains many variations in doctrines. As is well known, the New Testament does not only refer to the Lord God and Saviour, but it is in not of one voice on many subjects. One case in point, is the various Christologies, or the many names and titles given to the Lord Jesus. They differ from Mark to John, and from Paul to the author of Hebrews,

from believers with Jewish backgrounds, and Christians coming from a Hellenistic environment. I would plead here for a greater openness than exists.

Scholars have counted at least 50 ways of speaking about Jesus (i.e., in the third person) or talking to Him (i.e., in the second person). From this inventory, we can easily single out a dozen titles:²

1. Coming prophet
2. Messiah/Christ
3. Suffering servant
4. Master/Rabbi
5. High priest
6. Saviour
7. Son of David
8. Son of man
9. Son of God
10. Word of God
11. Lord
12. God

It would be possible to divide, somehow, the above-given titles into those which have a more-functional, or more-essentialist, sense, or a more-vertical, and others, a more-horizontal dimension. However, this is not required, to shed light on this issue.

b. Images for the Church

Another example would be the multitude of images used for the one church in the New Testament. Some authors, following Thomas Kuhn,³ speak here of the presence of various paradigmata. Others prefer

² Vincent Taylor, *The Names of Jesus*, London UK: Macmillan & Co., 1953; L. Sabourin, *The Names and Titles of Jesus: Themes of Biblical Theology*, New York NY: Macmillan, 1967.

the term “images”,⁴ or also “models” to designate various ecclesiologies.⁵ In short, there are a host of different ecclesiastical starting points, of which we mention, here, only four:

- the people of God;
- the new creation;
- the fellowship in faith;
- the body of Christ.

Not unnaturally, these basic insights will affect many sub-topics, such as the place and meaning of the ministries, the sacraments, etc.

c. Baptism

Looking now at the issue of (the sacrament of) baptism, there are also important differences among the churches as well, although here, too, a great convergence has been achieved. In my opinion, it is not necessary that baptisms are only given to people standing in streams, neither is it sufficient to understand “sprinkling” as marking with a wet finger only. But these two extreme positions are used in the Pacific area, and have some relevance here.

Perhaps, with further study, one might discover cross links between the many topics referred to, or align them with the two or three types of churches, referred to above. The important point that I wish to make is that, for ages, people with different doctrinal outlooks could live in the one mother church. I think, here, of the divides between East and West (before the great schism of 1054), North and South (with Luther, in 1521), and of later church reforms.

Can modern ecumenism not restore the broadest freedom of expression? Or should we be much more careful? As is well known, many of the great Christian families differ, e.g., in Christology. Are we

³ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

⁴ P. S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1975.

⁵ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 2nd edn, Dublin Ire: Gill & Macmillan, 1974.

now willing to ignore the achievements of the past, around the Christian divides about a Jesus, who is a mere man (Arianism), or a God, who just appeared as a human being (Docetism), or the God-man Jesus Christ, who was confessed in the great creeds? Has the time really come to take one common stand in the said, and other, areas?

4. Some Particular Thoughts on the Eucharist

Let us now zero in on the eucharist, where convergence among the churches is perhaps least. How far, then, are people ready for a common eucharist? As far as Catholics are concerned, a new wind of sympathy with other churches has been blowing since Vatican II (1962). In one text of the General Council, it clearly says that the sacrament of the eucharist has two sides: to be a *means* towards unity, and to be the *expression* of unity achieved (*Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 9).

The first element would put eucharistic sharing at the very *beginning* of ecumenical efforts (and, for this, exceptional cases have been identified), whereas the other element would place it at the very *end*, as being the last, and final, expression of true unity. Now, if the priestly ministry in the church is – again, according to Vatican II – less a matter of juridical power and authority than a matter of pastoral service given to the believers, then the former element in the eucharist might also deserve a greater emphasis than the one derived from the second element in it.

In another place, the same Council makes a further statement, pointing towards a basic unity in eucharistic understanding. Although, negatively, it regrets that certain other churches “have not preserved the ‘genuine and total [earlier version: “full”] reality’ of the eucharistic mystery”, it also adds, positively, that “they commemorate the Lord’s death and resurrection in the Holy Supper, they profess that it signifies life, in communion with Christ, and they await His coming in glory” (*Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 22). Obviously, this places many a “Protestant eucharist” in the field of “a meal of the Lord Jesus”, instead of keeping it in the realm of “a communion among Christians” only.

Yet, to celebrate a common eucharist – by all understood in the same way – is in my mind “not yet on”, mainly because of the question

of priestly orders (cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 22, going back to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215; cf. Denziger-Schoenmetzer, n. 802; also “Waldensian Profession of Faith”, n. 794, etc.), and the need to agree more fully on several issues.

Thus, for many theologians, to celebrate the same eucharist together is like wanting to make the ultimate step before the penultimate step is taken. This is, they feel, dishonest “by saying ‘peace, peace’, where there is no peace” (cf. Jer 6:14), so that people become even reluctant to seek further unity, and more unhappiness is created than otherwise would be the case.

To put it another way, many Catholics feel that they should “rather listen to God, than obey men” (cf. Acts 4:19). For them, it is not a “morally good” act to disobey those whom they recognise as their legitimate authorities in the church. They are bent not to yield to any outward human pressure, or any personal desire, whatever sadness such a decision will entail for them.

Well aware of these difficulties, and as a Catholic, I would still like to make some further explorations in the present field. Does not the saying tell us that “the better should not be an enemy of the good”? Or again, if my proposal does not describe what would be the best one can imagine, the formula may still be good.

Perhaps our widening of the horizon – to include Christ, the church, and the other sacraments – may indeed assist us to make a further step. Thus, the question I would like to ask is: Why is it necessary that people, today, have to use, always and uniquely, what they feel to be the highest achievement in a particular field of biblical “naming”?

Let us return to the great variety of the names and titles of Jesus. As a matter of fact, several of these Christological titles of Jesus are not unequivocal at all (like Cyrus being a “messiah”, too, or any righteous person being a “son of god”, too). Again, is it not a fact of life that many biblical designations for Jesus are in use today, and that it is quite impossible for anybody on earth to say everything, always, and on every occasion?

If this is so for Christology, and for other theological subjects, would it not be a worthwhile achievement if various churches could use “eating and drinking” in a new way? Eating and drinking together is such an anthropologically-common sign of unity, and such an important feature in the New Testament scriptures that all their implications are not necessarily exhausted already. To pursue this aim is, I think, something which justifies further investigation. Here, many aspects have to be drawn together to achieve a common agreement.

5. Elements for a Common Celebration

One way of further proceeding would be to pick up some already-existing examples of a “common eucharist” – such as the liturgy used at the WCC meeting held at Lima (1982). This liturgy has been used in some other places and times, for instance, at the Pacific Theological College in Suva (with two chalices being given around, one with [eucharistic] wine, and the other, not).

Instead of further developing this approach, it might be of some value to forget, for the time being, the said examples, and to try an “approach from below”, asking ourselves what components deserve to be included in a shared Christian celebration.

So, we come to a set of guidelines, of which, account could be taken for what I would like to call a “Year 2000 Convention”. These guidelines could be fittingly explained, or form the content of an occasional address, given when the actual situation (or celebration) occurs.

a. General Human Aspect

A first element to stress is that the celebration, or convention, envisaged, should be part of the proceedings for which the people came together. This affects, especially, the factor of time, so that the celebration in mind should not be an appendix to something else, or, should I say here, the preamble and opening session of the gathering, or a moment in the middle of the convention (cf. a toast at human banquets). In the case for the final and culminating option, there may arise a need that people have to go home (and have a wash after the first part of the final session).

From that first point of view, I believe that one should avoid, at all costs, the need to create a special time slot, uniquely, for the liturgical moment of the convention. In other words, it is preferable to have the concluding session addressing the last point on the ordinary agenda (e.g., the approval of minutes), which, therefore, has to be kept over for this very occasion (cf. 1 Cor 11:25) – the religious element “after the meal”. Of course, this does not mean that the chosen moment be necessarily a “closed session”, or that no other “observers” could be invited for the occasion.

b. Uniqueness of the Occasion

Various elements are closely linked with the consideration of the opportune time, viz, place and dress. Is there a suitable, and available, church building? Or does one try for a stadium, or other location? Local conditions will influence the decision.

Anthropologically speaking, I believe that dress standards are also important. Even if some people may like to down-play the liturgical atmosphere, I would think that something special in appearance may still be called for. For example, guidelines could be comparable with the accepted requirements for a commemorative banquet in the Pacific, where management would request some minimal standards – from “formal dress” (with stola, or covel, or cassock), down to “tropical formal”.

c. Religious-Ecclesiastical Aspect

There should be an explicit reference to the worship dimension. For this reason, it would seem proper that the participants who, in a broad sense, all belong to the Christian tradition, and thus, at times, wear their specific ceremonial garb, would put this on. This variety of dress could well emphasise that, although we are many, we are now one in purpose (i.e., to worship the Lord “who begins and ends every good work” – as the Christian tradition says).

Maybe it would be sufficient if, for this occasion, this dress aspect would only apply to the “minister” called upon for the occasion (cf. Mark 6:41) – “He gave to the disciples . . . who distributed to the people” – the people are distinguished from the disciples, who play,

there, a recognisable role). This point would hold, whether the agents chosen are ordained or not, male or female, etc. – as long as they are accredited ministers in their own churches.

d. Christian Aspect

Christianity has abundant references to “eating together”, which, anthropologically speaking, always expresses sharing and trust (e.g., sharing of kava, betel nuts, cigarettes), and so bring people together. Now, to give this universal and well-established custom a Christian ring, it must include an explicit connection with the Lord Jesus. However, one can ask whether Jesus’ “last supper” is necessarily the best occasion in Jesus’ life from which to take a cue. Or is this incident – even in the New Testament, already – not too much overlaid by various theological interpretations, and has become a specific cause for division?

It would seem to me that the New Testament example of Jesus eating with His disciples, with tax-collectors and sinners, and especially Jesus feeding the crowds may be the better example to inspire us. The latter incident, five times recorded in the New Testament, forms a bridge between the Old Testament promise (cf. “bread from heaven He gave them to eat” – John 6:31), and the eventual New Testament realisation (cf. “He took, blessed, broke, and gave”). In this way, the feeding of the multitude surely enters into the picture, as, also, various other meals recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

Some exegetes feel that, precisely, Jesus’ own fellowship meals with His disciples have to be stressed. These common meals provide:

- the context, or general backdrop, of the “last supper” (with bread and wine);
- a further reflection, in some of the post-resurrection meals (cf. roasted fish and bread – John 21:9); and
- the ultimate origin for the “breaking of the bread” in the Book of Acts, and the bedrock on which both the later *agape* meals, and the eucharistic celebrations, were patterned.

For us, it is most important to note that the said Pacific love-meal is clearly distinguished from the eucharist in imitation of the Last Supper, as is a regular feature in the life of many local congregations. In our opinion, it is not the “last supper” (cf. Matt 26:26-30; par.), which should dictate the “Year 2000 Convention”.

c. Pacific aspect

On the negative side, it may be good that, for the special celebration, all denominationally-tainted terms (e.g., eucharist, communion service, etc.) be avoided. These theological, doctrinal terms separate the faith of the people. The same is true of all specific interpretations (e.g., sacrifice “for us, and for our sins”, real presence, etc.), and certain hallowed practices of the past (“bread and wine”, as the two separated “elements”).

On the positive side, we may list several further points, which would mark a “Pacific love-meal”:

- There is, as hinted already, the possibility of having lay-people, or also women ministers present, as long as they are people, who may regularly officiate in their respective churches.
- Fitting to the local scene, and to the evangelical accounts, is the use of bread, together with fish. This could be any bread, and not just “unleavened bread from grain”. Naturally, also, fish is included, because it is readily available for many Pacific Islanders, independent of the fact that it clearly expresses the link with Jesus’ fellowship meals on earth. One should not object that the inclusion of fish will, necessarily, create a messy situation, because the arrangement of a bit of catering can do wonders here.
- Finally, another contextualised element would be that the “Pacific love-meal” will continue in a more-relaxed manner, with common singing and dancing. Less desirable, is that the ritual be followed by various performances, to be put on by “outsiders” to the meeting, or by those who host the final

gathering. Real members of the convention, and specially-invited guests, should form the core.

6. Some Antecedents

Having reached our conclusions from general premises, we may now add some specific historical information, first taken from ancient liturgies, and, secondly, taken from the fairly-recent past.

First, liturgists used to distinguish between *eucharistia major* and *eucharistia minor*, which, in the course of time, have comprised at least a dozen different meal settings. Relevant ingredients of such meals are fish only, fish and honey, bread and fish, bread and water, bread and (diluted) wine, bread only. The former format is characterised by the recitation of the “institution story”, derived from the Last Supper, with its use of bread and wine.

Without delving into all possible parallels, we would like to single out the Christian banquets that include fish. One “forerunner” may be the ancient Jewish “pure meal” as the first sabbatical meal, on Friday evening, which had messianic and other eschatological connotations. Another “forerunner” may be found in the sacred meals in memory of the deceased (or *refrigeria*), abundantly represented in the Roman catacombs (4th-5th century), and finding parallels, not only in pagan culture, but also in ancient Christian authors.

Our only point here is that cultic meals, with only bread, and without wine (and other instances), have a long history, and fall into the broad category of “minor eucharists”. Hence, the suggestion, made above, for a Pacific love-meal indicates an acceptable course of action.

Secondly, another memorable incident to remember here is the third encounter between the pope, Paul VI, and the Ecumenical patriarch, Athenagores I. The equality of the two prelates, the patriarch of the West, from Rome, and the patriarch of the East, from Constantinople, was really emphasised, e.g., by using two identical thrones on one and the same platform. According to Catholic principles, a regular eucharist, or celebration, would have been possible (cf. Vatican II), but, for the

Orthodox, an expression of “full ecclesiastical communion” was impossible.

The format chosen for the said encounter at Rome, on October 26, 1967, included a liturgical celebration, but without the recital of the “institution words” (i.e., without a “consecration”, hence an *eucharistia minor*). The various parts were the entrance rites, the readings, the intercessions, the action of praise and thanks, the prayer of the Lord, the occasional discourses, and the final blessing.

Conclusion

It is my conviction that, if the various aspects, treated above, are seriously taken into account, a “Pacific love-meal”, structured, as outlined, above, will not just be like any other eating together “as we do all the time”. Instead, this particular event would be a specific scripturally-based way of “being together as Christians”. Such a celebration would be a very explicit sign of unity among believers belonging to many different church orders. It does not entail that the “communion” shown does not really reach the mark (that is, according to one’s own denominational understanding). Instead, because the form advocated here is quite distinct from what any church is used to doing every so often, all Christians can take part in it, without being unduly burdened in their consciences.

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