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The Finnish Experience: *Communion in Growth. Declaration on the Church, Eucharist, and Ministry*

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Introduction

Dear bishops and members of the German-Finnish Consultation of the national Councils of Churches!

Dear ladies and gentlemen!

It is a great joy for me to be here to share some experience on the new Finnish dialogue report *Communion in Growth* (CiG) from the Catholic perspective. When I was in Rome writing my doctoral thesis on the apostolicity of the Church and apostolic succession in the Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue,¹ my bishop Teemu Sippo SCJ called me to be a member of the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue Commission for Finland among other Catholic participants. Due to the final work of the dissertation I myself could participate in this dialogue only from the second meeting onwards. I have realized that our dialogue group worked in a very good atmosphere, praying several times a day with the Divine Office and celebrating the Holy Mass in turn, either Catholic or Lutheran rite.

In this prayerful and theological conversation, we have received many positive results. Of course, our Commission harvested first the central fruits of the Catholic-Lutheran dialogues on the international and local level,² then took into account also the common heritage we share in Finland; for example, the continuity in the episcopal ministry and in the sacramental worship are crucial in the Finnish Lutheranism.³ Actually, the Catholic Church in Finland and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland are historically, as well as in their contemporary life,

¹ T. Nguyen, *The Apostolicity of the Church and Apostolic Succession. The impacts of this Relationship in the Post-Conciliar Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue*, Helsingia 2016.

² Cf. German project *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do they Still Divide?* (1990); International C-L, *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999, JD); German L-C, *Communio Sanctorum* (2000); International *The Apostolicity of the Church* (2006); Swedish-Finnish C-L, *Justification in the Life of the Church* (2010, JLC); International C-L, *From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (2013, FCTC); U.S. C-L, *Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist* (2015).

³ Cf. *Justification in the Life of the Church*. A report from the Roman Catholic-Lutheran dialogue group for Sweden and Finland (Uppsala, Stockholm & Helsinki: Ekotryckredners, 2010) 26-42.

closer to one another than many people would believe. This historical relatedness suggests that the theological conceptions are more parallel than might be expected. Therefore, a higher level of understanding can be expected from this Finnish dialogue.

Furthermore, we cannot forget the first “ecumenical imperative” between Catholics and Lutherans for the future common way proposed by the joint report *From Conflict to Communion* (FCTC, 2013): to begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division (cf. FCTC 239). So, we have come to acknowledge that more unites than divides us: “above all, common faith in the Triune God and the revelation in Jesus Christ, as well as recognition of the basic truths of the doctrine of justification” (FCTC 1). In fact, as Pope John XXIII encouraged, “the things that unite us are greater than those that divide us.”⁴ With this encouragement and optimism, the new Finnish dialogue has been inspired, and after three years of working, both partners can describe their “communion *in growth*”, although the goal of this way is not yet fully reached. For us, the doctrinal dialogue is particularly necessary, in seeking the truth in love. “We do this on the basis and in the light of our common Christian faith, praying for Christ’s guidance through God’s Holy Spirit” (CiG, p. 10).

1. Positive fruits from the Report

1.1. Sacramental communion ecclesiology

Nowadays, communion ecclesiology is understood as a basis for ecumenical ecclesiological convergence.⁵ However, according to Tomi Karttunen, there are some differences in the ways in which communion ecclesiology is understood: the crux is whether it can be understood sacramentally. This is not a problem in the Finnish Lutheran context. The Anglican-Lutheran Porvoo Common Statement (1992) understands communion ecclesiology sacramentally. Finnish Luther research has contributed to the rediscovery of the sacramental character of Martin Luther’s theology and his understanding of the word and presence of Christ in faith. *Unio* and *communio*, word and sacrament, belong together in Luther’s thinking.⁶

In our Finnish report we have thus harvested the fruits of this development in ecumenical ecclesiology, using communion ecclesiology as a common framework and starting point. We have the intention to give more content to the understanding of the sacramentality of the Church, baptism and Eucharist as main sacraments, and to the sacramentality of the ordained ministry. The aim is to make a contribution to “a differentiated consensus on the Church’s concrete sacramental structures, especially concerning the Eucharist and ministry within the Church’s

⁴ This famous phrase is recently referred, remembered and quoted by the L-RC Commission on Unity in its newest joint report, *From Conflict to Communion* (Leipzig: EVA / Paderborn: Bonifatius, 2013) 8.

⁵ Cf. J. Ratzinger, “Die Ekklesiologie des Zweiten Vatikanums,” in *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift* (Communio) 15 (1986) 44; WCC, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (2012).

⁶ T. Karttunen, “Introduction to *Communion in Growth* in Centro pro Unione, Rome, 23.1.2018”, in *Reseptio* 1/2018, 62-64, at 62.

sacramental framework” (CiG p. 9). The aim is to reach and give expression to consensus on questions where agreement is indispensable for unity.

For better understanding the concrete sacramental structures of the Church, the dialogue report sets out our common vision on the Church in considerable detail. We begin with the understanding of the Church as an instrument and sign of divine salvation (CiG 25-26). Then we show how we understand the connection between justification and the sacramental life of the Church (CiG 27). From this vision, communion and mission are intertwined (CiG 28) and the Church is in Christ “like a sacrament” (LG 1; CiG 29-31). The two models of the Church – *creatura verbi* and *sacramentum gratiae* – often in the past seen as in conflict or tension, are not only complementary but are both necessary for an adequate understanding of the Church. Surely, it is only based on the reality of incarnation within its Trinitarian framework that the sacramentality of the Church as communion in Christ can be understood. The ability of formulating such an ecclesiological consensus is an important step on the way towards full, visible unity between Catholics and Lutherans.

For Cardinal Walter Kasper, the question of where the Church of Christ is to be concretely found and encountered, and in her full sense exists (that is, where she subsists) has today become a central question in ecumenism.⁷ Actually, we seek to respond to his observation in his book “Harvesting the Fruits” that “there stands the fundamental ecumenical problem of the very meaning of the sacramental reality of the Church”.⁸ The diverse views on the Church’s sacramentality imply the question: does the Church have a visible and binding shape? According to the Catholic sacramental view, the Church of Christ and her whole mystery, without overlooking her charismatic dimension, subsists in a concrete and permanent institutional structure, in communion with the bishop of Rome and the bishops in communion with him (LG 8). The Finnish Lutheran view approaches this institutional aspect. In particular, the vision of sacramental communion ecclesiology “gives rise to fruitful and promising approaches to overcoming old problems within a larger context, such as participation in the Word of God and in the Sacraments (especially the Eucharist) and the exercise of a universal ministry of unity.”⁹

1.2. Petrine ministry

Actually, within the specific historic context of the Nordic Lutheran Churches, it is easier for Finnish Lutherans to take on issues of ordained ministry, episcopacy and the Petrine ministry. Today many Lutheran Christians welcome the fact that in the Catholic Church the Petrine office is seen and lived as a ministry for the unity of the Church (CiG 263). The Lutheran Churches

⁷ Cf. W. Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits. Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (Continuum: London, 2009) 203-204.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 154.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 150.

are also asking themselves about such a “service to the unity of the church at the universal level” (*Ministry* 73). Following the JDDJ there is no substantial obstacle to understanding the Petrine Ministry as a pastoral ministry willed by God. (CiG 262)

The Finnish report says: “*We agree* that a special ministry for the universal Church (*communio ecclesiarum*) as a visible sign and instrument of her unity and apostolic continuity in the service of the proclamation of the apostolic Gospel promotes the purposes of the Triune God for his Church. [...] The renewed ministry of primate of the communion of Churches (*primatus communionis ecclesiarum*) can serve the unity of the Church. The original and renewed Petrine office is to be seen in the context of unity in diversity, protecting both the unity of the Church and faith and legitimate diversity in her life in the episcopally and synodally led local Churches. This gives expression to the apostolicity and catholicity of the Church of Christ, to the fullness and universality of the Christian faith.” (CiG 265) In this sense, the true goal of ecumenism must remain “the transformation of the plural of confessional Churches separated from one another into the plural of local Churches that are in their diversity really one Church,” as Joseph Ratzinger asserts.¹⁰

Moreover, the Second Vatican Council anchored the papal ministry into a communion ecclesiological framework. The understanding of the communion of the Church (*communio ecclesiae*) as a communion of Churches (*communio ecclesiarum*) affords new possibilities for ecumenical dialogue and rapprochement on the understanding of the Petrine Ministry (CiG 275). Vatican II rediscovered the sacramental vision of the Early Church that understands “the unity of the Eucharist and the unity of the Episcopate *with Peter and under Peter*” not to be “independent roots of the unity of the Church, since Christ instituted the Eucharist and the Episcopate as essentially interlinked realities” (CN 14). Therefore, the Petrine ministry as something interior to each particular Church is a necessary expression of the fundamental mutual interiority between the universal and local Church in Catholic teaching (cf. CN 11, LG 26). It follows that from a Catholic perspective there should be a consensus that being in communion with the Bishop of Rome is a precondition for the full visible unity of the Church. (CiG 299; UUS 97)

Following this fact, the Finnish dialogue members say together: “We see today that the Bishop of Rome is *de facto* a pastor/shepherd not only for Catholics but also for the leaders and members of other Churches” (CiG 355). “*We agree* that the purpose of the doctrines of infallibility and primacy of jurisdiction can be understood as: 1) to help to ensure the unity of the Church is secured in the fundamental questions of Christian faith whenever they are threatened; and 2) to protect the freedom of the Gospel’s proclamation. Where Catholics speak of infallibility, Lutherans speak of the *status confessionis* as an expression of the firm

¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, “Luther and the Unity of the Churches,” in *Id., Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (Slough: St Paul, 1988) 99-122, at 120.

commitment to reject new unchristian doctrines which are against the Scripture and the apostolic and Catholic faith, as already expressed in the Conclusion of the Augsburg Confession.” (CiG 272) Therefore, “the possibility of an office to serve Christian unity at the level of the universal Church was never excluded as a matter of principle by the Reformation. Lutherans now regret that Luther used the expression “Antichrist” of the papal office, and the resulting history of mutual abuse.” (CiG 267)

These affirmations on the Petrine ministry are very significant. They are really an expression of our growth in communion. Although further reflection on the Petrine Ministry has been presented here and the consensus seems to be growing (CiG 297), the following statement in the previous Finnish-Swedish document *Justification in the Life of the Church* remains pertinent: “Further discussion is needed on the specific form that this universal ministry, which should protect the primacy of the gospel, should take.” (JLC 366) Moreover, the visible unity of Lutherans and Catholics today is impossible without a common differentiated understanding of the Petrine Ministry and its joint canonical framework (CiG 302). How can we jointly express the meaning and implications of this for our concrete ecclesial realities and structures? The question of the primacy of jurisdiction is especially difficult and sensitive. (CiG 298)

1.3. Seven sacraments

Another positive fruit harvested from the Finnish Dialogue Commission regards the common understanding of sacraments in general (CiG 63-71). We have reached an important conclusion based on the differentiated consensus as follows: “On the basis of our differentiated understanding of the sacraments in general (cf. 63–69), and in the light of the distinction between the major sacraments (*sacramenta maiora*) (Baptism, Eucharist) and the minor sacraments (*sacramenta minora*) as divinely instituted sacred services and effective sacramental instruments in the work of the kingdom of God, we can conclude that the condemnations of the sixteenth century regarding the number of the sacraments no longer apply. We share the same sacramental intention to undertake the Church’s mission, and *we agree* that Baptism and Eucharist are the principal sacraments and the others are related to them.” (CiG 311).

1.4. Eucharistic communion

We have also reached a significant agreement on the Eucharist, particularly regarding the real presence of Christ under the Eucharistic species and the sacrificial character of the Mass.

We share our joint understanding in accordance with the previous international Catholic-Lutheran dialogue documents: “In the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper Jesus Christ true God and true man, is present wholly and entirely, in his Body and Blood, under the signs of bread

and wine.” (*Eucharist* 16, *FCTC* 154) Despite the different forms of expression Catholics and Lutherans “seek to stress that the body and blood of Christ are truly, really, and substantially (*vere, realiter et substantialiter*) present in, with, and under the outward signs of bread and wine. The bread and wine change (*mutari, conversio*) into the body and blood of Christ at the consecration at the Eucharist.” (CiG 318)

Furthermore, we affirm that the unique sacrifice of Christ is made sacramentally present in the Mass. “*We agree* that the sacrificial character of the Eucharist can be expressed in many ways. In the context of the eucharistic celebration 1) bread and wine are brought to the altar at the beginning of the celebration as an offering and sign of thanksgiving for creation; 2) Christ is present as the sacrificed and crucified Lord; 3) the Eucharist is in word and deed a remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ’s passion (*memoria passionis*); 4) the sacrifice of Christ’s passion is present here and now in the Eucharist (*repraesentatio passionis*); 5) the fruits, effects, and gift of the cross are given personally to the faithful who receive the sacrament (*applicatio sacramentis*); 6) we bring a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God when we confess our sins, give thanks, pray, and celebrate Holy Communion in accordance with the institution of Christ and the encouragement of the apostle (Rom. 12:1); 7) The Eucharist obliges us to sacrifice ourselves in mutual love and service to one another.” (CiG 317)

There is, therefore, a constitutive connection between the sacrifice of Christ, of the Eucharist, and of the Church (CiG 322). Thus we can say that the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century on the Eucharist are no longer applicable (CiG 326), and “there seems good reason to hope that a differentiated consensus on the basis of the scope of our agreements in the basic truths of faith regarding the Eucharist may be reached” (CiG 166). Nevertheless, the issue of the validity and sacramentality of the ordained ministry must be discussed further.

2. Challenges in the future, issues for further study

2.1. Women priests and bishops

Our dialogue has reflected on the sacramental character of the Church, and as a result, the report presents our consensus on the sacramentality of the ordained ministry, but this consensus is also overshadowed by disagreement over women’s ordination. The ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopacy is a complicating factor in ecumenism.

Although there is wide agreement on the nature of the ordained ministry, the consensus does not acknowledge who can or cannot be ordained (CiG 295). As there remain differences about the concrete structures of the Church – namely, the episcopacy in apostolic succession, primacy and the teaching authority of the episcopacy in communion with the bishop of Rome – we have not been able to come to full agreement on the precise meaning of such a sacramental

structure.¹¹ For the full mutual recognition of ordained ministry, the relationship between Scripture, tradition, and teaching authority needs to be clear. There is also a need to agree on the relationship between the foundation and form of the apostolic office. The question of the object of the ministry (function) cannot push the question of the person of the minister into the background, since both are related. The binomial of “ordination” (*esse*) and “mission” (*agere*), as well as the three elements of *matter, form* and *intention*,¹² are actually inseparable in sacramental theology.

This issue also leads us to a critical observation of the methodology used by our dialogue report.

2.2. The method of “differentiated consensus”

It is significant that *Communion in Growth*, in reaching its areas of agreement between Catholics and Lutherans on Church, Eucharist and Ministry, utilized the method of “differentiated consensus.” The JDDJ and its method of “differentiated consensus” have indeed given fresh impulse and encouragement to our dialogue group. Actually, the drafting of a future *Joint Declaration on the Church, Eucharist, and Ministry* analogous to the JDDJ required the same ecumenical method as was used in the JDDJ. Imitating the three aspects of this method, first, we aimed to express our common understanding of Church, Eucharist, and Ministry; second, we elaborated our remaining differences to discern if they are still church-dividing; and finally, we identified the themes needing further elaboration in our shared ecumenical journey towards full communion. The method includes elaborating the fundamental truths with a common understanding but not by omitting confessional accents.

This use of “differentiated consensus” in *Communion in Growth* is a further example in Lutheran-Catholic dialogue of the validity and acceptance of the methodology and concept. It offers evidence that ecumenical reception between Catholics and Lutherans will be possible by means of differentiated consensus, by unity in reconciled diversity.¹³ However, this famous ecumenical method has its own limit. Is there a differentiated consensus on *ministerial structure* and which differences should be accepted without threatening its common view? “Which differences in the structure of ministry could we accept without threatening the differentiated common view of the ordained ministry?” (JLC 312) It is true that unity is not uniformity, but the tension should not be missed between the rejection of strict *uniformity* as a condition for unity and the necessary quest for *forms of unity*. The Leuven University professor, Pieter De Witte, criticizes the method of the differentiated consensus applied to the mutual recognition of ministries, namely a quick move from the “differentiated consensus in doctrine” to the

¹¹ W. Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 154-155.

¹² In fact, the intention “to do what the Church does” (regarding Eucharist, Orders, sacrificial nature of the priesthood), not just imposing hands, is necessary to ensure apostolic succession. Cf. Leo XIII, Apostolic Letter *Apostolicae curae et caritatis* (13.9.1896), in DH 3315-3319.

¹³ Cf. W.G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity* (G. Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 61.

“differentiated participation in the same ministry” without clarifying their connection first, in the perspective of the principle of “non-uniformity.”¹⁴ He writes:

“As long as the new view on consensus remains focused on the negative side (‘unity is not uniformity’), a discernment of which structures of unity are necessary is almost impossible. The concept of non-uniformity is itself too vague to say anything about such structures. The statement that there is non-uniformity between x and y can literally mean *any* relationship between them, except for their strict ‘formal’ identity. Moreover, the guiding principle of ‘non-uniformity’ may foster an attitude of suspicion towards endeavors to determine the necessary visible features of, for instance, ministry in the Church, because any such attempt can always be seen as the ‘totalitarian’ imposition of uniform rules. Therefore, the claim of a differentiated participation in the same ministry requires a positive criteriology concerning the concrete shape of Christian ministries. This is in fact strictly analogous to a feature of the differentiated consensus that has remained somewhat underdeveloped in ecumenical theorizing, namely the fact that even such a consensus presupposes some *degree* of uniformity (e.g. in the form of the common paragraphs in the JDDJ). The transition from differentiated consensus to differentiated participation only makes the need to overcome a one-sided rhetoric of non-uniformity more urgent.”¹⁵

Communion in Growth seems to move beyond the “differentiated consensus” of the JDDJ as it aims at some form of “differentiated participation” of Catholic and Lutheran ministers in the same apostolic ministry, because it raises this following question: “As with the Anglican-Lutheran Porvoo Communion of Churches, might one way of building a bridge towards mutually recognized ordained ministry be that a Catholic bishop would participate in the laying on of hands at the ordination of Lutheran bishops as a sign of the unity and continuity of the Church?” (CiG 293) In the conclusion of the report there is also a following recommendation: “Although there are remaining issues to be discussed, we may be hopeful that eventually the Eucharist and ministry of the member Churches of the Lutheran communion can be recognised by the Catholic Church, and that Lutherans can likewise recognise the Eucharist and ministry of the Catholic Church.” (CiG 363) This suggestion is very encouraging, but we cannot ignore the challenges of women’s ordination and the Petrine primacy.

The fact, that these topics, namely the foundation and the shape of the Church, the foundation and the form of ecclesial office, remain unaddressed in the dialogue, may hinder the very attempt to determine the content of the proposed “differentiated participation.” If “differentiated participation” implies a more embodied kind of unity than “mutual recognition,” then the question has to be addressed as to which embodiment is needed in order for the Churches to be one in their ministries. Therefore, according to both Cardinal Walter Kasper¹⁶

¹⁴ P. de Witte, “The Apostolicity of the Church’ in Light of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Consensus on Justification,” in *Ecclesiology* 7 (2011) 317-335, at 322.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, at 322-323, italics original.

¹⁶ Cf. W. Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 155-56, note 21. He refers to the German document, which treats of this question more extensively: T. Schneider, D. Sattler & G. Wenz (eds.), *Das kirchliche Amt in apostolischer Nachfolge*, 3 vols., Dialog der Kirchen 12-14 (Freiburg: Herder / Göttingen: V&R, 2004, 2006, 2008).

and the Lutheran ecumenist Theodor Dieter,¹⁷ the far-reaching concept of “differentiated consensus,” now applied to ministry, still requires further elaboration, careful study of respective problems and the capacity for judgment.

2.3. Interrelationships of Church, Eucharist and Ministry

The specific historical situation in the Nordic countries provides a fruitful but also challenging background to its work. Even though there has been some special historical closeness and theological parallelism between the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the dialogue in the end did not go further into detail, but limited its task to give only a contribution to the international discussion regarding a joint declaration on the Church, Eucharist, and Ministry. However, it should be remembered that, behind these three themes, the Catholic view intimately links ecclesial apostolicity, apostolic tradition, succession, communion, and sacrament together. The sacramental aspect cannot be ignored, while at the same time it should not be considered as the only relevant dimension. (CiG 285)

Actually, Church, Eucharist, and ministry are not items on a list of characteristics considered as extrinsically related to each other. Instead, they mutually influence one another. Therefore, we must first agree about what the Church is, and what Church unity or ecclesial communion requires, before reaching a satisfactory solution in the recognition of each other’s Eucharist and ministries. (CiG 286) The unity of the Church reaches its highest expression in the Eucharist. This communion is also necessarily based on the unity of the episcopate. Therefore, every celebration of the Eucharist is performed in union not only with the proper bishop, but also with the pope, with the episcopal order, with all the clergy, and with the entire people of God. (Cf. CN 14, CiG 274, note 323) Accordingly, the Petrine service reaches all the local Churches and all the faithful directly and immediately.

As we know, all the ecclesiological themes are connected to each other (the *nexus mysteriorum*). On one hand, the right understanding of the Eucharist-ministry relationship helps us to better understand the relationship between God’s salvific action and the mediation of the Church. On the other hand, the right perception of the nature of the Church illumines this relationship. The issue of the apostolicity of the Church and apostolic succession remains however a key one, for it ultimately goes back to the divine plan of redemption. Not only does it shed light on the whole, but it also brings to the deposit of faith a unifying clarity for understanding the Revelation of Christ, Church, and salvation.

It is clear that important work remains to be done. The report itself mentions these issues for further study: “the relationship between the universal and local Church in particular needs more

¹⁷ T. Dieter, “The Lutheran/Roman-Catholic Dialogue Achievements and Challenges,” in *Louvain Studies* 33 (2008) 74-86, at 76-77.

concrete explication in future discussions, although there is an agreement on the necessity of the interplay between the local, regional, and universal levels in the Church as an expression of her catholicity.” (CiG 294) “In this respect questions of varying importance still need further clarification. These include the minor sacraments (*sacramenta minora*), the relationship of the word of God as expressed in Holy Scripture to the Church’s doctrinal teaching, the ordination of women, moral discernment, joint ordination and ministry in practice, and canonical questions.” (CiG 366)

2.4. Teaching office and authority

All these issues relate to the authoritative teaching in the Church. How can we overcome the differences with regard to the exercise of authority in the Church? Catholics and Lutherans diverge in their views of where the authority to speak for the whole Church in matters of faith lies, and on how that authority should be shared between the different institutions of the Church (cf. JLC 170). Among Lutherans there are various views and opinions on the teaching office and authority (cf. ApC 287). So, in the end, with whom the Catholic Church makes a dialogue? With a single or united Lutheran Churches, or with some individual Lutheran theologians? In all dialogue documents, the authority of magisterial statements is taken as determinative from the Catholic standpoint. Inversely, the exercise of the magisterial office in the Lutheran tradition is not as cut-and-dried (cf. GC 11; CJ 210f).

Therefore, the future challenges regard the discussions about teaching that remains in the truth, which include issues of doctrinal development, Scripture and Tradition, Magisterium and *sensus fidelium*, conciliar decision-making and papal infallibility, ethical and anthropological questions. The social and ethical ecumenism will always need the theological and spiritual ecumenism in order to maintain a Christian identity.¹⁸

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, *Communion in Growth* presents a Finnish Lutheran-Catholic differentiated consensus on the basic truths of the faith regarding the Church, Eucharist, and ministry within the context of sacramental communion ecclesiology. We can say that we are on the path towards growing communion. The report itself is not yet the joint declaration, even though the word declaration is mentioned in the document’s subtitle. Nevertheless, we hope that the “reformed” method and the results can further encourage the future work of the Catholic-Lutheran Unity Commission towards the Joint Declaration on the Church, Eucharist, and Ministry. The drafting of this future joint declaration really gives us a precious possibility to go back to the sources of

¹⁸ Cf. K. Koch, “Progress in the Ecumenical Journey: The State of Ecumenism Today,” in *Information Service* 135 (2010/III-IV) 74-87, at 86.

both traditions, to deepen our common apostolic faith, to discover an “ecclesial” Luther,¹⁹ to retrieve the entire tradition of the Church, of which 1500 years are shared by Catholics and Lutherans alike, to rediscover again the things that unite us. “The things that unite us are greater than those that divide us.” The challenge of formulating the joint declaration will be also an important step on the way towards full, visible unity between Catholics and Lutherans.

¹⁹ Not in the sense of the “authentic” or hidden Luther, but in the sense of an ecclesial sifting and sorting of his doctrines, a highlighting of some, a refocussing of others. Cf. P. O’Callaghan, “The Mediation of Justification and the Justification of Mediation,” in *Annales Theologici* 10 (1996) 147-211, at 155.