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EUCARISTIC CONSECRATION IN THE ANAPHORA OF ADDAI AND MARI

Last year we celebrated the centenary of the historical document between Chaldean Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East entitled “Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East”¹. The scope of this document is to make a provision, in situations of pastoral necessity, for intercommunion between the Chaldean Catholic Church, and the Assyrian Church of the East. This “most remarkable Catholic magisterial document since Vatican II”² has drawn much attention of both the liturgical and ecumenical scholars since it stands as a milestone in the field of liturgy and ecumenism. The document has been received with great interest in different places, since it acknowledges the sacramental validity of the Anaphora of the Addai and Mari which is the principal Eucharistic prayer of the East, even when it is used without a recitation of the institution narrative. The purpose of this article is to make a documental study on the validity of the anaphora of Addai and Mari, without institution narrative, in the light of this Vatican document.

1. Background of the Declaration

The twentieth century has produced a lot of studies, which effected wonderful progress in the ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic Church and the

¹ „L'Osservatore Romano” (26.10.2001), 7.

² R. TAFT, *Mass without Consecration? The Historic Agreement on the Eucharist between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East Promulgated 26 October 2001*, “Worship” 77 (2003) 483.

other East Syrian non-Catholic Churches. Pro Oriente, the Christological document of 1994 and the pastoral necessities caused the formation and declaration of the liturgical and ecumenical document of 2001.

A. Pro Oriente Foundation

In 1964, at about the same time as second Vatican Council published its decree on ecumenism, Pro Oriente was founded by Cardinal König in Vienna³. There were a series of ecumenical meetings and visits from Vienna to the leaders of the Oriental Churches. Even though there was a difference of opinion, as to whether to include the Assyrian Church of the East in the dialogues conducted by the Pro Oriente, it was later included. Qualified theologians from the Oriental Churches and the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church discussed the ecumenical goal and the existing difficulties to attain such a goal. The consultations of Pro Oriente foundation helped to regain an enormous amount of common good, especially in the field of inter-communion between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church. The activities of Pro Oriente have created a new awareness of true Christian fellowship and mutual confidence from which we may draw hope for a future of complete communion in our sister Churches⁴.

B. Christological Document

In order to understand the Roman document of 2001 more deeply, we have to know the Christological document named “Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East” signed on November 11, 1994 by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch of the Church of the East, Mar Dinkha IV⁵. The two heads of the Churches declared that “conscious of professing one common faith in the mystery of the Incarnation” and of having the same sacraments, the signatories, in the name of their respective Churches, were committed to do everything possible “to remove the last obstacles that still prevent the realization of full communion”⁶.

³ A. STIRNEMANN, *Die Wiener Ökumenischen Konsultationen zwischen Theologen der altorientalischen Kirchen und der römisch katholischen Kirche: Zielsetzung und Ergebnisse*, in: R. KIRCHSCHLAEGGER, A. STIRNEMANN (eds.), *Chalzedon und die Folgen*, Wien 1992, 383; F. KÖNIG, *The prospects of Ecumenism* „Christian Orient” 20 (1999), 185–188.

⁴ Cf. G. CHEDIATH, *Pro Oriente Syriac Commission and Ecumenical Dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East*, „Christian Orient” 18 (1997), 175–184.

⁵ PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY, “Information Service” 88 (1995) 1, 2–3.

⁶ AAS 87 (1995), 685–687.

In the end, they decided to establish a Joint Committee for theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. Mar Dinkha IV and Mar Raphael I Bidawid, Patriarch of the Chaldean Church, approved the initiatives of each church to establish an ecclesial unity between their particular churches. On 29th November 1996 a “Joint Synodal Decree for Promoting Unity” was ratified by Mar Dinkha IV and Raphael I Bidawid. The decree also restated the areas of pastoral cooperation envisaged in the Joint Patriarchal statement, recognizing that Assyrians and Chaldeans should come to accept each other’s diverse practices as legitimate. It also paved the way for the process of ecumenical dialogue between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East.

C. Pastoral Necessities

Since the Persian Church existed outside the Roman Empire, it became commonly called the Church of the East. In 1552, a part of the Church of the East entered into full communion with the Apostolic See of Rome. Since then, the particular church in full communion with Rome has usually been called the “Chaldean Church”, while the other church took the name of “Assyrian Church of the East”. Both Churches, however still share the same theological, liturgical and spiritual tradition.

But today both of them face many pastoral problems since many faithful of their churches could not have sufficient opportunities to receive sacraments from their own priests. This is because a huge number of Chaldean Catholics and Assyrians live in Diasporas and in extra territory. Due to social and political reasons, they have left their own country (Iraq, Iran, and Turkey) and migrated to Western Europe, Australia, and North America. Only a very few of them remain in their home land. In this crucial situation, both the Churches have pastoral necessities, as many faithful of their churches are not able to receive the sacraments from their own Church ministers.

2. The Validity of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari without Institution Narrative

The problem before the Catholic Church is the question of the validity of the Eucharist which is celebrated with the anaphora of Addai and Mari. Since Catholic Church holds the importance of words of institution in the eucharistic consecration, how can she authorize her faithful to receive Holy Communion at a liturgy lacking the institution words? In order to resolve such a crucial problem, the Supreme Magisterium of the Church issued a document which deals

with the questions of the apostolicity and antiquity of the anaphora of Addai and Mari. The document points out three major arguments in order to approve the anaphora of Addai and Mari.

A. Arguments for the approval

Even if the Catholic Church considers the words of institution as indispensable and integral part of every eucharistic celebration, it approves the validity of the anaphora of Addai and Mari. This oriental gem can be considered valid', on the basis of following arguments.

a. Antiquity

The Anaphora of Addai and Mari is one of the most ancient anaphorae, dating back to the time of the very early Church. It was composed and used with the clear intention of celebrating the Eucharist in full continuity with the Last Supper and according to the intention of the Church. The absence of a coherent institution narrative represents, indeed, an exception in comparison with the Byzantine and the Roman traditions, as developed in the 4th and 5th century. This exception, however, may be due to its very early origin and to the later isolation of the Assyrian Church of the East.

In the conscience of faith, the Assyrian Church of the East was always convinced to celebrate the Eucharist validly and so to perform in its fullness what Jesus Christ asked his disciples to do. She expressed this conscience of faith, whether using the anaphora of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the anaphora of Nestorius or the anaphora of Addai and Mari, independent from the fact that only the first two anaphorae, of later origin, contain the institution narrative⁷. It should be added that, before the period of the Catholic Patriarchate under Patriarch Sulaka (1551–1662), no document exists to prove that the Church of Rome insisted on the insertion of an institution narrative into the Anaphora of Addai and Mari. Moreover, the validity of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, in fact, was never officially contested neither by East nor West.

⁷ The Assyrian church of the East knows very well the anaphoric function of the *institution narrative* since it possesses the *institution narrative* in the other two anaphorae, that is to say the anaphorae of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius. Nevertheless this Church has always been eager to respect the original configuration of the anaphora of Addai and Mari because of its venerable antiquity.

b. The ancient tradition of the Assyrian Church

Secondly, the Catholic Church recognizes the Assyrian Church of the East as a true particular Church, built upon orthodox faith and apostolic succession. The Assyrian Church of the East has also preserved full Eucharistic faith in the presence of our Lord under the species of bread and wine and in the sacrificial character of the Eucharist.

The Assyrian Church of the East also practices the so called sacrament or mystery of Holy Leaven. From time immemorial, the Assyrian tradition relates that from the bread Jesus took in his hands, which He blessed, broke and gave to his disciples, He gave two pieces to St. John. Jesus asked St. John to eat one piece and to carefully keep the other one. After Jesus' death, St. John dipped that piece of bread into the blood that proceeded from Jesus' side. Hence the name of "Holy Leaven", given to this consecrated bread, dipped into the blood of Jesus. Until this day, Holy Leaven has been kept and renewed annually in the Assyrian Church of the East. The local bishop renews it every year on Holy Thursday, mixing a remainder of the old Leaven within the new one. This is distributed to all parishes of his diocese, to be used during the whole year. No priest is allowed to celebrate Eucharist without Holy Leaven. This tradition of the sacrament or mystery of Holy Leaven, which precedes the actual Eucharistic celebration, is certainly to be seen as a visible sign of historic and symbolic continuity between the present Eucharistic celebration and the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus.

c. The immanent presence of the Institution Narrative

Finally, the words of Eucharistic institution are indeed present in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, not in a coherent narrative way and *ad litteram*, but rather in a dispersed euchological way, that is, integrated in successive prayers of thanksgiving, praise and intercession⁸. All these elements constitute a "quasi-narrative" of the Eucharistic Institution. In the central part of the Anaphora, together with the Epiclesis, two explicit references are made to the Eucharistic body and blood of Jesus Christ. In the first one, we commemorate the offering of Jesus as taught which reads as follows: "My lord, in your abundant and inef-fable mercies, make a good and acceptable memorial of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, of all the just and righteous fathers who have found great favour in your presence in the commemoration of the Body and Blood of your Christ which we offer you the pure and holy altar as you have taught us"⁹.

⁸ „L'Osservatore Romano" (26.10.2001), 7.

In the second instance, we commemorate the life-giving mystery of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. Here we remember the Lord's command to celebrate the Eucharist in memory of Him. It is as follows: "And we also, My Lord, your weak, frail and miserable servants, who are gathered together in your name, and who stand before you at this time and have received by tradition, the example which is from you, rejoicing and glorifying, and commemorating and celebrating this awesome, holy, vivifying and divine mystery of the passion, the death, and burial and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"¹⁰.

So the words of the institution are not absent in the anaphora of Addai and Mari, but explicitly mentioned in a dispersed way, from the beginning to the end, in the most important passages of the anaphora. It is also clear that the passages cited above express the full conviction of commemorating the Lord's paschal mystery, in the strong sense of making it present; that is, the intention to carry out in practice precisely what Christ established by his words and actions in instituting the Eucharist.

3. The Process

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity took the initial steps to formulate such an important document. The task implied a review of the existing sacramental theology of the Eucharistic consecration. A preparatory document dated 23 May 1998, entitled "Pastoral Disposition for the Eucharistic Hospitality between the Assyrian Church and the Catholic Church", was prepared, proposing that the Catholic Church recognizes the validity of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari and giving the reasons for it. This extra-ordinarily document was circulated among the Catholic experts accompanied by a letter of 28 May 1998, signed by the then Prefect, His Eminence Achille Cardinal Silvestrini, and Sub secretary Msgr Claudio Guerrotti.

A long and careful study was undertaken of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, from a theological, liturgical and historical perspective by the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith. The arguments proving the validity of the anaphora of Addai and Mari, being elaborated and examined jointly by three dicasteries of the Holy See, have received the approval of Pope John Paul II¹¹. Then the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has published the document entitled "The Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist between

⁹ *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza*, Trivendrum 1986 (rev. 1989), 44: K.A. PAUK, G. MOOKEN, *The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari Together with the Liturgies of Mar Theodorus and Mar Nestorius and the Order of Baptism*, K. A. PAUK, G. MOOKEN, trans., Trichur 1967, 38.

¹⁰ *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana* 44–45: K.A. PAUK, G. MOOKEN, *Liturgy of the Apostles*, 39.

¹¹ „L'Osservatore Romano" (26.10.2001), 7.

the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East". The document was promulgated on 26 October 2001, but bears the date of its approval, 20 July 2001.

The document discussed the pastoral and ecumenical context, as well as what it calls the dogmatic question concerning the validity of Addai and Mari, a question, the document reveals, that in three letters from 1994–1997, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith had repeatedly insisted needed further investigation. The document takes a forthright and courageous stand in favour of recognizing the validity of Addai and Mari, arguing, *inter alia*, from the apostolicity of East Syrian tradition and from Addai and Mari itself, placing its lack of institution narrative in the context of the history of the Eucharistic prayer, as well as in relation to the Assyrian Eucharistic tradition concerning the institution narrative as reflected in the other two East-Syrian anaphorae, which do have the institution narrative. The promulgation of the document is an answer to the pastoral problems existing in the Chaldean Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East.

4. The Entire Eucharistic Prayer as Consecratory Formula

The Eucharistic consecration cannot be limited to a particular moment or to an isolated formula. A broader vision of Eucharistic consecration can be traced in the Catechism of the Catholic Church when it refers to the anaphora: "with the Eucharistic prayer – the prayer of thanksgiving and consecration – we come to the heart and summit of the celebration"¹². The main stream of the Vatican document has moved towards the view that the whole prayer of the anaphora of Addai and Mari is consecratory. The present document states that the words of institution are indeed present in the anaphora of Addai and Mari, not in a coherent narrative way and *ad litteram*, but rather in a dispersed eucharological way, that is, integrated in successive prayers of thanksgiving, praise and intercession.¹³ The view that the prayer of the consecration is the entire core of the anaphora, not just some segment of it set apart as an isolated 'formula', is more faithful to the earlier common tradition of the undivided church.

5. Pastoral Perspectives

The purpose of the agreement between Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East is basically pastoral. The aim of the document is to ensure

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1352.

¹³ „L'Osservatore Romano" (26.10.2001), 7; F. PITTAPPILLIL, *The Celebration of the Holy Mysteries*, Kottayam 2011, 231.

that the faithful of two sister Churches that spring from the same ancient apostolic tradition not be deprived of the Bread of Life through the unavailability of a minister of their own church.¹⁴ So the Catholic Church provides special regulations for situations of pastoral necessity, such as those the Assyrian Church of the East and the Chaldean church face today. The document highlights the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches:

If necessity requires it or genuine spiritual advantage suggests it and provided that the danger of error or indifferentism is avoided, it is permitted for Catholic Christian faithful, for whom it is physically or morally impossible to approach a Catholic minister, to receive the sacraments of penance, the Eucharist and the anointing of the sick from non-Catholic ministers, in whose Churches these sacraments are valid. [...] Likewise Catholic ministers licitly administer the sacraments of penance, the Eucharist and anointing of the sick to Christian faithful of Eastern Churches, who do not have full communion with the Catholic Church, if they ask for them on their own and are properly disposed¹⁵.

The role of Eastern Catholics is unique in the process of the eucharistic and ecumenical communion between East and West. The Decree on Catholic Eastern Churches clearly puts the practical application of ecumenism thus: “[...] the sacraments of penance, holy Eucharist, and the anointing of the sick may be conferred on Eastern Christians who in good faith are separated from the Catholic Church, if they make the request of their own accord and properly disposed. Indeed, it is also permitted for Catholics to ask for these same sacraments from those non-Catholic ministers in whose Church are valid sacraments, whenever necessity or real spiritual advantage suggest it and access to a catholic priest become physically or morally impossible”¹⁶.

The practical legislation of the pastoral applications of the norms is entrusted with the local ordinaries. They can decide the lenient ways of sharing in religious services, of course, with timely and effective rules and regulations. This provision of the Eastern Catholic Church Law and the Decree on Catholic Eastern Churches can be applied between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. When necessity requires, the Assyrian faithful are permitted to receive Holy Communion in a Chaldean celebration of the Holy Eucharist; in the same way, Chaldean faithful for whom it is physically or morally impossible to approach a Catholic minister, are permitted to receive Holy Communion in an

¹⁴ R. TAFT, *Mass Without Consecration? The Historic Agreement on the Eucharist between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East Promulgated 26 October 2001*, „Worship” 77 (2003), 483.

¹⁵ *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* 671, 2–3.

¹⁶ *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 27.

Assyrian celebration of the Holy Eucharist. In both cases, Assyrian and Chaldean ministers should celebrate the Eucharist according to the liturgical prescriptions and customs of their own tradition, especially regarding the use of the anaphora¹⁷.

Considering the above situation, it is allowed to receive the sacrament of Eucharist, in case of necessity, from another church. It is in this context that the *Orientations* of 2001 are inserted. It was treated, in fact, to concede to the Christians, either Chaldeans (Catholics) or Assyrians (non-Catholics), to receive the Eucharist in a church and from a minister of a sister Church, when, on account of the circumstances related to the Diaspora, they are not able to receive it from a minister of the proper community. Thus, this document opens a wide horizon at the level of the pastoral collaboration between these two churches.

6. Ecumenism as One of the Prior Concerns of the Church

The church has the obligation to give witness to what Christ taught and preached and the unity of his followers is a focal point (Jn 17,21). In the beginning of the new century ecumenism became one of the prior concerns of the Catholic Church. The ecumenical dialogue between the Churches helps to achieve full communion. The relationship between the Catholic Church and various other churches has radically changed ever since the II Vatican Council. Since then, many ecumenical dialogues, and conferences have been held between the Catholic Church and other orthodox churches, especially with the Assyrian Church of the East.

A. Unity without losing Identity

All post-conciliar documents of the Magisterium concerning liturgy have a thrust for ecumenical unity without losing the identity of the Church. Unity in the Church is not the fruit of ecumenical dialogue. It is “not something which has to be achieved ecumenically”.¹⁸ The unity is the work of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (LG 4). The Catholic Church is always vigilant to maintain the unity with all other churches especially with the churches those who have valid sacraments. The Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church are aware of the need for unity at the same time keeping their ecclesiastical identity. The document appreciates the richness and antiquity of the traditions of the Church of the East. Just as the Chaldean Catholic Church wants to

¹⁷ *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* 674, 2.

¹⁸ W. KASPER, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity Today*, London 2004, 51.

have the preservation of her full communion with the Roman See, the Assyrian Church of the East wants to maintain her freedom and self-governance. The goal of the document is the fullness of unity of the churches, without losing their identity, which can be attained gradually.

B. Ecumenical Efforts

The existence of the anaphorae without institution narrative or without any reference to the institution narrative like that of Addai and Mari should make a paradigm shift in the traditional Western concept of the Holy Mass. Some time ago the Church of the East decided to print the anaphora of the Apostles in her *Taksa* with the institution narrative inserted on a page without number, and the priests indeed use this text in order to prevent all doubts on the validity of their Eucharist¹⁹. It was an ecumenical effort from the side of the Eastern Church. In this context we can affirm that ecumenical dialogue seeks not confrontation but agreement and understanding between each other. It strives to enter into the other's point of view, to understand it insofar as possible with sympathy and agreement.

Finally the 2001 Vatican document between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church is the most important decree since Vatican II for it is an important milestone in ecumenical dialogue, especially in the post Vatican II era. It is the fruit of joint ecumenical efforts between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian church of the East. The document contains many concrete ecumenical spiritual implications and expectations of both Churches. The Catholic Church recognises the Assyrian Church of the East as a true particular Church, built upon orthodox faith and apostolic succession.

7. A Critical approach to the Document

There is much criticism against the publication of the 2001 document from various scholars. The reasons which motivated the publication of the document are of historical and non-theological nature. The consequences of this decision are very weighty for they completely overthrow the sacramental theology ratified by the Council of Trent according to which three elements are necessary for the validity of a sacrament: the matter, the form, and the intention of the priest to do what the Church intends. But in the anaphora of AM, the form (the words of consecration) is lacking. The document defends it by asserting that "the words of the institution of the Eucharist are in fact present in the anaphora

¹⁹ Cf. P. HOFRICHTER, *The Anaphora of Addai and Mari in the Church of the East – Eucharist without Institution Narrative?*, *Pro Oriente Syriac Dialogue* I, Vienna 1994, 190–191.

of Addai and Mari, not in the form of a coherent narration and in a literal way but in a eucological and disseminated manner, that is to say they are integrated in the prayers of thanksgiving, praise and intercession which follow". In so far as one calls forth historical arguments, as the Roman document does, one wonders how one can explain the absence of the words of consecration in this anaphora. The origin of it is very probably in the secret of the hidden mystery, this law of secrecy which in the first centuries of the Church, required keeping the sacred realities hidden from profane eyes. Before the schism of the Eastern Assyrian Church, these words were actually pronounced, even if they were not written; after the schism it ceased to be done. However, it would seem that there are other reasons. Certain modernists do not deny themselves the use of this precedent in view of radical modifications concerning theology and the action of the sacraments, wishing thus to make an end of medieval theology and its miracle – working words.

8. Conclusion

In this article, we have discussed the 2001 document which is a landmark in the field of ecumenism, liturgy and pastoral theology. It is a bold and progressive step in the ecumenical dialogue between the Assyrian Church and the Catholic Church especially in the post- Vatican era. With this document many doubts and questions in relation to the anaphora of Addai and Mari are clarified. It affirms the antiquity of the anaphora of Addai and Mari and the validity of the Assyrian liturgy using the above anaphora. Since the approval of this document there is a growing thrust for the unity between these churches. It is a clear example of the collaboration between the churches in the realm of liturgy too. By affirming the validity of the anaphora of Addai and Mari, the Catholic Church is going back to its earlier concept of Eucharistic consecration, namely the understanding of the whole anaphora as consecratory which view is more comprehensive and integral.

Eucharystyczna konsekracja w anaforze Addaja i Mariego

Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule autor podkreśla znaczenie dokumentu opublikowanego w Watykanie w 2001 roku, dotyczącego komunii eucharystycznej między

członkami Kościoła chaldejskiego i Asyryjskiego Kościoła Wschodu. Ów dokument wskazuje trzy główne argumenty, przemawiające za ważnością anafory Addaja i Mariego. Są to: antyczne pochodzenie, immanentna obecność narracji ustanowienia Eucharystii oraz starożytna tradycja Asyryjskiego Kościoła Wschodu. To właśnie potwierdza sakramentalną ważność anafory Addaja i Mariego, która jest główną modlitwą eucharystyczną we wschodnich liturgiach syryjskich, nawet wówczas, gdy nie są wypowiedziane w niej słowa ustanowienia. Autor konkluduje artykuł krytyczną oceną dokumentu.

Mateusz Potoczny