

## JOHN PAUL II'S *UT UNUM SINT* AND CONVERSATION WITH WOMEN

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*[John Paul II's encyclical Ut unum sint continues conversation with the separated churches initiated at Vatican II. At the council the Catholic Church moved away from identifying other churches in terms of their disobedience and defined them instead in terms of their full Christian mission. The author here suggests our using this kind of change of attitude or "conversion" in conversing with Catholic women. Accordingly women would be addressed not in terms of their capacity to obey but in terms of their capacity to participate fully in Christian discipleship.]*

THE CHARACTER EMILY in Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town*, on her brief visit among the living after her death, is heard to say, "Oh, Mama, just look at me one minute as though you really saw me." She is a model of conversion after which a different kind of "seeing" is possible. Likewise, in the case of a recovering alcoholic at a party who looks on as an intoxicated associate is ignored by her companions and then later says to her, "You are not invisible to me," we have another illustration of how one acts after conversion. Both examples show that conversion is not just a movement toward another way of being but also a movement away from an old way of being. Elizabeth Johnson characterizes conversion as a two-part dynamic process which involves contrast and confirmation.<sup>1</sup> Emily, the recovering alcoholic, and Johnson all invite the question this article addresses: How does an already converted Catholic woman who experiences herself as an *imago Dei* and an *imago Christi* deal with official statements from the Vatican to the contrary? One way to ponder this question is by looking at another conversion, one that recently occurred inside the Vatican in the encyclical *Ut unum sint*.

### TOWARD CONVERSION

Pope John Paul II in that document uses Peter as a model of conversion to address separated Christians. He grounds his discussion in the salvation

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1994) 62–65.

of Christians in Jesus Christ's humanity. He attempts to solve the problem of alienation by showing how it interferes with the work of salvation. In so doing, John Paul II locates the discussion in the *imago Dei* and the *imago Christi*. I wish to show that the shape of this argument could, if applied to Catholic women, yield the same saving consequences that it so magnificently does when applied to non-Catholic churches. If the pope were to approach his discussion of women in these ways, he would be making use of one of the great modern success stories of the Church and also solving at the same time one of its destructive pathologies that deserves conversion. It is far more than a mere structural difficulty in the institution. The Second Vatican Council was right when it argued that some alienations deny the salvation that the Church proclaims. Now that the bishops of the Church have clearly affirmed the presence of salvation in Christian communities outside of itself, and hence reduced or eliminated this denial in that arena, it is time to complete the same task in dealing with its own women members.

One of the ways we come to conversion is by noticing inconsistency. Recognizing a lack of coherence is often the first step toward change. Authority figures in particular ought not to be inconsistent lest they lose their power to guide. If this is the case with secular authorities, it is all the more so in the Church which seeks to guide humanity in its activities for the sake of the historic mission of Jesus Christ. The leadership in the Church has treated two alienated groups inconsistently: the separated Christian churches and the women members of the Catholic Church. In different ways and at different times in its history, the Church has said to these two groups, "you fall short." In both cases, the stance has had a problematic character. During Vatican II, the Council Fathers confronted the alienated situation of the Christian churches in an attempt to heal disunity. While further progress still needs to be made, the leadership in the Church can claim success in its handling of this situation. This is not so, however, with women's position in the Church. And this alienation is tragic because it militates against the productive involvement of women in the Church. In this article I inspect the success of the Church's efforts to heal disunity that began in Vatican II. I wish to show that the same principles ought to be applied to its conversations with women. If this is done, perhaps it will mark a movement that will allow women to be treated as though the whole Church "really saw" them.

### **Principles of Conversion**

I approach this task in four stages. First, I discuss the vision of *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Lumen gentium* in order to describe the model that the council used to frame its stance toward the Christian churches. I also

include a discussion of how that model has changed.<sup>2</sup> Second, I outline and discuss the principles of *Unitatis redintegratio*. My third step is to use John Paul II's Letter to Women<sup>3</sup> to illustrate the different models that are used in conversations with women on the one hand and with non-Catholics on the other. This is where the heart of the inconsistency resides. Finally, I discuss how the recent encyclical *Ut unum sint* broadens and expands the vision of *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Lumen gentium*. It is my claim that the papal office has shown itself more compassionate and open to dialogue with the separated churches than with its own women members. Since the Catholic Church has a success story with the ecumenical movement, it is useful to apply the principles of that success to a new conversation with women.

In his allocution of November 21, 1964, the day *Lumen gentium* and *Unitatis redintegratio* were promulgated, Pope Paul VI spoke directly to the separated Christian observers when he pointed out that *Lumen gentium* was to be interpreted in light of *Unitatis redintegratio*. The ecclesiology in both documents is mutually clarifying. The Decree on Ecumenism took a stance toward the separated churches that was a departure from the one taken by the Church prior to the council. The 1962 schema presented by the Theological Commission contained the following description of the Church which articulated that prior stance: "The Roman Catholic Church is the Mystical Body of Christ . . . and only the one that is Roman Catholic has the right to be called Church."<sup>4</sup> This stance revealed an inconsistency from the point of view of the other churches. The Catholic Church claimed to be the Church of Christ, the society that embodies the life and work of Christ present. These other churches certainly saw themselves, in spirit and in institution, as doing the work of Christ. The Catholic Church did not recognize the embodiment of Christ in the separated churches, demanding

<sup>2</sup> I presuppose an analysis of the history of how Vatican II rejected what I will call an obediential model. Pope John XXIII was explicit that Vatican II was to be a pastoral council and Pope Paul VI re-affirmed that vision in his speech opening the third session. However, this history is somewhat complex; some opposed this newer vision. See, the article by Richard P. McBrien, in Adrian Hastings, ed., *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After* (New York: Oxford University, 1991) 84-95; Xavier Rynne, *The Third Session: The Debates and Decrees of Vatican Council II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965) 17; Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962) passim. See also Langdon Gilkey, *Catholicism Confronts Modernity* (New York: Seabury, 1975) especially 1-60.

<sup>3</sup> The Letter to Women was dated June 22, 1995, and released on July 10, 1995. The text can be found in *Origins* 25 (July 27, 1995) 51-72.

<sup>4</sup> Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., "The Significance of the Vatican II Declaration that the Church of Christ 'Subsists in' the Roman Catholic Church," in René Latourelle, ed., *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives* (New York: Paulist, 1988) 2.273.

instead obedience to itself. Should they choose to obey and become members of the Catholic Church, then those churches could achieve the unity that the Church of Christ seemed to require. The Catholic Church's claim to be doing the work of Christ and yet excluding the similar self-characterization by the separated churches obscured the message of Jesus Christ's historic mission: that in Christian life, love precedes obedience. This obediencial stance reflected in the early schema was rejected by the Council Fathers and a new model was used instead.<sup>5</sup>

In both *Lumen gentium* and *Unitatis redintegratio*, the council recognized that the obediencial model was potentially harmful for the Church *ad extra* because it called into question the Church's credibility as a representative of Christ, and threatened the mission of the Church. The following passage from *Unitatis redintegratio* not only rejected the stance of the schema but directly addressed the heart of the problem, the disunity between people who all confess Christ as Lord. This disunity "contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature."<sup>6</sup>

If a society's model is appropriate, it will be able to function over time as its context develops and changes. If a model is faulty, the situation will stagnate in the best of conditions and degenerate in the worst. The vision reflected in the statement from *Unitatis redintegratio* cited above made the success of the Catholic Church's involvement in the ecumenical movement possible. As long as the Church defined separated Christians in terms of their "errors" rather than in terms of their salvific characteristics, no progress could be made. The credibility of the Church would be damaged and harmed in concrete situations among these diverse Christians. The power of church authority to guide was diminished. Thomas Stransky describes *Unitatis redintegratio*'s shift this way: "The shift is from a former ecclesiology of self-sufficiency and the church model of 'return', to that of incompleteness and the need for one another in the one but still-divided household."<sup>7</sup>

The ecumenical movement has made so much progress that it is impossible to deny that this new "ecumenical model" has succeeded at least in addressing disunity and recognizing the separated churches as communities that proclaim Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church began to "see" the other churches. When John XXIII established the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in 1960, he began a process that continues today.<sup>8</sup> The concepts articulated and promulgated in *Lumen gentium* and *Unitatis red-*

<sup>5</sup> E. Johnson, *She Who Is* 62–65.

<sup>6</sup> *Unitatis redintegratio* no. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Stransky, "Decree on Ecumenism," in Nichols Lossky et al., ed., *The Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 264–65.

<sup>8</sup> Richard P. McBrien, "The Roman Catholic Church," in *ibid.* 876–82.

*integratio* mattered: there have been real changes because of this change in the model of discourse. In contrast, even now when the papal office speaks of women, people both inside and outside of the Church observe that apparently little has changed. The situation is seen to stagnate and grow serious.

What was the conceptual tool that allowed the new model used in *Lumen gentium* and *Unitatis redintegratio* to emerge? I would claim that it was the vision of conversion discussed in both documents. This conversion re-emphasized Christianity's belief that people share in the dynamic life of the Spirit. The text was grounded in a recognition that the Church of Christ is present in other communities and in a recognition that all churches are called upon to collaborate in the work of the kingdom that Christ proclaimed as its "initial budding forth." Conversion toward this emphasis upon Christ's message of salvation helped the new model to take shape. When the discourse was grounded in the mission of the Church to be the Church of Christ in service to the world, the model required that the separated churches be considered.

The question that emerges is: How do the separated churches disclose and reveal the Church of Christ? *Unitatis redintegratio* stated in Chapter 2 that Christ gave a unity to his Church that is seen in "a communion of faith, hope and love, whose principal cause is the Holy Spirit, [and] the Church is also intended to be visibly united in the profession of the same faith, the celebration of the same sacraments, in the fraternal concord of one people of God."<sup>9</sup> Here we see a specific instance of the council's emphasis upon the life in the Spirit. With this anchor, the model of discourse maintains its appropriateness. That *Lumen gentium* and *Unitatis redintegratio* discovered an appropriate model in the ecumenical context is seen in their results.<sup>10</sup> The choice to ground the discourse in a "communion of faith, hope and love" makes for an effective model. This understanding of the nature of the Church of Christ necessarily connects it to its mission. Paul VI referred to the mission of the Church as needing

to extend on earth the saving mission of Christ. The hour has sounded in history when the Church, which expresses herself in us and which from us receives structure and life, must say of herself what Christ intended and willed her to be, and what the age-long meditation of the Fathers, pontiffs and doctors in their wisdom has explored with piety and fidelity. The Church must give a definition of herself and bring out from her true consciousness the doctrine which the Holy Spirit teaches her.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> F. Sullivan, "The Significance of the Vatican II Declaration" 277.

<sup>10</sup> See esp. Thomas Stransky, "Decree on Ecumenism" 264-65.

<sup>11</sup> National Catholic Welfare Conference, Press Department, *Council Daybook: Session 3* (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965-66) 7.

### Principles for Healing Disunity

In order to “say of herself what Christ intended,” the council had to answer the question about the relationship between the separated churches and the Church of Christ that the Spirit enlivens. Having seen that *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Lumen gentium* framed a new model and grounded it in Christ’s mission to the world, we are ready now to look at the principles that *Unitatis redintegratio* uses to lay the foundation for healing disunity. While we look at the principles, we will also see the Church’s characterization of these groups and their members. This is important to note at this point, because I later suggest that the imaging of Jesus which all Christians need to attempt is one characterized by reciprocal relating and not by obedience. And since it is the imaging of Jesus which is one of the most problematic areas of the conversation with women, it is crucial to keep this in mind.

*Unitatis redintegratio* describes five ways to promote unity and overcome alienation.<sup>12</sup> Since each of these could be applied to the alienated situation of women, I note where the principles might or should be brought to bear.

The first principle is that we are called upon to make “every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult.” This principle is not consistently applied to women. As Joan Chittister points out, women have neither been able to define themselves nor been able to tell their stories.<sup>13</sup> Recent scholarship has demonstrated that women’s stories have been largely untold and even undocumented by comparison to men’s.<sup>14</sup> In the recent past, in fact, Archbishop Rembert Weakland’s “listening sessions” with women were viewed with some suspicion in certain quarters.

The second task in the process of healing disunity is to dialogue with competent experts from the separated communions. This too has been neglected in recent years by official characterization of many moderate women’s voices as expressing “radical feminism.” The intellectual integrity that *Unitatis redintegratio* calls for in these discussions has been sadly lacking in certain official statement of the Church about women.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> These five principles are discussed in *Unitatis redintegratio*, Chap. 1, Section 4.

<sup>13</sup> Joan Chittister, *WomenStrength: Modern Church, Modern Women* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1990) chap. 1; see also her *Job’s Daughters: Women and Power* (New York: Paulist, 1990) 1.

<sup>14</sup> Carol Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman’s Life* (New York: Ballantine, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> For a summary of this literature, see Susan A. Ross and Mary Catherine Hilkert, “Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature,” *Theological Studies* 56 (1995) 327–52.

The third principle of *Unitatis redintegratio* is a call to a ministry of intensive cooperation. Instead of this, as women's ministries have taken new shape in the recent decades, communities of religious women in particular have seen their ministry questioned and even halted by harassing investigations. These investigations are perceived to be characterized less by an inquiry into women's ministry and its effectiveness than by a wish to control women's activities.<sup>16</sup> The reluctance to recognize changes in the shape of women's ministry violates this third principle.

The fourth principle is a call for common prayer. Since the Eucharist is our highest form of prayer, this is perhaps the most often ignored of *Unitatis redintegratio's* principles, especially for American Catholic women. Women already exercise various forms of leadership in the life of the Church. Not recognizing their leadership in worship creates difficulty for many women. At present, leadership in the Church has had little to say to those women who lead people in catechesis, but who are not authorized to lead them in the sacramental celebration of their Christian discipleship. This is particularly problematic when these women are indeed preaching the Word and leading prayer in many other non-Eucharistic activities in the Church.<sup>17</sup> More needs to be said, for example, to the women in the resident halls of Catholic colleges and universities who plan all the liturgies, are the leaders in the formation of the community, but rely on a priest to come once a week for the Sunday Eucharist. More needs to be said too to women who are parish catechists leading in every step of Christian initiation but not in the sacramental celebration. These are two examples of the many ways that the women experience a restriction in terms of prayer and worship.

The fifth principle is articulated as an invitation to undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform. The failure to apply this principle to conversation with women is reflected in the continued use of the obediential model. Renewal and reform will occur only when a conversion away from this view of women takes place. The need for the application of this

<sup>16</sup> M. Kolbenschlag, ed., *Authority and Community in Conflict* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1986). For a concise discussion of women's concerns in light of Vatican II, see Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Place of Women in the Church," in Adrian Hastings, ed., *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After* 260-66.

<sup>17</sup> A recent report in the Catholic press tells of the halting of an eleven-year program of team ministry where women held equal authority in parish decisions. Thomas Reese was quoted as saying: "My impression is that in Hartford, the priests felt more comfortable with the old system, where they could be as collaborative as they wanted to be but still retain final authority." In response to the same situation, Sister Miriam Therese Winter who teaches at the interdenominational Hartford Seminary observed, "It's not ending because it has been a failure. It's ending because it has been a success" (*The Catholic Messenger* 53 [November 9, 1995] 6).

principle along with the other principles is especially seen in my discussion of the pope's recent Letter to Women.

### THE PAPAL LETTER TO WOMEN

John Paul II's Letter to Women of 1995, written before the Beijing conference, is built upon an anthropology that presumes a complementarity between men and women. However, complementarity, at least as it is construed in theological discussions of gender, can be highly problematic.<sup>18</sup> Both experience and the social sciences have taught us that women have been subordinated. One of the ways this has been done is by restricting women's activities by defining women's work in terms of distinctive roles that men and women play. Note the following passage from the Letter to Women:

Necessary emphasis should be placed on the 'genius of women,' not only by considering great and famous women of the past or present, but also those ordinary women who reveal the gift of their womanhood by placing themselves at the service of others in their everyday lives. For in giving themselves to others each day, women fulfill their deepest vocation. Perhaps more than men, women acknowledge the person, because they see persons with their hearts. They see them independently of various ideological or political systems. They see others in their greatness and limitations; they try to go out to them and help them.<sup>19</sup>

If one looks carefully at this statement, one will recognize what is dangerous about it: if women are, indeed, "better" fitted to function from the heart than men, all of society suffers. Regina Coll has insightfully articulated this insight from feminist studies:

The system of patriarchy demeans women, but we must not lose sight of the fact that it also demeans men. The effects of patriarchy may be compared to the effect that slavery had on both slaves and masters. Slave-holders did not suffer in so dramatic and demeaning a way as the slaves, but the system of slavery held them in a different kind of bondage, restricting their ability to grow as full human beings.<sup>20</sup>

The lack of unity between how men and women are human beings plays out in the Church in much the same way that Coll sees it playing out in society. The Church suffers as a result.

This anthropology taken over from social science contains difficulties and is theologically problematic as a description of women's (and hence

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is* chap. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Letter to Women no. 9, in *Origins* 25 (July 27, 1995) 137-43, at 143.

<sup>20</sup> Regina A. Coll, *Christianity and Feminism in Conversation* (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third, 1994) 78.



human) nature. The pope's Letter to Women reflects attitudes that were intended to be a response to the rationalism of the Enlightenment.<sup>21</sup> Work of the world and society became the arena for rational, nonspiritual work. The Church was "feminized" because it was viewed as a passive helper to those in authority. The theological discussion involved the official characterization of women as unable to act *in persona Christi*. This problem of "imaging Christ" is ironically present in the section just quoted. The description of women's work and their stance toward persons precisely conjures the image of the Jesus of the Gospels. The pope could just as easily be describing Jesus as he spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well or to any number of other sociopolitically rejected persons in the Gospels. And surely the pope would not want to claim that the Gospels teach us that women are better suited to be disciples of Jesus. A profound inconsistency is revealed in this anthropology. And, as is often the case when inconsistencies show up, the deeper issue is not difficult to detect.

### Obediential Model

This deeper issue is the model of obedience that grounds the letter's stance toward women. The pope repeatedly describes women to themselves in much the same way that the Catholic Church described the separated churches to themselves. Women are defined in terms of their capacity to obey. The Church's leadership argues that the alienation women express could be overcome if they simply recognize what it is they should be obedient about. It is stated that women cannot participate in the mission of Christ in the same way as men do because they cannot image him, but can only "obey" him. This is not just the case in relation to ordination. In many areas of church life, women appear to be defined primarily in terms of their obedience. When it comes to ordination in particular, if ordination is not possible for women, are they able to participate in all the benefits and responsibilities that come with baptism? Was not one of Jesus' clearest messages that obedience is insufficient for the faithful life? When obedience is the model, women's capacity to participate in the missionary work of the Church of Christ is impugned. Women's participation in the benefits of salvation is questioned by the anthropological stance of the Letter to Women. Complementarity too easily takes us where we do not want to go: to a definition of women as less than human, as incomplete.<sup>22</sup> Sister Luke

<sup>21</sup> Christine Gudorf, "Renewal or Repatriarchalization? Responses of the Roman Catholic Church to the Feminization of Religion," in Joann Wolski Conn and Walter E. Conn, ed., *Horizons on Catholic Feminist Thought* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1992) 61–84.

<sup>22</sup> Joan Chittister, *WomanStrength 2*; Chittister puts the question: "Are women really human beings or not?"

Tobin, who served as an auditor beginning at the second session of Vatican II, voiced this concern at the council to the Commission on the Church in the Modern World, noting that “what concerned women was that they be treated as the fully human persons that they are.”<sup>23</sup> Some ecclesial statements about women, like certain statements about separated churches before Vatican II, reflect an unconverted attitude not reconcilable with the ecclesiology of *Lumen gentium*. This is important to keep in mind because *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Ut unum sint* are both built upon that ecclesiology.

### Dialogue with *Ut unum sint*

By this brief look at the pope’s Letter to Women, I have suggested that the pope makes use of the same unhelpful model that before Vatican II obtained toward the separated churches. *Unitatis redintegratio* shifted from a model that desires the return of disobedient or erring churches to a model that seeks restoration of unity in the Christian life.<sup>24</sup> In his encyclical *Ut unum sint*, John Paul II broadens and develops the vision of *Unitatis redintegratio*. If one studies *Ut unum sint*, one will be better able to see how the principles of both documents could be creatively applied to the present disaffected situation of women. In the encyclical John Paul II, by building upon the model of *Unitatis redintegratio*, makes two gestures that I wish to highlight. The first gesture is his invitation to the separated churches to help him envision a renewed role for the Bishop of Rome where he discusses the Petrine ministry of mercy as a unifying ministry in the Church (nos. 88 through 96). He begins his discussion with Pope Gregory the Great’s description of the bishop of Rome’s ministry as *servus servorum Dei*. This characterization has added power because Paul VI used it to describe himself at the council and John Paul II repeatedly grounds his remarks in the council. John Paul II recognizes that such a role ought to contribute to Christian unity and to Christian service to the world. He then raises a question:

Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject [the role of the bishop of Rome], a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the

<sup>23</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, “The Place of Women in the Church” 261. Sister Luke Tobin recently stated that it was Rosemary Goldie who made this intervention (see the videocassette *Faithful Revolution: Vatican II*, cassette no. 2, executive producer, Sherry Revord, and producer and director, Mark Birnbaum, Lyrick Studios, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994) 674.

will of Christ for his church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea “that they all may be one . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21)?<sup>25</sup>

It is notable that here his appeal to Peter is not a call for obedience. Peter is authoritative as a paradigm of the saved and converted person, but not authoritarian as the head of the teaching Church.

While this invitation to greater dialogue is directed *ad extra* to separated Christians, it could and should, I am convinced, also function *ad intra* as applied to women. Indeed, if the pope were to ask women to help shape the role of the bishop of Rome, the nature of the conversation would change. To do so he would have to do what he does in the situation of the separated churches: recognize that the model used in the past was inappropriate. In this encyclical, the pope recalls his speech at Geneva on June 12, 1984, where he acknowledged that the role of the bishop of Rome has been an obstacle to Christian unity in the past and that it “constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians, whose memory is marked by certain painful recollections” (no. 3). He ended that speech by joining again with the voice of Paul VI and asking for forgiveness.<sup>26</sup> After recognizing sin in the situation of alienation, the pope carries forward the idea of conversion from sin in his discussion of Peter as a model of how to overcome today’s alienation. He seeks to use Peter to clarify and develop the unifying role of the pope among Christians. Because our union with Peter is a unity in conversion and repentance, the dynamics appealed to are not juridical dynamics. This move could prove very useful for the situation of women.

The encyclical *Ut unum sint* makes use of the ecclesiological vision of Vatican II to encourage unity. The lay community immediately prior to Vatican II has been characterized as largely a passive, obedient group that looked to the hierarchy to define its Christian life. At the council, one witnessed a move away from obedience as the paradigm for ecclesiology, and toward reciprocal relationship as the better paradigm. We see this same shift in the understanding of Peter’s role in *Ut unum sint*. This vision comes from *Lumen gentium* and again is a progression from Vatican II. *Ut unum sint*’s heavy reliance on *Lumen gentium*’s ecclesiology removes the dualism or oppositional nature of the divided churches. Even though *Lumen gentium* says that Christ’s Church “subsists in” the Roman Catholic Church, it is clear that Christ’s Church also exists in these communities. They are no longer defined by what they lack in relationship to Catholicism. Rather, the emphasis is placed upon the positive aspects of these communions. And notice what happens as a result: the language of obe-

<sup>25</sup> *Ut unum sint* no. 3.

<sup>26</sup> See the discourse of John Paul II at the headquarters of the World Council of Churches, Geneva (June 12, 1984) 2: *Insegnamenti* VIII/I (1984) 1686.

dience falls away. The former relationship that was framed in terms of opposition and authority is changed so that, by 1995, in *Ut unum sint*, the pope is able to ask other churches for help in redefining his role. That request does not reflect the stance of one who demands obedience.

A second move of expansion is *Ut unum sint*'s detailed discussion of dialogue as it grows out of today's "personalist way of thinking" and of our commitment to the dignity of the human person. This stance of the Church *ad extra* is compassionate and humane. Compassionate, because the encyclical recognizes the suffering that still results from disunity; humane, because it defines people by the human dignity bestowed in Christ. Several times in the encyclical, the pope reminds us that because they are Christians, the separated churches share in the dynamic life of the Triune God. This Christian life with God is necessarily grounded in the Gospel. The pope uses the categories of renewal and conversion to describe this dynamic life:

Each one therefore ought to be more radically converted to the Gospel and, without ever losing sight of God's plan, change his or her way of looking at things. Thanks to ecumenism, our contemplation of the "mighty works of God" (*mirabilia Dei*) has been enriched by new horizons for which the triune God calls us to give thanks: the knowledge that the Spirit is at work in other Christian communities, the discovery of examples of holiness, the experience of immense riches present in the communion of saints and contact with unexpected dimensions of Christian commitment. In a corresponding way, there is an increased sense of the need for repentance: an awareness of certain exclusions, which seriously harm fraternal charity, of certain refusals to forgive, of a certain pride, of an unevangelical insistence on condemning the "other side," of a disdain born of an unhealthy presumption.<sup>27</sup>

The official teaching of the Church in speaking *ad intra* has not been as compassionate nor sanguine about women's capacity to share in all aspects of Christian living. Sharing in God's triune, dynamic life that is recognized as the starting point away from disunity with the Christian churches is often missing from ecclesial descriptions of women. The insight of Vatican II obtains; any alienation or disunity comes down to the issue of salvation precisely in that, if unity is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, then anything that precludes unity itself interrupts the activity of the Holy Spirit. If we change the subjects of the quotation above from the separated Christians to women, the nature of the dialogue with women would have to change as well. As several theologians have noted, the nonaffirmation that women can act *in persona Christi* essentially suggests that women's humanity is fundamentally different from men's.<sup>28</sup> And if this is the case, it has disas-

<sup>27</sup> *Ut unum sint*, introduction and no. 15.

<sup>28</sup> See Susan Ross and Mary Catherine Hilkert, "Feminist Theology" 327-52.

trous consequences for how the Incarnation and Resurrection apply to women. And, since a Christian understanding of who God is, is grounded precisely in these mysteries, this sharing in the life of God in the Church of Christ is restricted in the case of women.

Both of the pope's moves in *Ut unum sint* presuppose a reciprocal relationship. Peter is seen as a model for the Christian life because he both speaks to Christians in his modeling and because he himself was constantly in need of renewal and conversion. The dialogue that the pope asks for with the separated churches is one that he sees as mutually enriching; both parties will learn from each other. These moves are grounded in the change of position begun at Vatican II. They reflect the larger vision of the council. At the end of the document *Gaudium et spes*, after discussing the problems and hopes that confront the modern world, the council strikes its stance. It is not one of condescending pedagogy but one of unfolding service. A similar change in position toward women is necessary.

### CONCLUSION

I have claimed that John Paul II ought to use the same voice to women that he uses to the separated churches. The road that led me to this claim had four landmarks. The first was the Second Vatican Council; both *Lumen gentium* and *Unitatis redintegratio* reject an ecclesiology grounded in obedience. They choose instead to place their emphasis upon converted service to Jesus' gospel message. Part of the motivation for doing so is the recognition that disunity among Christians obstructs the Church's mission to the world. The second stage on the way was the inspection of the principles of dialogue from *Unitatis redintegratio*. These principles demand open dialogue with intellectual integrity; they also recognize that the Church has made dialogue impossible in the past. It recognizes this as sin and names it as such. I then made use of the pope's Letter to Women written prior to the United Nations Conference on Women at Beijing. In this stage I tried to show that not only has the pope failed to reject the obediential model that the council rejected, he also fails to recognize that the same sinful situation obtains in the case of women in the Church. My last step was to point out that in the discussion with the separated churches the pope uses Peter as a model to discuss a new vision for the Bishop of Rome. In doing so, the papal role ceases to be characterized primarily as demanding obedience, it is characterized rather as inviting unity. The goal of this unity is service to the world at a time when the supposed meaninglessness of human life is a great threat to the Church's mission. This mission will be best served if dialogue, not obedience, is the hallmark of Christian discourse. When the pope invites the separated Christians into this expanded dialogue, he emphasizes the need for conversion on the part of both dialogue partners.

The history of ecumenism tells us that conversion is necessary. When an inappropriate model is used in “ecumenical” contexts, whether direct ones between and among churches, or analogous ones within a given church, it obstructs dialogue and further alienates separated persons. John Paul II claims that his duty as the successor of the apostle Peter is to be an example of conversion. He repeatedly links himself with the vision of Vatican II. Just as *Unitatis redintegratio* did, *Ut unum sint* grounds its program in the common salvation of all Christians in Christ’s humanity. *Ut unum sint* begins its suggested solution to the problem of disunity by showing how alienation interferes with the work of salvation. The activity of repentance is not a stipulation from authority, but is an essential component of life in Christ. So the first principle, that calls for a recognition of harm done, cannot be addressed unless the very anthropology that impugns women’s participation in the work of the gospel is also addressed. The encyclical proclaims that the Church will no longer point its finger at anyone else but will look to its own divisive activities. As of now, however, the disunity that Catholic women experience is attributed to women’s unwillingness to obey rather than to the institution’s reluctance to convert itself. In the case of women, the “sinful activity” that alienates is its use of this distorted anthropology. The moves that have been made by the leadership in the Church toward the separated churches since Vatican II have been successful because they began in the principles of the Christian life itself. When the Church takes the same steps with women as it has done with other Christians, it will be taking one of its own success stories as a model and solving one of its own most destructive pathologies at the same time. Until then, women members of the Church will have to keep asserting in a variety of ways, “We are not invisible.”