



A Service of Love: Papal Primacy, the Eucharist, and Church Unity

Paul McPartlan

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A crucial topic in Catholic-Orthodox ecumenical dialogue is the nature and exercise of universal primacy in the church. In 1995, Pope John Paul II expressed the hope that pastors and theologians of both churches might seek ways in which the papal ministry could accomplish "a service of love recognized by all concerned" (*Ut Unum Sint*). In this short and penetrating study, Paul McPartlan, a member of the international Roman Catholic-Orthodox theological dialogue, presents a proposal, carefully argued both historically and theologically, for a primacy exercising a service of love in a reconciled church, West and East.

McPartlan builds on the substantial foundation already laid in the dialogue for an understanding of the church in terms of the Eucharist. Eucharistic ecclesiology has been one of the most remarkable developments in the theological renewal of recent decades. Drawing particularly on scriptural and patristic teaching, it offers a highly promising framework for resolving this most sensitive and difficult of issues?recognizing the bishop of Rome as the focal point and servant of the Eucharistic communion among bishops. Vatican II directed that those working for reconciliation between Catholics and Orthodox pay close attention to the relationships that pertained between the Eastern churches and the see of Rome before the split of 1054. McPartlan seeks to do just that, notably incorporating the teaching of the council on the role of the papacy to craft a proposal that may commend itself to Catholics and to Orthodox.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Paul McPartlan is Carl J. Peter Professor of Systematic Theology and Ecumenism at the Catholic University of America. He is a member of the International Theological Commission and the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. A contributor to the recently published *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles, and Criteria* by the International Theological Commission, McPartlan also is the author of *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* and *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology*.

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