

‘PETER AND PAUL SEMINAR’:  
A FOLLOW UP BY THEOLOGIAN AND CANON  
LAWYERS TO THE GROUPE DES DOMBES’  
PUBLICATION *FOR THE CONVERSION  
OF THE CHURCHES*<sup>1</sup>

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When in Spring, after a severe winter with months of rain and cold, nature once again reveals its vitality in many colourful blossoms, in a greenness that seems particularly bright, in the smell of freshly mowed grass, and in rising temperatures, many of us feel a new zest for life. We awaken from what feels like hibernation and we make plans to change things: this summer I will do outdoor sports; I will lose weight or will register for a summer school. We go on the internet and check our options. We are enthusiastic, but somehow—a few months later when the air is filled with the first signs of Fall—we realize that we did not accomplish what we intended. Our good intention remained what it was: an intention. It did not become part of our life, it did not shape our life because we did not act on the plans and the vision we had for ourselves. When a vision is not followed by action, the vision will remain just that: a beautiful vision.

When Pope John XXIII convoked Vatican II he asked the bishops of the world to reflect with him on the needs of the church and the task of the church in the world. The bishops gathered in Rome; and they acquired many new insights and formulated these insights in conciliar documents. As the Council closed, the bishops packed their suitcases, left Rome and were filled with a new zest for life as they returned to their dioceses. Since Vatican II had not been held ‘behind closed doors’, the whole church was aware of what had happened and was thus hoping and expecting with the bishops that things would change. The time had come to implement the vision and thus to shape the life of the people, the life

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of the church itself.<sup>2</sup> In theological terms, the time of reception of the Council had started.<sup>3</sup> Now 40 years later we wonder what happened to the vision of Vatican II. Was and is it implemented? Does it shape the life of people?

The purpose of these reflections is to explain first the dynamics of the relationship between a vision and its implementation, then I will attend to the restoration of Christian unity as the hermeneutical criterion of the activities of the Church and, subsequently, to the method outlined for this by the Groupe des Dombes. Finally, I will explain the contribution that 'Peter and Paul Seminar', an international group of theologians and canon lawyers, intends to make in this regard.

### 1. *The Relationship Between a Vision and Its Implementation*

As already pointed out, if a vision or an insight is not followed by concrete action that insight remains what it is: an insight on paper. No matter how good the insight is, if people do not act in accordance with the insight, the insight itself will not shape the life of people nor will it have an impact on them. Thus, if we want to improve our health and think this can be achieved by doing sports, we need to go out, buy appropriate shoes, and start running. Often joining a team that runs together at a set time helps to really get going and stay with it! To perform sports in a team is like a kind of structure: it assists in achieving the intended purpose.

<sup>2</sup> Zest for life characterizes Anton Houtepen! This study is to acknowledge his continuous commitment to the restoration of the unity of the Church of Christ and his capacity to inspire in particular students to attend to the 'ecumenical cause'. The latter insures that the next generation will continue to work on this. My interest in ecumenism was awakened in a course on ecumenism given by Anton Houtepen at the Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen in 1986 when I was about to set off for studies in canon law. The course was to be completed with a paper. I am grateful that he gave me permission to write a paper that allowed me to bring my interest for the two disciplines together. This openness of Anton Houtepen—an openness rarely found among theologians—was the beginning of my personal commitment to study canon law in light of the unity of the Church of Christ and to search for fitting structures. Many years later our roads crossed again as Miguel Garijo Guembe, professor of ecumenism in Münster, was dying and asked me to inform his friend Anton of this fact, a friend he held in great esteem. I was deeply impressed that Anton Houtepen immediately took his car to visit a dying long time friend. A gesture of what true friendship means. And so this article is as well a tribute to the friendship of these two men engaged in ecumenism!

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Routhier presents an insightful study on the process of reception in *La réception d'un concile*. *Cogitatio Fidei*, 174 (Paris: Cerf, 1993).

For theological insights this is probably not all that different: they too need to be implemented in order to shape the life of the community. Structures can assist the community to achieve what it considers to be relevant. Thus if Vatican II affirms the doctrine of collegiality, it is subsequently necessary that structures are provided that assist the community in making this doctrine into a lived reality. The same goes for the doctrine in which the church is seen as a *communio*: it will have repercussions for the understanding of relations between the local churches and the universal church, between collegiality and primacy, but also for the participation of all the members of the faithful in the threefold ministry of Christ according to their own status.<sup>4</sup>

Canonical structures assist a community in implementing its theological vision. Hence, it is no surprise that although a revision of the existing legislation was announced with the convocation of Vatican II, the decision was made not to start the work before the Council was completed. As Pope John Paul II in promulgating the *Code of Canon Law* wrote: 'Indeed in a certain sense this new Code could be understood as a great effort to translate this same conciliar doctrine and ecclesiology into *canonical* language.'<sup>5</sup> What was somewhat surprising though—certainly in retrospect—was that the Council itself did not see, or saw insufficiently,

<sup>4</sup> Pope John Paul II points out what the newness of the Council is and that this in particular should determine the new legislation when he writes in the apostolic constitution *Sacrae disciplinae leges* through which he promulgated the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*: '... it follows that what constitutes the substantial *newness* of the Second Vatican Council, in line with the legislative tradition of the Church, especially in regard to ecclesiology, constitutes likewise the *newness* of the new Code. Among the elements which characterize the true and genuine image of the Church we should emphasize especially the following: the doctrine in which the Church is presented as the people of God . . . and hierarchical authority as service . . . ; the doctrine in which the Church is seen as *communio* and which therefore determines the relations which are to exist between the particular churches and the universal Church, and between collegiality and primacy; likewise the doctrine according to which all the members of the people of God, in the way suited to each of them, participate in the threefold priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, to which doctrine is also linked that which concerns the duties and rights of the faithful and particularly of the laity; and finally, the Church's commitment to ecumenism.' John Paul II, apostolic constitution, *Sacrae disciplinae leges*, AAS 75 (1983). English translation from *Code of Canon law, Latin-English Edition, New Translation* (Washington DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1998) xxx (emphasis in original).

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II added immediately a guiding principle for interpretation: 'If, however, it is impossible to translate perfectly into *canonical* language the conciliar image of the Church, nevertheless the Code must always be referred to this image as the primary pattern whose outline the Code ought to express insofar as it can by its very nature.' John Paul II, *Sacrae disciplinae leges*, xxx (emphasis in original).

the dynamics between insights and the implementation of the insights. When the bishops left Rome, many of them did not really care about the structures that needed to be set up and they left it to canon lawyers to translate the doctrine of Vatican II into canonical norms.<sup>6</sup>

The canon lawyers left to do the work had a difficult but twofold task:

1. Identify what in the doctrine of Vatican II needs to be appropriated by today's community;<sup>7</sup>
2. Find a modality for the appropriation of that doctrine which was identified as being in need of implementation. This modality is to be suitable for the community, which means that it is to be such that the community is able to receive the norm.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to notice that the task is twofold, because it allows for evaluating whether the judgments made in both steps were correct: was that which was judged to be the doctrine of Vatican II in need of protection and promotion indeed that which the council intended? And second, was the modality chosen really the best in the sense of, does it actually assist the community in appropriating the doctrine of the council, or

<sup>6</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx writes in the foreword to his book *Mensen als verhaal van God* (Baarn: H. Nelissen, <sup>2</sup>1990) that the problem of the church after Vatican II is that if the vision of the council does not find protection in canonically guaranteed, space breathing and space granting structures, than constructive theology and loyal innerecclesial and theological critique remain fruitless: 'Ik weet het: als juist die visie op de—weliswaar nooit los verkrijgbare, maar wel aanwijsbare—kern van evangelie en Christendom, niet een aangepaste institutionele gestalte krijgt in kerkrechtelijk gewaarborgde, ruimte ademende en ruimte gevende structuren . . . , dan blijven opbouwende theologie en loyaal binnenkerkelijke en theologische kritiek alsnog vruchteloos.' (p. 5)

<sup>7</sup> Pope John Paul II states in *Sacrae disciplinae leges* as well that the newness of the Council was to mark the newness of the Code. '. . . it follows that what constitutes the substantial *newness* of the Second Vatican Council, in line with the legislative tradition of the Church, especially in regard to ecclesiology, constitutes likewise the *newness* of the new Code. Among the elements which characterize the true and genuine image of the Church we should emphasize especially the following: the doctrine in which the Church is presented as the people of God . . . and hierarchical authority as service . . . ; the doctrine in which the Church is seen as *communio* and which therefore determines the relations which are to exist between the particular churches and the universal Church, and between collegiality and primacy; likewise the doctrine according to which all the members of the people of God, in the way suited to each of them, participate in the threefold priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, to which doctrine is also linked that which concerns the duties and rights of the faithful and particularly of the laity; and finally, the Church's commitment to ecumenism.' (p. xxx—emphasis in original)

<sup>8</sup> It means that the strengths and weaknesses of a community are taken into consideration. This may exist in spiritual, financial, emotional, and cultural resources.

should the modality be changed or adapted?<sup>9</sup> Such an understanding of the relationship between a vision and structures is important because it allows for seeing that while the doctrine governing the structures is the same, the structures may differ from time to time—that is in the course of history—or from place to place—that is from one (local) church to another.

Methodologically, it becomes clear that a cooperation of experts in the history of theology and institutions, of systematic theologians and of canon lawyers (the membership of ‘Peter and Paul Seminar’ comprises exactly that!) is required.<sup>10</sup> Systematic theologians will identify, through critical theological reflection, those institutions which stand in need of reform. With respect to the identified institutions, historians will assist in determining what kinds of modalities have been developed in the history of the Christian tradition to implement specific theological concepts and ideas. They (historians) along with theologians and canonists will seek to distinguish what belongs to the core of a certain institution<sup>11</sup> from the modalities that are shaped and determined by historical and cultural circumstances. Canon lawyers will propose how current institutions might thus be reformed in such a way that they better serve the appropriation of the theological vision.

<sup>9</sup> Hence, structures developed for one local church need not be ideal for all local churches, or structures developed at a specific time in history need not be beneficial for the community at a later time. Thus, the doctrine governing the structures might be the same, but the structures themselves might differ.

<sup>10</sup> The Executive Director for the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the episcopal conference of the USA, John F. Hotchkin, wrote about the cooperation of theologians and canon lawyers: ‘The ministry of ecumenists, that is, those who through dialogue, shared prayer and common witness and service seek to tread pathways of convergence which it is hoped will lead to reconciliation and full communion among churches, is a ministry that needs the companionship of the ministry of canonists. For it is the task of canonists to give form and abiding structural expression to relationships and the new realities this new millennium is opening before the church. This is a ministry which demands a good deal of clear sightedness and judiciousness in the building of ecumenical edifices that will stand, and withstand the test of time. Without the aid of this ministry there remains a possibility that the accords reached through ecumenical dialogues will in the end reach no further than the production of a sort of *entente cordiale* among the churches, but not yet that full unity which is Christ’s will and prayer for us.’ John F. Hotchkin, ‘Canon Law and Ecumenism: Giving Shape to the Future’, *Proceedings of the Canon Law Society of America* 62 (2000) 4.

<sup>11</sup> In addition to that the theological weight of a certain doctrine can be identified.

This rather short description of the connection between doctrine and structures suffices for the moment.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. *Unity as a Hermeneutical Criterion*

'*Unitatis redintegratio*', the restoration of unity among all Christians became one of the chief concerns of Vatican II and with it one of its major commitments. Pope John Paul II affirms this forcefully in his ecumenical encyclical *Ut unum sint*:

'At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself *irrevocably* to following the path of the ecumenical venture, thus heeding the Spirit of the Lord, who teaches people to interpret carefully the 'signs of the times'.'*(UUS 3)*<sup>13</sup>

Based on the doctrine expressed in the Decree on Ecumenism, but even more so on the spirit of the Council<sup>14</sup> it is safe to conclude that the restoration of unity itself is a hermeneutical criterion for the Catholic

<sup>12</sup> For a more elaborate explanation of this understanding of canonical norms, see Ladislav Örsy, 'Lonergan's Cognitional Theory and Foundational Issues in Canon Law. Method, Philosophy and Law, Theology and Canon Law', *Studia canonica* (13 (1979) 177–243 and Myriam Wijlens, 'The Church Knowing and Acting: The Relationship between Theology and Canon Law', *Louvain Studies* 20 (1995) 21–40 and idem, *Sharing the Eucharist: a Theological Evaluation of the Post Conciliar Legislation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000) in particular the chapter on method, 1–31.

<sup>13</sup> The original text reads: 'Au Concile Vatican II, l'Eglise catholique s'est engagée *de manière irréversible* à prendre la voie de la recherche œcuménique, se mettant ainsi à l'écoute de l'Esprit du Seigneur qui apprend à lire attentivement les 'signes of the times'.' Pope John Paul II, encyclical letter *Ut unum sint*, AAS 87(1995) 921–982, English translation: *Ut unum sint*, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1995), hereafter cited as *UUS*.

<sup>14</sup> There is a debate what the Spirit of Vatican II would imply. The first point concerns the question whether the Council was completed upon the closing session, or whether it presented a way of thinking to which the conciliar texts testify. In the latter case, the work must continue after the Council. There are good indications that the latter is a correct interpretation of Vatican II. Three popes testify to it: Pope John XXIII called for an 'aggiornamento', which Pope Paul VI made his own. In addressing canon lawyers after the council, Paul VI stated that therefore a *novus habitus mentis* was required of the canon lawyers. By this he referred to the need for a permanent new disposition of the canon lawyers. Pope John Paul II stated that the newness of the Council should be the newness of the Code (cf. footnote 4 above). It thus seems that the three popes did not see the spirit of the Council to end with the last session. See for a more detailed reflection on this Myriam Wijlens, *Sharing the Eucharist*, 25–29 and my forthcoming article "'That All May Be One . . .'" (John 17:21). The Lord's Prayer in the Work of Canon Lawyers: A Mere Option?" To be published in *The Jurist*.

Church in all its operations, be it in the legislative or executive realm.<sup>15</sup> Pope John Paul II confirms this most strongly when he mentioned this in the apostolic constitution with which he promulgated the Code of Canon Law: he writes that the commitment to ecumenism belongs to that which constitutes the substantial *newness* of Vatican II and that it therefore should determine the new legislation.<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the Pope speaks about the ‘commitment to ecumenism (*studium* [. . .] *ab Ecclesia in oecumenismum impendendum*)’, not the doctrine on ecumenism! *Studium* means commitment characterized by zeal and eagerness. This is much more than just ‘translating’ the doctrine into norms, it is as well an attitude of mind and heart.

More than ten years later he affirms once again that ecumenism is to penetrate, yes to permeate, the whole life of the Church:

‘Thus it is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, *is not just some sort of ‘appendix’* which is added to the Church’s traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does; it must be like the fruit borne by a healthy and flourishing tree which grows to its full stature.’ (*UUS* 20—emphasis in original)

The mental turn to unity is basically a *metanoia*, a conversion, towards unity, but not just by individuals, but by the churches themselves. Committing oneself as a church to the restoration of the unity of the Church as Christ wanted it

‘is not simply a matter of exposing our own treasure to others apologetically, or of teaching them a lesson. Our areas of weaknesses are also where they have their own problems, which they themselves have identified. The ecumenical task consists less in changing others than in changing ourselves, in correcting that which is within our reach and for which we are responsible.’<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> I have worked this out in more detail in my articles “Is the Ecumenical Vision in Need of Structures?” in *One in Christ* 38 (2003) 26–46 and in ‘Conversion with or without Church Law?’, Dagmar Heller (ed.) *Bekehrung und Identität: Ökumene als Spannung zwischen Fremden und Vertrautem*. Beiheft zur Ökumenischen Rundschau, vol. 73 (Frankfurt a.M.: Lembeck, 2003) 83–101.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. footnote 7 above. See for further elaborations on this my forthcoming article ‘That All May Be One . . .’.

<sup>17</sup> Hervé Legrand, ‘The Episcopate. The Ecumenical Critique of Catholic Theology’, translated from the French by Catherine E. Clifford (unpublished paper). This is fully in line with Vatican II which urges Catholics ‘to make a careful and honest appraisal of what-

A change of heart and mind is in the vision of the Decree on Ecumenism the 'soul of the whole ecumenical movement' (UR 7–8). Conversion, which is a turn anew to the Lord Jesus Christ, however, is not just a spiritual attitude, because a conversion that has no effect in the concrete life of the faithful is no conversion at all. The Decree on Ecumenism thus states that 'all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and accordingly undertake with vigour the task of renewal and reform' (UR 4). Thus, the conversion should be followed by renewal and reform: *ecclesia semper reformanda*.<sup>18</sup> Pope John Paul II wrote about the connection between conversion, renewal and reform; and he stated that the Council calls for personal conversion as well as for communal conversion (UUS 15):

'In the teaching of the Second Vatican Council there is a clear connection between renewal, conversion and reform. The Council states that 'Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has a need, insofar as she is an institution of human beings here on earth. Therefore, if the influence of events or of the times has led to deficiencies . . . these should be appropriately rectified at the proper moment.' No Christian Community can exempt itself from this call.' (UUS 16)

Hence, there can be no doubt that the unity of the Church of Christ is to be an overriding hermeneutical criterion and that the road to achieve the intended unity lies in conversion, renewal and reform.

### 3. *The Groupe des Dombes' Publication* For the Conversion of the Churches

The Groupe des Dombes is a group of Reformed, Lutheran, and Catholic pastors and theologians in French speaking Europe, who, without an official mandate from the competent authorities of their churches, has been engaged in a continuous dialogue since 1937. In its work it has

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ever needs to be renewed and done in the Catholic household itself, in order that its life may bear witness more clearly and faithfully to the teachings and institutions which have been handed down from Christ through the apostles' (UR 4).

<sup>18</sup> In addressing the plenary of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity in November 2001, Cardinal Walter Kasper remarked that there is an ecumenism *ad extra* and one *ad intra*: 'ad extra through ecumenical encounters, dialogues and co-operation and ecumenism *ad intra* through reform and renewal of the Catholic Church itself. There is no ecumenism without conversion and reform' (UR 6–9; UUS 15–17). Walter Kasper, 'Present Situation and Future of the Ecumenical Movement', see [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).



consistently attended to the connection between growth in theological consensus and the concrete change of the life of the churches. The Groupe has focused in particular on the conversion of the churches<sup>19</sup> and concludes that as a human person continuously changes and develops, so the churches are subject to a continuous dynamic of conversion. The Groupe reflected in particular in its study *Pour la conversion des églises*<sup>20</sup> on the meaning of conversion of churches and has placed it in relation to identity. The two—conversion and identity—are interdependent:

‘Far from excluding each other, identity and conversion call for each other: there is no Christian identity without conversion; conversion is a constitutive of the Church; our confessions do not merit the name of Christian unless they open up to the necessity of conversion.’<sup>21</sup>

The Groupe states that every denomination has several identities. There is an identity in space: a church might exist over the whole earth or over a certain territory, such as a nation. It may display differences in its way of life and its operations. Thus there is a unity in diversity. It also has an identity in time: it extends from the beginning of Christianity to the very end of time. It includes the history of the community, which shaped it, and holds a future that only God knows. This identity also exists at different levels which in the proposal of the Groupe des Dombes corresponds to a conversion. The conversion is directly linked to a theology of *kenosis*.<sup>22</sup> The study by the Groupe opens with the great Christological

<sup>19</sup> This goes back to the founder of the Groupe des Dombes, Abbé Couturier: ‘[. . .] at the heart of Abbé Couturier’s vision of ecumenism is a profound insight concerning the interdependence of common prayer for Christian unity, the search for doctrinal unity through theological dialogue, and institutional conversion or reform along the road to full ecclesial communion.’ Catherine Clifford, ‘Dialogue and Method: Learning from the Groupe des Dombes,’ in *One in Christ* 38 (2003) 44.

<sup>20</sup> Groupe des Dombes, *Pour la conversion des églises: identité et changement dans la dynamique de communion* (Paris: Centurion, 1991). English translation: *For the Conversion of the Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1993). Catherine Clifford, professor at Saint Paul University in Ottawa and member of the ‘Peter and Paul Seminar,’ wrote her dissertation on the Groupe des Dombes and defended it at the University of St. Michael’s College in Toronto in 2001: *The Groupe des Dombes: A Dialogue of Conversion*. It has been published in American University Studies Series VII, Theology and Religion, vol. 231 (New York: Peter Lang, 2005). See also Catherine Clifford, “Kenosis and the Path to Communion.” *The Jurist* 64 (2004) 21–34.

<sup>21</sup> *For the Conversion of the Churches*, no. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Catherine Clifford has presented an analysis of *kenosis* in relation to the church at the symposium ‘Collegiality in the Church: Theology and Canon Law’ in Washington DC. I am grateful for her insights (see also footnote 28 below).

hymn from Paul's letter to the Philippians, where Paul calls upon the church at Philippi to take on the mind and heart of Christ, to realize in its life the self-emptying and self-giving love of Christ:

'Let the same mind be in you as was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even on a cross. Therefore, God also exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.' (Phil 2: 5–11).

This is presented in the context of Paul's exhortation:

'That is the one thing that would make me completely happy: There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than ourselves, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people's interest instead' (Phil 2: 2–4).

The Groupe goes on to explain the connection between identity and conversion.

First, there is a *Christian* identity, which consists in God's initiative to make himself known to humanity through the message of his Son Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The corresponding conversion is the appropriation through faith and practice of the mystery of baptism, which is grace open to mission.

Second, there is an *ecclesial* identity, which signifies that the Church is the Body of Christ where, because of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of God to humanity in Jesus Christ becomes manifest. The ecclesial identity must stand in service of the Christian identity. The ecclesial conversion corresponds to this.

Third, there is a *confessional* identity which refers to many elements that exist and that emerged only after the churches separated and that were often caused by historical events that have lost their significance. The corresponding conversion consists in giving up those elements that are neither foundational nor indispensable. They could be sacrificed for the sake of unity, for the healing of the broken body of the Church of

Christ. Institutional conversion consists in such a sacrifice. This, however, can be phrased positively, namely: the conversion of the churches consists in a strengthening of each one's Christian and ecclesial identity at the expense of confessional identity. It implies bringing new dynamics into the ecumenical endeavour where there is a change from the inside for the sake of the others and for the sake of the whole.

#### 4. *The Response by 'Peter and Paul Seminar'*

So far this study reveals that a vision is in need of structures for it to shape life, that the unity of the church needs to be an overriding hermeneutical criterion in the activities of the church and that the response of the church to the prayer of the Lord 'that all may be one' (John 17: 21) may consist in identifying the doctrine and seeing whether the structures can be so adapted that they assist the community in achieving the unity of the Church of Christ. Thus, a focus is on the third level of identity and conversion as proposed by the *Groupe des Dombes*. The *Groupe* has laid a foundation for this and has presented examples to verify its theory.

The 'Peter and Paul Seminar' was founded to start where the project of the *Groupe des Dombes* stops. 'Ladislas Örsy originated the plan based on the experience of the *Groupe des Dombes*, for a dialogue between canonists and theologians. The motivation for the discussions was ecumenical, to further the union of the Christian churches; but the focus was on canonical structures of the Church that, in their present form, inadequately express the Church's own theological convictions.'<sup>23</sup>

The 'Peter and Paul Seminar' met first in 1998 in Ottawa just after the annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America. Ten persons pondered on the question: 'What modifications, based on the Church's teachings, need to be made to canonical structures in the interest of Christian unity?'<sup>24</sup> Subsequently, the group, taking into account the interest and expertise of each member, identified a number of theological insights emerging from Vatican II, that would need practical provisions in the form of legislation, such as 'primacy, episcopacy, infallibility, collegiality, unity, the position of the laity, all of them of major importance in view of the unity of the Christian churches. Each member then accepted the task of studying the relationship between a given theo-

<sup>23</sup> For a short historical description see James A. Coriden, "Peter and Paul Seminar: An Historical Note," in *The Jurist* 59 (1999) 329.

<sup>24</sup> Coriden, 'Peter and Paul Seminar', 329.

logical value and the subsequent legislation (some of it in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, some in other documents) to see how far the practice followed the insight.'<sup>25</sup> If necessary, the scholar was encouraged to suggest changes in the current legislation.

Hence, the method followed consists of four steps:

1. Identify the insight that the church has and determine that it is in need of legal support.
2. Determine what theological insights are supported in the current canonical norms.
3. Investigate whether the insights that need support—as identified in step one—are the insights that are currently supported—as discovered in step two.
4. If necessary, make suggestions for improvement of the norms.

The research for these four levels requires skilled persons in history, theology, and in canon law. I will return to this aspect.

One year after the first meeting drafts of the performed studies were submitted to the group for discussion. Furthermore, the group continued to reflect on the method and looked for additional members. Again in 2000 and 2001 the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' met to discuss the revised drafts. In the meantime an agreement was made with the periodical *The Jurist* to publish the papers.<sup>26</sup>

In 2002 the Seminar set out on a new project. Whereas the first time, each member had taken a subject of personal interest and had been asked to perform the four steps mentioned above for the chosen subject, the second project focused for all members on one single subject: the collegiality of bishops. The 'Peter and Paul Seminar' decided that its members from the different fields of expertise would focus on this one issue. The

<sup>25</sup> Ladislav Örsy, 'The Scope and Spirit of the Peter-Paul Seminar,' *The Jurist* 59 (1999) 332–334.

<sup>26</sup> The issue of *The Jurist* 59 (1999) vol. 2, contains besides the already mentioned introductory articles of Coriden, 'Peter and Paul Seminar'; and Örsy, 'Introduction' the following articles: James A. Coriden, 'Lay Persons and the Power of Governance', John Huels, Richard Gaillardetz, 'The Selection of Bishops: Recovering the Traditions', George Tavard, 'The Roman Primacy and its Canonical Formulation', Ladislav Örsy, 'Episcopal Conferences and the Power of the Spirit', Thomas Scirghi, 'One Body, Two Churches: Sharing the Eucharist in an Interchurch Marriage', and Margaret O'Gara, 'Counter-Evidence of Infallibility's Exercise'. Not all members submitted an article for publication.

membership somewhat changed, also because in a way the four different steps in the research as outlined above required expertise in a certain field.<sup>27</sup> So instead of each person having to have the expertise to perform all four steps, as was the case in the first project, the second project opted much more for a cooperation of experts for a particular step in relation to the subject of collegiality. This implied at the same time, however, an increased cooperation among the members: again subjects were divided, but this time—as mentioned—more according to discipline. Whereas, for example, the systematic theologians concentrated in particular on the theological insights arising from Vatican I and II and focused on what needs to be protected and supported by legal structures, the historians attended more to the understanding of collegiality in the course of history and to the different modalities chosen in the course of history to give expression to the collegiality of bishops. Finally the canon lawyers investigated the existing structures to discover which theological insights they support and they focused on the modalities chosen by the legislator to ‘translate’ the conciliar vision in structures. After all members had done their homework again, a first draft was discussed in 2003 and a final draft in 2004. Once more, the editor of *The Jurist*, a member of the group himself, agreed to publish the papers.

The 2004 meeting was a rather special event: Georgetown University Law Centre hosted the ‘Peter and Paul Seminar’ for its closed meeting where the papers on collegiality were discussed and together with Woodstock Theological Centre invited the ‘Peter and Paul Seminar’ to hold a symposium open to the public on the subject ‘Collegiality in the Church: Theology and Canon Law’. The symposium consisted after two introductory presentations about the nature of ‘Peter and Paul Seminar’ and about *kenosis* in relation to the church, of three main sessions: the first session dealt with ‘Laity and Collegiality’, the second one attended to

<sup>27</sup> The members are Catherine Clifford (systematic theology, Saint Paul University, Ottawa), James A. Coriden (canon law, Washington Theological Union, Washington DC), Brian E. Daley S.J. (patristics, University of Notre Dame), Eugene Duffy (systematic theology, Western Theological Institute, Galway, Ireland), Clarence Gallagher S. J. (history of canon law of the eastern churches, Campion-Hall Oxford), Thomas J. Green, (canon law, The Catholic University of America; chief editor of *The Jurist*), Margaret O’Gara (systematic theology, University of Saint Michael’s College, Toronto), Ladislav Örsy, S.J. (canon law, Georgetown University Washington DC), Gilles Routhier (church history and systematic theology, Université de Laval, Quebec), George Tayard, AA (systematic theology, Assumption Center, Brighton, Mass.) and Myriam Wijlens (canon law, Theological Faculty Tilburg, The Netherlands). The idea is to have core members and invite others to join for a specific project because of their expertise in the selected area.

'Episcopacy and Collegiality' and the third one focused on 'Papacy and Collegiality'. In each session there were two speakers: after a theologian had identified the theological issue, a canon lawyer presented an analysis of the practice.<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, other members of the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' together with the guests raised further questions and offered comments.

The result of the meetings was first of all a greater appreciation for the method chosen. The members of the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' experienced and appreciated the complementarity of the work performed by the different scholars: everybody could benefit from the insights of scholars from other but related fields. During the meeting it also became evident that nearly all members of the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' are actively engaged in ecumenical dialogues be it on a national or international level. The commitment to ecumenism is thus of great interest to each member. Second, at the end there was a better knowledge of the issues underlying collegiality of bishops and an increased awareness to focus on synodality in the church as well. The general decision was made to continue the project and to deepen the study in a further project, where the special character and goal of the 'Peter Paul Seminar', namely to contribute to the unity of the Church of Christ, will be a strong point of attention. What this concretely implies will be determined in the rather near future.<sup>29</sup>

The description of the work and intention of the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' reveals that the group is in a way unique. There are at least two reasons: unlike other groups or symposia that might take up a certain re-

<sup>28</sup> I myself opened with explaining the unique contribution that the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' intends to make, Catherine Clifford spoke about the meaning of *kenosis* in relation to the Church. In the three subsequent sessions the theologians and canon lawyers were: for the laity: Margaret O'Gara and James A. Coriden; for the episcopacy: Gilles Routhier and Thomas J. Green; and for the papacy: George Tavard and Ladislav Orsy. The intention is to publish the papers, but no decision has been made as to where and how. *Editor's note*: this issue and the next issue of *The Jurist* for 2004 will publish the formal papers of the Seminar, not the much briefer presentations referred to above.

<sup>29</sup> The 'Peter and Paul Seminar' has a friendly relationship with the Fondazione per le scienze religiose Giovanni XXIII in Bologna which has a research project and organized a symposium on 'Synod and Synodality in the Churches'. Three members of the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' attended this symposium in September 2003 in Bruges, Belgium. The 'Peter and Paul Seminar' invited the Fondazione to send 'observers' to its meeting in Washington, DC in April 2004: two persons (Giacomo Bettini and Massimo Faggioli) were present. Other guests were John Burkhard (Washington Theological Union), Arthur Espelage (Executive Coordinator Canon Law Society of America), Brian Flanagan (Boston College), Laurent Villemin (Institut Catholique, Paris).

search project, the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' requires from its members a personal conversion and commitment to the unity of the Church of Christ in order to contribute to the conversion of the Catholic Church to the unity of the Church of Christ. Second, the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' is not composed solely of ecumenists or of any other specific theological discipline; rather it brings together experts from different disciplines who offer their own expertise and receive the expertise of others: there is a complementary aspect in their work.

After this exposition, the name selected by the members of the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' is thus almost self explanatory and is at the same time a continuing challenge to the members: 'From early times Peter was honoured as the principle of unity, Paul was remembered as an apostle blessed with creativity.'<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the theologians and canon lawyers who together form the members of the 'Peter and Paul Seminar' intend to be creative in their search and drive to contribute to the unity of the Church of Christ.

<sup>30</sup> Örsy, "Introduction," 334.