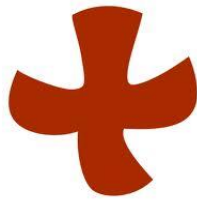


Communion in Taizé

Theological interpretation of a Eucharistic practice in an ecumenical context



Tilburg University
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Master's thesis Christianity and Society
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Under supervision of
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Cover photo by Khegan Delport
The altar of Taizé's Church of Reconciliation

Redactioneel

De oecumenische gemeenschap van Taizé, die volgend jaar 75 jaar bestaat, is voor velen een bron van inspiratie. De community slaagt daar waar andere initiatieven maar moeilijk vooruit komen. Dat geldt in het bijzonder voor de relatie met jongeren maar ook op oecumenisch gebied. Jaarlijks gaan jongeren in grote getale voor een verblijf van enkele dagen of weken naar Taizé toe. Daarnaast is er ieder jaar in één van de grote Europese steden een Europese jongerenontmoeting tussen kerst en nieuwjaar waar duizenden jongeren aan deelnemen. Ook wat oecumene betreft is de community een begenadigd voorbeeld. Eenheid en verzoening van de christelijke denominaties was vanaf het begin een centrale doelstelling van frère Roger (1915-2005). De oecumenische community werd in 1940 door frère Roger opgericht. In 1972 werd de eerste katholieke broeder in de gemeenschap opgenomen.

Over de oecumenische betekenis en de spiritualiteit van Taizé is veel geschreven. Maar er is weinig literatuur waarin de wijze waarop de oecumenische verbondenheid in de gemeenschap vorm krijgt, beschreven en geduid wordt. Fokke Wouda, student van de Tilburg School of Theology, deed er onderzoek naar en wijdde er zijn *master's thesis* aan. In augustus 2014 studeerde hij af. De titel van zijn scriptie luidde: '*Communion in Taizé, Theological interpretation of a Eucharistic practice in an ecumenical context*'. Hierin beschrijft hij de liturgische praktijk van de gemeenschap die hij vervolgens plaatst binnen het framework van het kerkelijk recht van de Katholieke Kerk en bereflecteert vanuit het perspectief van de katholieke systematische theologie.

We publiceren deze *master's thesis* als een special van het tijdschrift *Perspectief*. Ten eerste vanwege de relevantie van het onderwerp en de wijze waarop de auteur dit onderwerp heeft geanalyseerd en geïnterpreteerd. Een bijzondere omstandigheid daarbij is dat de auteur zelf van gereformeerde huize is. Desalniettemin is hij er in geslaagd een oecumenische studie te maken vanuit het perspectief van het kerkelijk recht van de Katholieke Kerk en de katholieke systematische theologie. De tweede reden is dat het tijdschrift *Perspectief* een platform wil bieden aan jonge theologen voor de publicatie van bijdragen over oecumenische thema's. We hebben nog niet zo

veel jonge auteurs kunnen aantrekken. Graag publiceren we deze scriptie van deze jonge theoloog ook in de hoop dat er meer interessante bijdragen van jonge auteurs zullen volgen.

Een opmerking tenslotte over de oranje kleuren in de inhoudsopgave en van de tussenkopjes. Fokke Wouda schreef me daarover het volgende: 'Oranje is de kleur van Taizé. Voor in de kerk van Taizé hangen grote oranje doeken. Ter decoratie, maar ze beelden overigens ook zeilen van een schip uit. De kleur oranje heeft verder geen betekenis, ik meen dat Frère Roger eens gezegd heeft dat het gewoon zijn lievelingskleur was. Omdat het de kleuren van Taizé zijn heb ik verschillende tinten rood en oranje gebruikt. Kijk gerust ook eens op taize.fr.' Een goed advies, dat ik graag aan u, lezer, doorgeef. En vooral veel genoeg bij het lezen van deze studie.

Geert van Dartel

Dankzij leden en donateurs kan de Katholieke Vereniging voor Oecumene haar werk voortzetten. Steun de oecumene.

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Communion in Taizé

Theological interpretation of a Eucharistic practice in an ecumenical context

“I do not forget that in its unique, original and in a certain sense provisional vocation, your community can awaken astonishment and encounter incomprehension and suspicion. But because of your passion for the reconciliation of all Christians in a full communion, because of your love for the Church, you will be able to continue, I am sure, to be open to the will of the Lord.”

Pope John Paul II addressing the community of Taizé



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Foreword

The period in which this research was performed stretched from Ash Wednesday till Pentecost. This is an appropriate coincidence, since all major events of the institution and birth of the Church are celebrated in this period. This has added another dimension to this research project, of which my visit to Taizé in the Holy Week was no doubt the summit. For me, the wish to understand the attempts of the Taizé community is not solely born from academic interest. My personal history regarding different ecclesial traditions enables me to relate to brother Roger's wish for reconciliation. I am glad that in this way I can contribute a little to the understanding of the current situation in Taizé and its significance for the ecumenical process.

This thesis marks the end of my studies. It represents my prime interests throughout this period. In a way, this thesis is connected to my bachelor's thesis, dedicated to Catholic Eucharistic theology. Both researches had the (side) objective to improve my understanding of the Catholic view on the Eucharist. In this master's thesis my intention was to investigate the practice in Taizé concerning the Eucharist and communion. From the start, the working title of my thesis was as it is now: "Communion in Taizé." At first, I intended the word communion to refer merely to the consecrated host. This research has made me understand better the inherent relation between the Eucharist and the unity and community of the Church in Catholic theology. This relation is indispensable for understanding the situation in Taizé from a Catholic perspective. Now, at the end of the research process, the word communion in the title is to express the two elements of this relation, both the host and the *communio* of the Church, rooted in the *communio* of the holy Trinity.

At the end of this foreword I want to take the opportunity to thank all the people involved during these years. I am grateful that my parents have offered me the chance to undertake the studies of my choice and for their support. I want to thank my wife Geertrude too for the support and space she has given me these years, even though the process was not always easy. Friends, family, fellow students and all my lecturers have made my studies possible; thank you all. In the context of this thesis I want to

mention dr. Harm Goris, my supervisor. Thank you for your support during the process and for your valuable suggestions. I want to thank the C.J. de Vogelstichting for sponsoring my trip to Taizé and the Catholic Association for Ecumenism for publishing my thesis. Finally, I want to thank the Taizé community itself for receiving me. My special thanks go to brother Richard, who has been willing to answer all my questions and to share his views with me. I hope my work does the community and its intentions justice.

Fokke Wouda, Trinity Sunday, 15 June 2014



1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction of the research area

The ecumenical movement is an interdenominational movement within Christianity. It aims at ecclesiastical unity, by getting involved in dialogue and cooperation on various levels. One presupposition, inherent to ecumenism being a movement, is that the individuals involved remain members of their own distinctive denominations, so that full unity is not realised until formal ecclesial communion is established. The ecumenical community of Taizé is in this sense extraordinary, that it has institutionalized its ecumenical relations and ideals. Still, the Taizé brothers remain members of their Churches of origin.

The reconciliation of different denominations was the core intention of brother Roger Schutz, the founder of the Taizé community. The community started out as an interdenominational brotherhood that sought to live in a very practical way the Gospel of Jesus. Thus, the brothers cared for Jews and other refugees during WW II and afterwards also for German prisoners-of-war. Soon after the war, the community began to attract young people from all over Europe, seeking to be inspired by the spirituality of the community. Today, Taizé receives thousands of visitors from all over the world every year. People live the rhythm of the monastery together with the brothers for one or more weeks, a rhythm marked by the daily prayers, austerity and an atmosphere of reconciliation.

However, like mentioned before, this institutionalized ecumenism is extraordinary. It operates on the frontiers of the different ecclesial traditions it brings together. It is a situation that is likely to raise questions. After his death in 2005, speculations arose that brother Roger would have converted to Catholicism in secret, even that he was ordained a priest. Denying a formal conversion of brother Roger to Catholicism, his successor brother Alois responded: "Since his approach was progressive and

completely new, it was difficult to express and to understand. It was easy to misinterpret.”¹

1.2 Introduction of the research

Journalist Sandro Magister paraphrases Cardinal Kasper on the topic of brother Roger’s relation to the Catholic Church: “According to Kasper, it is as if there had been an unwritten agreement between Schutz and the Church of Rome, ‘crossing certain confessional’ and canonical limits.”² Cardinal Walter Kasper himself said about brother Roger’s relation with the Catholic Church: “The meaning of some theological or canonical terms could be discussed endlessly. Out of respect for the faith-journey of Brother Roger, however, it would be preferable not to apply to him categories which he himself considered inappropriate for his experience and which, moreover, the Catholic Church never wanted to impose upon him.”³

Although from a spiritual viewpoint Kasper’s appeal is certainly valuable, from academic perspective and ecumenical theory the problems concerning these theological and canonical categories and terms are especially interesting and relevant. The study of the practice of Taizé from these perspectives can clarify in what way Catholic theology and law have found or created space for such a far-reaching ecumenical practice. Literature on Taizé is mostly spiritual in nature. Systematic reflection on the practice is not yet available. With this thesis I want to start this reflection. By doing so, I hope to contribute to a correct interpretation of brother Roger's new ecumenical way and its significance for the ecumenical process.

¹ Guenois, Jean-Marie, ‘Something that was without precedent’ (Taizé website: 12 April 2008: http://www.taize.fr/en_article6739.html) [English translation of the article in French: Guenois, Jean-Marie, ‘Frère Roger ne s’est pas “converti”’ (La Croix website: <http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Actualite/Frere-Roger-ne-s-est-pas-converti- NG -2006-09-06-516310> : 7 September 2006) [21 March 2014].

² Magister, Sandro, ‘Was the Founder of Taizé Protestant, or Catholic? A Cardinal Solves the Riddle’ (website of L’Espresso journalist Sandro Magister: <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/206302?eng=y> : 25 august 2008) [03 March 2014].

³ Magister, ‘Was the founder of Taizé Protestant, or Catholic?’.

Thus the relevance of this research is in the first place to be understood as ecclesiastical. The interdenominational relations are to be examined and will be the first to benefit from an accurate description and evaluation. However, the relevance of Christianity as such is not only to be found within the Christian community itself, but also in society at large. Therefore, the improvement of Christian unity with the Church's mission in mind also affect the society Christians are part of.

Some of the biggest objections and challenges in ecumenism rise in the field of Eucharistic theology and practice. Especially there the theological and canonical terms Kasper refers to are applicable. This research therefore is centered around Taizé's Eucharistic practice. It will take the dual perspectives of systematic theology and ecclesial law, being two sides of the same coin, as ways to interpret the practice. Law specialist Ladislav Örsy demonstrates the close connection between the two by stating that "the relationship between theology and canon law can be best summarized by saying that in theology the Church contemplative is speaking to the people, and in canon law the Church active is guiding the faithful. (...) The two operations blend into one but without losing their distinctive characters: they mutually support each other. They together reveal something of the internal life of God's covenanted community."⁴ An adequate Catholic reflection on the ecumenical practice of Taizé therefore needs the double perspective of theology and law. In this research, I take this double perspective of theology and law to interpret the practice by answering the question: "How can the Eucharistic practice of Taizé as an ecumenical event be interpreted from the viewpoints of present-day Catholic ecclesial law and systematic theology?"

I will take three steps. The first step is to describe the Taizé practice involving Eucharist and communion in chapter 2. This description is based on literature and my own observations in Taizé. The second step, performed in chapter 3, is to position the encountered practice in the current legal framework of the Catholic Church. The third step, in chapter 4, is to reflect on the present situation from Catholic systematic theology, represented by Cardinal Kurt Koch. This reflection is reciprocal; it includes a reflection of the practice of Taizé and some of its underlying theological and spiritual

⁴ Örsy S.J., Ladislav M., 'Theology and Canon Law', in Beal, John P. (e.a., eds.) *New commentary on the Code of Canon Law* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 2000), 9.

key notions, as expressed by Taize's current prior brother Alois, on Catholic theology. I will present a final overview, combining the two perspectives, in the concluding fifth chapter.



2 Description of the practice

The starting point of this research is the Eucharistic practice of the Taizé community. As stated in the first chapter, this practice is part of a larger institutionalized ecumenical practice. Therefore knowledge of the diachronic and synchronic context is highly relevant. This ecumenical context plays a big role in positioning the Taizé practice in legal and theological terms, as I will do in chapters three and four. In paragraph 2.1 I will introduce the history of Taizé and its community life today. The second paragraph is the actual object of reflection; the current practice of Taizé when it comes to Catholic Eucharist and communion. This description is based on my observations in Taizé. I will present my conclusions in paragraph 2.3.

2.1 Context

2.1.1 History of Taizé

The community of Taizé was founded by Roger Schutz (1915-2005), a Swiss reformed Protestant.¹ Affinity with Catholicism is shown in his family, by his father, a Protestant minister, and especially by his grandmother. This, and his own contacts with the Catholic Church, inspired a deep longing for reconciliation amongst Christians. Another ideal of Schutz was to live a simple life according to the Gospel, especially by caring for the poor. During his theological studies, Roger developed ideas about a community of reconciliation inspired by monasticism. Eventually, in 1940 Roger was able to purchase a house in the small village of Taizé in Burgundy, France. By the end of the year, three friends joined him, thus realizing the envisioned community. First in the free territory of France and later under German occupation, the community welcomed Jews and other refugees. After the war, they cared for German prisoners-of-war, located in

¹ General information on brother Roger and Taizé is taken from Santos, Jason Brian, *A community called Taizé. A story of Prayer, Worship and Reconciliation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2008).

a nearby camp. The brothers considered them to be the most vulnerable in society at that moment. By doing so, the brothers continued their lives of reconciliation in a very practical way.

The brothers lived a simple life, aiming for self-sustainability and praying together three times a day. They continued to receive guests. Because their provisional chapel in the house soon proved too small to accommodate all the guests, the brothers requested permission to use the vacant Catholic Church in the village. After a process in which permission was granted and withdrawn again, permission was definitely granted by the papal nuncio in Paris, future Pope John XXIII Cardinal Roncalli. In 1949 four more brothers joined the community. The provisional annual vows seemed inadequate for the community, therefore the brothers decided to introduce the life commitment in which they took the classical monastic vows of poverty, obedience and chastity for life. This implied that the community needed a prior, a function that, not surprisingly, was dedicated to brother Roger.

The same year, on the initiative of the Archbishop of Lyon, Cardinal Gerlier, brother Roger was introduced to Pope Pius XII, whom brother Roger requested to “leave a little way open”² for ecumenical encounters between Catholics and Protestants. This appeal didn’t seem to sort out much. However, Brother Roger was more successful with Pius XII’s successor, John XXIII. This new Pope appeared to be very interested in the ecumenical community. He granted the prior an annual audience, a custom continued by his successors Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and today still by Pope Francis.

The Second Vatican Council, initiated by John XXIII, was a breakthrough in ecumenism. As I will demonstrate further in detail in paragraph 3.1, the attitude of the Catholic Church towards other Churches and towards ecumenism changed radically. The early post Conciliar period was marked by ecumenical optimism. Hopes were high that visible ecclesiastical unity could be established soon. This ecumenical spirit was significant for the development of the Taizé community too.

At brother Roger’s funeral - he was stabbed to death by a mentally disturbed woman during the evening prayer of 16 August 2005 - presiding Cardinal Kasper said: “the

² Brother Roger, quoted in Santos, A community called Taizé, 64.

springtime of ecumenism has flowered on the hill of Taizé.”³ The most obvious fruit of this flowering was the given possibility to share Catholic communion. This opportunity was offered by the then Bishop of Autun, mgr. Armand Le Bourgeois. When the first Catholic was to join the community definitely in 1972, brother Roger regarded it impossible not to share table communion with all the members of the community. Therefore, on this occasion, brother Roger and the other brothers for the first time received communion from the hands of the Bishop of Autun.

Since the beginning the community had adapted its prayer services and worship services to the changing needs of the community, searching for a good way to celebrate in its ecumenical context. The community chose to follow the way opened up by mgr. Le Bourgeois and to embrace the Catholic Eucharist as their common way of understanding the sacrament and as form of their common worship. In time, Catholic brothers were to be ordained priest by the Bishops of their regions of origin, enabling the community to structurally celebrate mass in Taizé. Today, three priest participate in the community and indeed celebrate mass daily.

2.1.2 *Community life today*

No one expected the community life to evolve to its current form, certainly not brother Roger. However, he adapted a concept he himself referred to as “dynamic of the provisional.”⁴ What was meant to be a small community of men trying to reconcile the Christian denominations and to care for the poor has become a large and settled community that welcomes over 100,000 young people from around the world every year. The community certainly has needed its improvising skills to be able to do so. The extension of the original Church of Reconciliation, the church building of the

³ Kasper, Walter, Address at brother Roger’s funeral (Zenit website: <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/cardinal-kasper-s-address-at-brother-roger-s-funeral> : 24 august 2005) [14 june 2014].

⁴ Brother Roger, quoted in Santos, *A community called Taizé*, 83.

community, is only one example of the effort given to adapt to the unforeseen circumstances.⁵

Regularly, some eighty of the brothers are present in Taizé. The other 20-30 brothers live in small communities in poor areas in countries like India, Kenya and the Philippines. The brothers present in Taizé care for the youth that have come to join them for the week and earn the living of the community e.g. by working in the pottery and the shop.

Daily life is centered around the three prayer services. Since communion is administered in the morning prayer, I will only describe this service extensively in the next paragraph. Two other services take place on a daily basis: a Catholic mass that I will describe as well, and a Protestant service. The latter takes place in the Orthodox chapel. This chapel is not located in the community's main building, the Church of Reconciliation, but right next to it. In this service the Protestant holy Supper is celebrated, of which the bread is also administered in the morning prayer.

2.2 Practices involving Eucharist and communion

2.2.1 Principles

The current situation is the outcome of over sixty years of improvisation, according to brother Roger's principle of the dynamic of the provisional. The prayer services of the community have evolved over time. They have been adapted to suit various situations: from a small all Protestant community of just a few men, to a situation where thousands of people from all kinds of ecclesial backgrounds join the prayers of a community of over a hundred brothers with very diverse backgrounds as well. Many Catholics have joined the community – current prior brother Alois is a Catholic. More changes are likely to follow, since the fall of Communism has enabled more and more Eastern Orthodox to find their way to Taizé too.

⁵ The community's website presents panoramic photographs of the interior of the Church of Reconciliation: http://www.taize.fr/en_article12734.html. Sections can be closed down by lowering garage door-like systems, reducing the size of the church hall in the 'low seasons' and enabling multifunctional use of the building throughout the day.

As said before, the focus of Eucharistic worship is now on the Catholic mass. In it, the brothers have found a common understanding of the mystery of the Eucharist. However, to enable them to welcome all Christians the brothers give space to other rites as well. Occasionally, an Orthodox mass is celebrated. On a daily basis, a Protestant service takes place. The bread and wine of that holy Supper celebration are administered during morning prayer. Additionally, for those who cannot participate in either of these traditions, e.g. because they are not baptized, the rite of the blessed bread was introduced. This rite has its origins in Eastern Orthodoxy. The rite refers to the story of Jesus feeding 5000 men in the desert. The bread is blessed right before the prayer service starts. Thus the brothers intend to create an atmosphere of fraternity and reconciliation, without denying the differences between the people present.

2.2.2 *Morning mass*

With only few exceptions, the first celebration of each weekday is a Catholic mass. It is celebrated in an improvised chapel in the back of the main church. The main part of the church is reserved for the already gathering visitors, who can prepare themselves for the morning prayer in silence. The mass is not part of the 'mandatory' daily routine for the visiting youth, but is free for all to visit.

The mass is celebrated by the Taizé priests and Catholic priests who visit Taizé with a group of young people. The temporary chapel is created by closing down a section of the church, where a movable altar is placed. The attendants take place on the ground, just as in the general prayers. The morning of my observations (15 April 2014), the esteemed number of attendants is about 300. In comparison, some 5000 attend the morning prayer on this day.

The liturgy celebrated is that of the Latin rite. The hymns chosen are Taizé's. A great amount of hosts is being consecrated, far more than necessary for the gathered people. Most people seem familiar with the liturgy and are clearly used to celebrate it. Most of them receive communion, only few request for a blessing instead. When mass is ended the consecrated bread and wine are taken by the priests and stored in the tabernacle in the front section of the church.

2.2.3 *Morning prayer*

The morning prayer starts at 8.15 AM. The main difference with the other two prayers that take place around noon and in the evening is that in this morning prayer communion is being administered. That is why it is significant for this research.

Typical for the Taizé prayers is that almost everything is being sung. The prayer starts with the brothers entering the church, taking their places in their designated area. LED displays throughout the church announce the next song. A songbook and leaflets with additional songs and the reading are distributed at the entrances. When all brothers are seated, the service starts with a song. Thereafter, a psalm is being sung, most of it by the brothers, the refrain by all. After this, the people in the front will turn around, so that all face the ambon, from which the gospel of that service is being read. This happens in two languages, in this case in French and English. After another song all will turn towards the altar again. Small excerpts from the gospel are being read in several more languages, so that most people have had the chance to hear it in a language they know.

After yet another song, a silence is kept for seven to twelve minutes. This silence replaces the homily and provides space for personal contemplation or prayer. After the silence, intercessions are being uttered or sung by the brothers, interspersed by one of Taizé's 'Kyrie eleison' songs, followed in the end by the 'Our Father'.

Then, everyone stands up for a simple communion prayer, after which communion is administered. This prayer is taken from the tradition of Taizé itself. As stated above, the bread and wine are consecrated in the morning mass. There is also the possibility to turn to administrators of blessed bread or of Protestant communion. These are held by so called permanents, young people who have decided to stay several weeks or even several months in Taizé. They locate themselves at designated places in the front section of the church. Especially in the busy periods like Easter and throughout summer, the church is very crowded. It is physically a challenge find one's way to the front section to actually make use of these possibilities.

Although I lacked the means to investigate it, I have reason to assume that at least some of the non Catholic visitors turn to the brothers administering Catholic communion instead of to the administrators of Protestant bread or the blessed bread.

Most people indeed go to the brothers, who administer consecrated hosts and wine. Some request for a blessing instead of receiving the Catholic communion. During this administration of the sacrament, more songs are sung. When everyone has had the chance to communicate, the brothers leave the church. The visitors can choose to stay a little longer in the church for more singing, but gradually everyone will leave for breakfast.

2.2.4 Sunday Mass and special occasions

On Sundays morning mass is incorporated in the morning prayer. All elements of the Latin rite are incorporated in the morning prayer liturgy, which therefore takes a lot longer than a regular morning prayer. Since every week in Taizé is a reflection of the Holy Week, every Sunday represents Easter. Consequently, Thursdays represent Holy Thursday. Then mass is not celebrated in the morning, but is incorporated in the evening prayer, in the same way as Sunday mass. On Fridays, representing Holy Friday, mass is not celebrated.

2.3 Conclusions

The Taizé community is not another alternative to existing Churches, but a monastic community of men from different Christian denominations. It was founded in 1942 by Roger Schutz, a Swiss Protestant, who longed deeply for reconciliation amongst Christians.

The community started out as a mixed Protestant community. Already since the 1950's it attracted many, predominantly young visitors. Thus Taizé became not only a centre of ecumenical encounter, but also a significant centre of evangelization and revitalization of faith. According to brother Roger's principle of dynamics of the provisional, the community embraced this unanticipated situation.

Although personal relationships were already growing, contacts with the Catholic Church were few and reserved, since the Catholic Church was not yet involved in the ecumenical movement. This attitude changed dramatically with Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's.

In 1972 the first Catholic entered the community. On that occasion, Bishop Le Bourgeois of Autun for the first time gave communion to brother Roger and the community. In this period, marked by great optimism that full ecclesial unity would soon be achieved, permission was granted to celebrate Roman Catholic mass in the community. Ever since Catholic mass is the dominant form of worship in the community.

Today, mass is celebrated every morning. In the morning prayer, the brothers all receive communion, along with the Catholics visiting Taizé. Summit of the week is Sunday mass, celebrated within the morning prayer. Non Catholic visitors are offered alternatives, like bread from an earlier celebrated Protestant holy Supper or blessed bread. Occasionally, also Orthodox mass is celebrated. Different rites are never celebrated in the same service. Without having empirical data to confirm this presumption, I can reasonably assume that some non Catholic visitors do receive communion during the morning prayers.

3 Legal positioning

As stated in the first chapter, theology and ecclesiastical law are the two sides of the coin that is the internal life of the Church community. The relationship between the two is mutual, however “canon law, in its essence and existence, depends on a pre-existing theological reality.”¹ This means that theology precedes canon law and that canon law is the result of the practical implementation of theology. Theology provides the principles for the legislation to regulate a concrete practice.

In this research, the concrete practice as described in chapter 2 is the starting point. In this third chapter I will examine the legislation that is relevant to this practice. The sources I draw from are the *Codex Iuris Canonici*, the Code of Canon Law, and the Second Vatican Council’s decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Then I will look at the interpretation and implementation by Church officials, by examining their attitude towards the Taizé practice. Paragraph 3.3 contains the conclusions I draw from this reflection. In the next chapter I will turn to the underlying theological motives.

3.1 Ecclesial documents on the Eucharist in ecumenical contexts

3.1.1 *Codex Iuris Canonici*

The prime source for regulations in the Catholic Church is the *Codex Iuris Canonici*, the Code of Canon Law (CIC). The first remark I have to make about canon law is that the present codex was promulgated by Pope John Paul II only in 1983. This means that all earlier decisions concerning ecumenism and Taizé were taken under the old codex of 1917. However, since it is the aim of this research to reflect on the current situation, it is sufficient to consider the new codex alone.

Secondly, whenever canon law is considered, the question of hermeneutics arises. Again, the aim of this research is reflection, not to give a juridical verdict. Still, this is

¹ Örsy, Lászlás M., *Theology and Canon Law. New Horizons for Legislation and Interpretation* (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press 1992), 7.

the proper place to examine some of the remarks made by Ladislav Örsy in his book *Theology and canon law*. In this I will focus on the relationship between canon law and ecumenism in particular.

The new codex was initiated by the Second Vatican Council. Örsy points to the new attitude this Council displayed and that resonates in the new codex. Örsy describes this attitude by saying that “with the help of increased knowledge, the mind can *move into a higher viewpoint, take a fresh look at familiar things, and have the basis to raise new questions*. The answers will be a felicitous synthesis of old and new, just as happened at Vatican II.”² With regard to ecumenism, this new way of thinking resulted in the Council’s shift “*from confessional conflict to ecumenical vision*. (...) The council moved away from such hostile attitudes and came to a better understanding of unity, notwithstanding our differences. This movement gave a new direction to the Catholic Church in ecumenical matters and created a much more favorable climate for the work of reunion.”³

The codex is rather concise when it comes to the Eucharist in ecumenical context. Two canons are of special interest. Canon 844 states about the administration of the Eucharist to non Catholics in paragraphs one and four:

§1. Catholic ministers administer the sacraments licitly to Catholic members of the Christian faithful alone, who likewise receive them licitly from Catholic ministers alone, without prejudice to the prescripts of §§2, 3, and 4 of this canon, and can. 861, §2.

§4. If the danger of death is present or if, in the judgment of the diocesan Bishop or conference of Bishops, some other grave necessity urges it, Catholic ministers administer these same sacraments licitly also to other Christians not having full communion with the Catholic Church, who cannot approach a minister of their own community and who seek such on their own accord, provided that they manifest Catholic faith in respect to these sacraments and are properly disposed.

² Örsy, *Theology and Canon Law*, 15 [italics by Örsy].

³ Örsy, *Theology and Canon Law*, 13 [italics by Örsy].

The community adheres to this canon by offering non Catholics the opportunity to receive Protestant communion or the blessed bread. However, in the busy periods of the year the church is so crowded that it is difficult to find one's way to the special locations where these are administered. Adequate data about who in fact receives communion during the morning prayer lacks. This could be a field of further investigation. In any case, the situation in Taizé is rather complex. So many people from such various contexts are present that adequate control is virtually impossible.

When it comes to the brothers, they all receive Catholic communion, Catholics and Protestants alike. Although a formal dispensation is absent, informally this practice has the approval of the local Bishop, ever since mgr. Armand Le Bourgeois, the then Bishop of Autun, gave communion first to brother Roger and later to all members of the community.⁴

The other relevant canon at this point is canon 908:

Catholic priests are forbidden to concelebrate the Eucharist with priests or ministers of Churches or ecclesial communities which do not have full communion with the Catholic Church. Catholic Eucharist and the Protestant holy Supper are not being celebrated within a single service. Every morning they are celebrated apart from each other, the Eucharist in the improvised chapel in the back of the Church of Reconciliation, the holy Supper in the Orthodox chapel, outside of the church. On Sundays and other special occasions when the Eucharist is celebrated in the prayer service, no Protestant alternative will be celebrated at the same time as well. It is clear that the community has chosen the Catholic Eucharist as their common form of worship. In that sense the Eucharist is dominant in Taizé today.

⁴ Guenois, 'Something that was without precedent'.

3.1.2 A key principle from Vatican II

Conciliar documents contain first of all dogmatic statements. However, they also express guidelines for practical implementation of the teaching of the Church. The theological reasoning of the Council will be treated in the next chapter, here I look at the guidelines given.

As stated already in the previous paragraph, the Second Vatican Council embraced and promoted ecumenism and expressed a new attitude towards non Catholic Christians. In fact, the entire decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* is dedicated to the restoration of Christian unity. No longer is ecumenism of return the sole conception of restoration of the unity. Since Vatican II the Catholic Church promotes active participation in the ecumenical movement.

This participation needs guidance and regulation to define the space and the boundaries for ecumenical encounter. The council encourages ecumenical encounters and, under some conditions, shared prayer. With regard to the Eucharist the council states in number 8:

“Yet worship in common (communicatio in sacris) is not to be considered as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of Christian unity. There are two main principles governing the practice of such common worship: first, the bearing witness to the unity of the Church, and second, the sharing in the means of grace. Witness to the unity of the Church very generally forbids common worship to Christians, but the grace to be had from it sometimes commends this practice. The course to be adopted, with due regard to all the circumstances of time, place, and persons, is to be decided by local episcopal authority, unless otherwise provided for by the Bishops' Conference according to its statutes, or by the Holy See.”

The language is very clear: in principle worship in common is forbidden. However, a small space is left open here for common prayer and Eucharistic sharing. The decree “offers two principles for (...) eucharistic sharing, first, as the sign of the Church’s unity, second, as participation in the means of grace. The first principle, not yet achieved,

may forbid sharing; the second may commend it.”⁵ The decree only refers to *communicatio in sacris* again in the section on ecumenical contacts with Eastern Orthodox Christians⁶, not in the section on Protestantism.

Still, apparently the Taizé community operates within the narrow space offered by this decree, according to the authorities. On an informal level, local authorities have demonstrated their approval by celebrating the Eucharist with the brothers, by distributing communion to them, and by refraining from imposing disciplinary actions against the community. I will deal with the two principles encountered in *Redintegratio unitatis* in more detail in chapter 4.

3.2 Implementation by ecclesial authorities

The implementation of the Code of Canon Law is as important as the codex itself. The authorities have to interpret and apply the law. The way ecclesial authorities have dealt with the Taizé community indicates how to value the community and its methods from the viewpoint of canon law.

A major change can be seen in the attitudes of Catholic authorities before and after the Second Vatican Council, with regard to the community. Before the Council, the Church was rather isolated from other Christians. Permission to use the old Roman church in the village of Taizé for the ecumenical prayer services of the brothers was initially granted, but soon withdrawn, because the Bishop of Autun was not sure whether this would be in line with the Church’s policy. It was such a big issue that it eventually ended up with the papal nuncio in Paris, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli - the later John XXIII. He gave permission to use the village church for the prayers of the brother, without however permitting them to welcome Catholics in their services yet.⁷ Another key relation was Cardinal Gerlier, Archbishop of Lyon. Favoring ecumenism, he urged brother Roger to visit the Pope in Rome. The first visit was not too successful.

⁵ McManus, Frederick R., ‘Canonical Overview: 1983-1999’ in Beal, John P. (ed.), *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 2000), 16.

⁶ C.f. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 15.

⁷ Santos, *A Community Called Taizé*, 62.

Brother Roger was able to express his hope that Rome would “leave a little way open.”⁸ After Pius XII died, again Cardinal Gerlier encouraged brother Roger to visit Rome for an audience with the newly elected Pope John XXIII. According to brother Emile of Taizé, brother Roger considered Pope John XXIII to be the person that influenced the community the most.⁹ The Pope would have a meeting with brother Roger every year, a custom continued by the Popes after him. He also invited him to participate in the Second Vatican Council as an observer. On that occasion brother Roger and the brothers accompanying him met several Bishops and Cardinals, among whom also Karol Wojtyła, the later Pope John Paul II.¹⁰ In 1986, during his papacy, he visited Taizé. He gave communion to brother Roger at several occasions.

His future successor, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, gave communion to brother Roger too, at the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Cardinal Kasper analyzed that “Ratzinger only repeated what had already been done before him.”¹¹ Still, the Vatican was somewhat embarrassed by the criticism in Catholic media and informally declared that under the circumstances, communion could not be denied to brother Roger.

The papacy and the community have had and still have a close relationship. John Paul II visited the community in 1986. Pope Benedict XVI has sent several messages to the community and to the visitors of the European meetings, organized by the brothers every year in a big European city. In 2012 this meeting took place in Rome, with on the programme also a prayer meeting at St. Peter’s square in presence of Pope Benedict. However, Popes like Benedict seemed to prefer to stress the spiritual ecumenism of Taizé rather than to draw attention to the practice of common worship. Thus Benedict said: “brother Roger encouraged all those who passed through Taize to become seekers of communion. We should listen in our hearts to his spiritually lived

⁸ Brother Roger, quoted in: Santos, *A community called Taizé*, 64.

⁹ Brother Emile, ‘Taizé: a call to reconciliation’ (lecture at the KU Leuven, KU Leuven website: <http://www.kuleuven.be/up/images/documents/taizereconciliation.doc> : 20 october 2008) [2 june 2014].

¹⁰ Brother Emile, ‘Taizé: a call to reconciliation’.

¹¹ Magister, ‘Was the founder of Taizé Protestant, or Catholic?’

ecumenism, and let ourselves be guided by his witness towards an ecumenism which is truly interiorised and spiritualised.”¹²

This is in contrast to the active approval given by local Bishops. The Bishop of Autun, as indicated earlier, gave communion to brother Roger and the community. Several other Bishops have ordained some of the brothers, originating from their respective dioceses, to the priesthood, enabling the community to celebrate Catholic mass together. As a result of this, today three priests are members of the community. The ordination of Taizé brothers to the priesthood can be interpreted as an indirect endorsement by Church authorities of the life of the community, including its Eucharistic practice.

3.3 Conclusions

At the end of this chapter I want to draw some conclusion, at first about the categories canon law speaks about. Concelebration is carefully avoided in Taizé; all non Catholic worship services and masses are celebrated on other times and/or other places than Catholic mass. Concerning intercommunion, it is a fact that non Catholic brothers receive Catholic communion. One can speak of intercommunion, when it comes to the brothers. However, they participate in the community and its liturgy on their own behalf, not as representatives of their respective Churches. Local authorities *de facto* consider the community and its individual members to be in full communion with the Catholic Church.

Although I did not have the chance to investigate if non Catholics do in fact receive communion in Taizé, it is reasonable to assume that this does take place. It is not the community's policy, as is demonstrated by their effort to enable the visitors to receive communion according to their own traditions.

¹² Benedict XVI, 'Taizé: European Youth Meeting. Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI' (Vatican website:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121229_taize_en.html : 29 December 2012) [24 June 2014].

The space provided by ecclesial law for ecumenical encounters involving the Eucharist is very limited. The document that forms the foundation of later legislation and directions, *Redintegratio Unitatis*, in general forbids worship in common. Only in exceptional cases permission to shared prayer and table communion may be granted. The fact that the Taizé community *de facto* is granted this space, points out that apparently this is such an exceptional case.

Ecclesial law first and foremost has ecumenical encounters between different Churches in mind. Taizé is not a Church, but a community of men that aim for reconciliation amongst themselves. This might be one reason to treat the community with special consideration.

The personal relations between the community and ecclesial authorities, local and universal, have been crucial for answering the juridical questions about the Taizé practice. A special role is played by brother Roger, the founder of the community. His personal relations with the local Bishops and the Popes has led to a mutual understanding and recognition. Clearly, these authorities have judged brother Roger to be in (nearly) full communion with the Catholic Church, reason not to deny him holy communion. Without this relation built on trust, it is hardly imaginable that the community would have had the position it now enjoys.

The most explicit sign of approval of the community's practice is delivered by the ordination of some brothers to the priesthood. Especially this act legitimates the practice. Another sign was delivered by Cardinal Kasper presiding over brother Roger's funeral mass at the Church of Reconciliation. This is however more likely to be interpreted as honoring the person and ideals of brother Roger than as an official 'green light' for the regular practice of the community. Approval is granted in a more implicit way, by fostering close relations, praising the initiative of the brothers, and by abstaining from disciplinary actions against (members of) the community.

Pope Benedict XVI, addressing the community and its visitors, rather stressed the spiritual ecumenism performed than acknowledging the full table community that already exists at least within the brotherhood. I interpret this as a signal that the Church does not disapprove of the current practice, but neither wants to promote it as a model of ecumenical encounter

4 Theological reflection

After having completed the first two steps of this investigation, describing the practice and positioning it within the legal framework of the Catholic Church, it is time to reflect on it from the perspective of systematic theology. Starting point of my reflection is the *communio* ecclesiology as expressed by Cardinal Kurt Koch in his speech at the International Eucharistic Conference (IEC) of 2012, complemented with his ecclesiology *Die Kirche Gottes* and his book on ecumenism *Dass Alle Eins sein*. Koch is a theologian in the school of Ratzinger and a prominent in the dominant reception of Vatican II. Since 2010, Koch is also the president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. As such, his ecclesiology is of great significance for the ecumenical dialogue.

In paragraph 4.1 I reflect on ecumenism in general and the Taizé practice in general from Koch's ecclesiology. The necessity of visible ecclesial unity for table sharing is supported by this ecclesiology. The ecumenical approach of Taizé stresses other presuppositions, as I will demonstrate in paragraph 4.2. I use this paragraph to introduce the view of Taizé as expressed by the current prior of Taizé, brother Alois. Based on his lecture, delivered at the IEC 2012 too, I will let the Taizé practice reflect on Catholic theology as well.

4.1 Catholic ecclesiology, Eucharist and ecumenism

4.1.1 *Communion ecclesiology*

Cardinal Koch, together with his tutor Ratzinger and his predecessor as president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Cardinal Walter Kasper, belongs to the dominant strand of reception of Vatican II that favors the concept of

communio to represent best the council's ecclesiology.¹ This concept of communion is the core of the Church's self understanding and its basis for participation in the ecumenical movement.

Koch shows that "the point of departure for all *communio* is the encounter with Jesus Christ as the Son of God become flesh. In this encounter, communion also emerges between human beings, grounded in the communion with the Triune God. Both meanings of *communio* receive their clearest expression and realisation at the same time in the celebration of the eucharist."² Already in this statement a double principle concerning Eucharist and communion becomes clear. On the one hand, celebrating the Eucharist is an *expression* of communion. On the other, it is the *realization* of this communion. There is a tension in this double principle. One can ask the question if there is a chronological primacy of the one over the other. This is not an easy question to answer.

With the help of Paul's identification of the expression "body of Christ"³ with both the Eucharistic bread and the Church, Koch states that "the building of the church occurs through the eucharist, and the unity of the many faithful in the one church comes from the one eucharistic bread and thus from the one Christ: because Christ is one, the eucharistic bread is also only one; and because the faithful partake of communion with the one Christ through this one bread, the church too can only be one."⁴ Thus, ontologically there *is in fact only one Church*, despite its visible division. Within Catholic ecclesiology the one Church is represented by the concept of the universal Church, in which the distinctive local Churches are united: "each local church that celebrates the eucharist is *wholly* church, but no local church is the *whole* church."⁵ But schisms like the Great Schism and the Reformation have broken the visible unity of local Churches. Ecclesial structures and liturgical life are no longer shared. The concept of the universal

¹ Koch, Kurt, 'The Relation between the Eucharist and Ecclesial Communion: An Ecumenical View' (lecture at the IEC 2012, IEC 2012 website: <http://www.iec2012.ie/media/1SymposiumKoch1.pdf> : 8 june 2012) [6 june 2014], 1.

² Koch, 'The Relation', 1.

³ 1 Cor 10:16, cf. Koch, 'The Relation', 5-6.

⁴ Koch, 'The Relation', 3.

⁵ Koch, 'The Relation', 8 [italics by Koch].

Church is fundamental for Catholic communion ecclesiology and the cornerstone for the Catholic goal with the ecumenical process: restoring full visible ecclesiastical communion.

4.1.2 *Communion ecclesiology and ecumenism*

Corresponding to this ecclesiology, “the restoration of unity amongst all Christians,”⁶ has been the goal of Catholic involvement in ecumenical dialogue. Koch describes this goal as “die sichtbare Einheit im Glauben, im sakramentalen Leben und im kirchlichen Amt.”⁷ The ecclesiological documents of Vatican II *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Lumen Gentium* have opened up Catholic ecclesiology for the participation of other Churches and ecclesial communities in its own communion. The famous phrase “*subsistit in*”⁸ indicates that the Catholic Church being communion does not necessarily exclude other Churches or communities from belonging to the same communion. Although its full meaning is debated, the phrase at least states that the full unity or communion of the Church subsists in the Catholic Church, but that other Churches and ecclesial communities to a greater or lesser extent share in the communion of the Catholic Church. For the Catholic Church, the goal of ecumenism is to restore full communion amongst all Christians, so that they are visibly united in the one Church, as they are already ontologically.

Although originally shared by most parties involved, in the current state of the ecumenical process this visible unity does not seem to be the ultimate goal anymore: “Vielen scheinen sich mit dem heutigen Zustand der Verschiedenheit der Kirchen abgefunden zu haben und sich mit dem faktischen Pluralismus zufriedenzugeben.”⁹ Koch analyses the Protestant and Orthodox ecclesiologies with their stress on the local Church to be an explanation for this paradigm shift in ecumenism. However,

⁶ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1.

⁷ Koch, Kurt, *Dass Alle Eins sein. Ökumenische Perspektiven* (Augsburg: Sankt Ulrich Verlag GmbH 2006), 25.

⁸ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4.

⁹ Koch, Kurt, *Die Kirche Gottes. Gemeinschaft im Geheimnis des Glaubens* (Augsburg: Sankt Ulrich Verlag GmbH 2007), 268.

indifferentism with regard to visible division in structure and liturgical life is unacceptable for communion ecclesiology, as expressed by Koch.

Returning now to the double principle of expression and realization of unity through the Eucharist, a remark on the presupposition encountered in canon law is appropriate. According to canon law full visible communion is required in order to share Eucharistic communion, as can be concluded from canon 844, c.f. paragraph 3.1.1. Likewise, the 'Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism' of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity states: "Eucharistic communion is inseparably linked to full ecclesial communion and its visible expression."¹⁰ Koch supports this requirement by stating that "because for the Roman Catholic Church the intrinsic relationship of eucharist and church is fundamental, she holds fast - like the majority of Christian churches - to the principle of the indissoluble unity of ecclesial communion and eucharistic communion."¹¹ The ecclesial communion Koch speaks about is in this statement not the ontological communion established through the Eucharist, but the visible unity. This is one reason for the Catholic Church to stress the visible unity as a precondition for Eucharistic sharing. In the context of the current developments in the ecumenical process this is understandable. According to Koch, many partners in the ecumenical dialogue are no longer interested in establishing visible unity in one ecclesiastical structure, but only in Eucharistic intercommunion. The fear of indifferentism or accepted pluralism keeps Catholic theology from taking steps in that direction. The conclusion so far, shared by Koch, is that "the shared Supper belongs as a whole at the end and not at the beginning of ecumenical endeavours."¹²

¹⁰ Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, 'Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism' (Vatican website:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_2_5031993_principles-and-norms-on-ecumenism_en.html 25 March 1993) [14 June 2014], 129.

¹¹ Koch, 'The Relation', 9.

¹² Cardinal Karl Lehmann quoted in Koch, 'The Relation', 9.

4.1.3 *Reflection on Taizé*

What does this all mean for the practice encountered in Taizé? In chapter 3 I concluded that the practice is tolerated and even facilitated. But the current practice of Taizé, involving non Catholics participating in the Eucharist has not yet a defined and officially authorized status within the framework of ecclesial law. Something similar can be said about Catholic theology. Although much of Taizé's ideas correspond with Catholic theology, the two do not coincide completely. Especially when it comes to the tension concerning ontological and visible communion, the two differ. Still, implementing theological principles in daily practice, apparently there is enough reason for Catholic authorities to regard the community as an exception to the general rules.

Brother Alois, brother Roger's successor and current prior of the community might have the right explanation, expressed in his contribution to the International Eucharistic Congress of 2012. When he discussed the ideas of the community about the relation between baptism, reconciliation and communion, he asked: "is it because Brother Roger was so consistent with this vision of the Church bringing together all the baptized, and lived it out with all its consequences, that he was recognized by different Church leaders as a brother sharing communion in Christ?"¹³ In the next paragraph, I will reflect upon Catholic theology from the view expressed by brother Alois concerning the relation between baptism, reconciliation and communion.

4.2 Taizé's concept of reconciliation

4.2.1 *Reconciliation*

Brother Alois, current prior of Taizé, spoke at the International Eucharistic Congress of 2012 too. He delivered a speech in which he set forth the ideas of reconciliation of brother Roger and the community. Brother Alois says that brother Roger "opened an

¹³ Brother Alois, 'A Passion for the Unity of the Body of Christ' (lecture at the IEC 2012, IEC 2012 website: <http://www.iec2012.ie/media/Monday11thJuneBrotherAlois1.pdf> : 11 june 2012) [6 june 2014], 5.

original way to head towards the visible unity of Christians.”¹⁴ In this paragraph I want to demonstrate that this way is based on Taizé’s concept of reconciliation, which starts from ontological communion instead of visible communion.

Brother Roger was not willing to choose between the various Christian denominations. He expressed this in his personal ‘creed’: “I have found my own Christian identity by reconciling within myself the faith of my origins with the mystery of the Catholic faith, without breaking fellowship with anyone.”¹⁵ By making three remarks about this spiritual statement of brother Roger, I will explain the relation between communion and Eucharist as viewed by the Taizé community. In paragraph 4.2.2 I will elaborate the role of baptism in this relation.

At first, the key concept of the spirituality of brother Roger and the Taizé community is that of reconciliation. Through Christ, people are reconciled with God and with each other. The communion between God and men that becomes visible through this reconciliation does not only then appear, but reappears in its fullness. Likewise, the communion between men reappears. Communion between God and man, and of man with one another, is reestablished in Christ’s salvific actions and his institution of the Church. Reconciliation is not the establishment of something unprecedented, but the restoration of what was lost. After Christ, only visible unity between Christians was lost, but not the ontological unity amongst men established by his actions.

The Taizé community tries to make this unity visible again. In the shift of focus from visible division toward the ontological unity that is inherent to the nature of the Church as precondition for ecumenical encounter and common worship lies the most significant contribution and originality of brother Roger and the Taizé community. This vision is best summarized in the words of brother Alois: “brother Roger was convinced that such a community could give visible expression to the unity of the Body of Christ, which not only lies before us as a goal, but which already exists in God. The Church is divided, but in its depths it is undivided. In the heart of God it is one. So it is up to us to create places where this unity can emerge and be manifested.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Brother Alois, ‘A Passion’, 1.

¹⁵ Brother Roger, quoted in brother Alois, ‘A Passion’, 6.

¹⁶ Brother Alois, ‘A Passion’, 6.

This is why brother Alois can say that “often the words ‘may all be one’ are construed as a command to be put into practice. But they express first of all the gift that Christ gives to humankind: he bears us within himself; he brings us with himself into the communion of the Holy Trinity (...). He does not only pray that all may be one but that they may be one ‘in us’.”¹⁷ One element of the original way of brother Roger is that his starting point was this gift of communion, which he accepted. In his view, this implied that he had to put his trust in the given communion, which is rooted in ‘in us’, which is the very Trinity. For brother Roger this meant that he had to accept *within himself* the reconciliation of man-made divisions.

My second remark is about this phrase “within himself”. For brother Roger and his community, the way of reconciliation involves in the first place the self. Brother Roger’s grandmother, after having seen Christians fight each other in WW I, chose to regularly go to the Catholic Church nearby to pray. This simple yet powerful gesture has inspired brother Roger to pursue reconciliation in the first place within himself. The sensibility with which he has proceeded testifies of this attitude. Taizé’s contribution to the ecumenical process is in the first place a deeply lived spiritual one.

As demonstrated in chapter 3, the situation in Taizé has not yet received full official acknowledgement, although the practice has the implicit approval of Church authorities. The community never wished to push the limits by force. Neither has it imposed its ideas or its own expression of unity on others; visitors are offered the possibility to receive communion according to their own tradition.

Likewise, theological consensus between the community and, in this context, Catholic theology is not yet established. But brother Alois asks in this context the rhetorical question: “In the history of the Church, has not lived-out faith always preceded the theological expression of it?”¹⁸ The theological concept of *lex orandi, lex credendi* comes to mind here. A concept very appropriate in the case of Taizé, since the lived-out faith first of all finds its expression in the common prayers and Eucharistic worship. In this context I also call to mind again the remark of Cardinal Kasper that brother

¹⁷ Brother Alois, ‘A Passion’, 2.

¹⁸ Brother Alois, ‘A Passion’, 6.

Roger “crossed certain confessional limits”.¹⁹ Kasper also makes clear that the Catholic Church did not want this incomplete consensus to be an obstacle in the case of brother Roger.

When it comes to the practice of the Taizé community, it becomes clear that it is not a model that can be transplanted to another context. The community itself is not a format or a concept that in itself is the solution to the questions of ecclesial division. But the personal and spiritual reconciliation can be a source of inspiration. It is a provisional solution that calls for a permanent solution.

A third remark concerns the final phrase of brother Rogers statement, that he did not break fellowship with anyone. In the first place, this phrase refers to the Church of his origins. Brother Roger sought communion with other Christians, without ‘converting’ to another denomination. He continued to be in communion with the Church of his origins, thus not breaking fellowship with it. But I think that, based on the spirituality of reconciliation, it is reasonable to include other Christians as well. I interpret this phrase of brother Roger to include other Christians and their significant Churches and communities, based on the ontological communion that the Church is.

4.2.2 *The significance of baptism*

Brother Rogers refusal to break fellowship with anyone is rooted in his firm belief in the communion granted by God in Christ, which is already established in baptism. Or, as brother Alois puts it: “when we discover that communion with God is an exchange, then we understand better that reconciliation is not one dimension of the Gospel among others; it is the very core. It coincides with what is central to our life as baptized persons; it is the restoration by Christ of mutual trust between God and humanity, the beginning of a new creation. And that transforms the relationships between people.”²⁰ The nature of the communion established in baptism is a topic on which Catholic theology and Taizé differ. The Taizé community sees full communion established in baptism, a basis for their ideas on how to restore visible unity amongst baptized Christians. But according to *Unitatis Redintegratio* baptism “only a beginning, an

¹⁹ Magister, Sandro, ‘Was the Founder of Taizé Protestant, or Catholic?’

²⁰ Brother Alois, ‘A Passion’, 3.

inauguration wholly directed toward the fullness of life in Christ. Baptism, therefore, envisages a complete profession of faith, complete incorporation in the system of salvation such as Christ willed it to be, and finally complete ingrafting in eucharistic communion."²¹ I cannot further investigate this difference in views and its consequences here. I can only signal it. A further deliberation of this topic might be helpful in the current ecumenical debate.

4.3 Conclusion

Present Catholic communion ecclesiology cannot justify the practice as encountered in Taizé completely. In my reflection on the practice, I have encountered a tension concerning the concept of *communio*. Catholic theology does consider visible ecclesiastical communion a precondition for participating in the Eucharist, whereas Taizé rather stresses the ontological communion established by Christ and begotten by baptism.

Reflecting on the situation in Taizé from the perspective of Catholic theology does provide a warning against indifferentism regarding visible disunity or acceptance of the *status quo*. On the other hand, the Taizé practice encourages Catholic theology to explore once more the nature of the communion granted by baptism. Thus, this practice, which is in a way authorized by the Catholic Church, challenges Catholic theology at this point. The words of praise uttered by several high authorities with regard to the ecumenical efforts of the community justify a stronger interest of Catholic theologians for the practice and ideas of the Taizé community. In my opinion, this interest can focus best on the nature of communion perceived in baptism.

The unsolved problems encountered imply that, from the Catholic perspective, the Taizé practice cannot be a model for ecumenical encounter. Similar to the outcome of the previous chapter, from the perspective of Catholic theology too the Taizé practice can only be defined as exceptional. As such it is a sign, a provisional solution, an anticipation of the hoped for outcome of ecumenism: full ecclesial communion, expressed in shared worship.

²¹ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 22.

5 Conclusion

At the conclusion of this thesis it is time to return to the research question and to answer it according to the results of the previous chapters. This thesis is a systematic attempt to make the position of the Taizé community vis-à-vis the Catholic Church more explicit. The question was: "How can the Eucharistic practice of Taizé as an ecumenical event be interpreted from the viewpoints of present-day Catholic ecclesial law and systematic theology?" In order to answer this question, I have taken three steps.

The first was to describe the actual practice in chapter 2. The Taizé community has evolved over time from a small community rooted in several Protestant Churches, to a large established community of Protestants and Catholics, with great significance for the ecumenical process and evangelization. Liturgical practice has changed according to this evolution. Since 1972 Catholic Eucharist is the common form of worship of the brothers. Catholic mass is celebrated every morning. The brothers participate in it by receiving communion during the morning prayer, when communion is administered. On Sundays and other special occasions, Eucharist itself is incorporated in the prayer service. As a consequence, in practice intercommunion takes place, since many of the brothers are not Catholic. This can also be explained as the community being recognized as in fact being in full communion with the Catholic Church. The community does provide alternatives for non Catholic visitors. Given the circumstances, in their execution these alternatives may not be sufficient to prevent non Catholic visitors from receiving communion during the morning prayer.

The second step was to position this practice within the Catholic legal framework. I have demonstrated that only little space is available for the celebration of the Eucharist in ecumenical contexts. In general, common worship is forbidden. However, exceptional cases can be discriminated, which are to be decided upon by local and/or universal ecclesial authorities. In the case of Taizé, apart from permission for common prayer, official declarations on the status of its practice are not provided. However, informally and in most cases implicitly, approval is granted by the authorities. The

Catholic Church tolerates the situation in Taizé, without promoting it. The practice has never been promoted as official Church policy regarding the Eucharist in ecumenical context. Instead, the spiritual ecumenism lived by the community is stressed. The concept of Taizé has gradually received appreciation. It does profit from the small space offered by ecclesial law. Thus it does occupy a certain space within the legal framework of the Catholic Church. However, the Church has refrained from defining this space and from formally authorizing the practice.

The third step was to reflect upon the situation from the perspective of Catholic theology. The *communio* ecclesiology, which has become the dominant interpretation of the Second Vatican Council and still promoted by the president of the pontifical council for the promotion of Christian unity Cardinal Koch, appears to be the motive for the hesitation of the Church to allow common worship without visible communion. Communion ecclesiology and ecclesial law both stress the dimension of the Eucharist as expressing unity, instead of the Eucharist constituting unity, as precondition for table communion.

Communion ecclesiology certainly contains a warning for Taizé against indifferentism or acceptance of established pluralism. On the other hand, the theology and practice of Taizé challenges Catholic theology to consider once more the consequences of the concept of communion established in baptism, already present in Catholic theology. Taizé's spirituality of reconciliation stresses the ontological communion, whereas Catholic theology and law stress visible communion as precondition for common worship. Further consideration of this tension is in the interest of the ecumenical debate.

From both perspectives the practice of Taizé is to be considered as an exceptional situation. It is the product of the original spirituality of brother Roger and his brothers, of the ecumenical optimism that characterizes the early post Conciliar period, and of the willingness of local and universal ecclesial authorities to contribute to this spirituality. Under these unique conditions the practice evolved into its current shape. Being explicitly an exception to the rule, it cannot serve as a model or a precedent of Church policy regarding the Eucharist in ecumenical contexts. Current Catholic law and theology could not justify that yet. But neither was it intended to serve as a model. The situation in Taizé is a provisional solution for the urgent problem of Christian division.

According to the intention of the community, as well as to its position within the Catholic legal framework and systematic theology, Taizé can be a sign and a source of inspiration. The position of the Taizé practice can be located both within and outside Catholic law and theology. A position characteristic for the community as a whole, located at the crossroads of various legal and theological systems. Taizé indeed is a “parable of communion,”¹ as it describes itself. Visible communion is not yet fully realized, but the community is a sign of it. The Eucharistic practice of the community anticipates both the ontological communion inherent to the Christian Church and the visible communion yet to be established.

¹ Brother Roger quoted in Brother Alois, ‘A Passion for the Unity of the Body of Christ’, 5.

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About the author

Fokke Wouda (1988) was born in a reformed family in Apeldoorn. He studied reformed theology in Kampen (Broederweg) and catholic theology in Tilburg. The international master's programme *Christianity and Society* focusses on the relation between christianity and various aspects of society, amongst which the worlds of politics, economics, and the interreligious dialogue. Currently, Wouda is active as a post academic intern at the Council of Churches in the Netherlands (www.raadvankerken.nl), exploring the ecumenical and interreligious processes at several levels. Inspired by Taizé's spirituality of reconciliation and intrigued by the unusual circumstances in Taizé, Wouda has initiated this research to contribute to the ecumenical debate.



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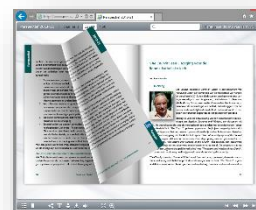
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