

# UNITY ACCORDING TO THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND VASSULA RYDÉN

by Fr. Dr. Michael Kaszowski

Fr. Kaszowski has taught dogmatic theology at the Archdiocesan Seminary of Katowice, Poland for the past 20 years. Vassula Rydén, the bearer of True Life in God, is called the apostle of unity. In effect, her mission to unify the Church of Christ, torn by schisms, appears as her principal task, as is most clearly delineated in the Messages.

However, a short time ago, Vassula Rydén was reproached for allegedly proclaiming a false ecumenism that is rejected by the Catholic Church. For this reason, it is worthwhile to compare her teachings with those of the Second Vatican Council, because the latter lays out the doctrine on unity which must be accepted by all Catholics.

## I. WHERE IS THE TRUE CHURCH TO BE FOUND?

The Second Vatican Council, which sought to accelerate the process of unifying the Church, had to first of all resolve a problem which is at the same time important and difficult. That is, how to define the relationship between the One Church founded by Jesus Christ and the many churches which exist today.

### THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE MANY CHURCHES

In order to respond to this difficult situation, the Council avails itself of the notion of the Church of Christ which subsists in the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches. Thus, the Council explains:

"This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which was governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines. Since these are gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity." (*Lumen Gentium*, 8)

This affirmation constitutes a basis for the conciliar doctrine on unity and ecumenism. An example will make this more clear: suppose that in each country there are several libraries, some large and some small. In comparing them, we could say that certain books are found in all of them, and other books only in the largest library.

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND OTHER CHURCHES

We might also say, in line with the Second Vatican Council, that the Catholic Church might be equated to the largest library; the Orthodox Church as being a bit smaller, and the other churches as still smaller libraries.

Similarly, the churches, as is the case with the libraries, are not equal because they do not always possess all the means of salvation given by Christ. Nonetheless, the members of all religions are equal in that they are all persons created by God. It is somewhat similar with the libraries: although even in the smallest, one can find precious books, the libraries themselves are not equal by reason of the quantity of volumes that each possesses. Nonetheless, the people who borrow the books from the libraries are all equal from the standpoint of their human dignity. Thus, the Council expresses, on the one hand, its conviction that the Church of Christ subsists in its fullness in the Catholic Church. On the other hand, the Council perceives and appreciates the numerous elements of sanctification and truth which belong uniquely to the Church of Christ but are, nonetheless, found in the non-Catholic churches.

### WHAT COMES FROM CHRIST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT SANCTIFIES AND SAVES

The Council declares that all the elements of sanctification and of truth, including those found outside the Catholic Church insofar as they come from Christ and the Holy Spirit, lead to sanctification and to salvation. In fact, the decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3 explains: "Moreover some, even very many, of the most significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written Word of God, the life of grace, faith, hope and charity along with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to Him, belong by right to the One Church of Christ. The brethren divided from us also carry out many liturgical actions of the Christian religion. In ways that vary according to the condition of each church or community, these liturgical actions most certainly can truly engender a life of grace and, one

must say, can aptly give access to the communion of salvation."

One might explain the Conciliar teaching thus: in the small libraries many books are missing. Nonetheless, those found there can be well utilized; they can be borrowed and read profitably.

## GOOD ELEMENTS BUT ALSO DISTORTIONS

The Council doctrine cited above is very optimistic, because it recognizes elements of the one unique Church of Christ in all churches and ecclesiastical communities. Unfortunately, there remains another side of the problem of which the Council is well aware. To varying degrees, certain means of salvation are missing in non-Catholic churches, such as ordination and the Sacrament of Penance. Moreover, their veneration of the Virgin Mary and the saints is fragmented, and all the non-Catholic churches have rejected the very precious gift offered by Christ to His Church to protect their unity, their faith and the truth: the ministry of the Bishop of Rome.

Citing once again the example of the libraries, one could say that certain churches are like libraries that have been damaged by a fire that has not completely destroyed them, but has burned completely, or at least partially, many books. It is necessary, thus, to replace the ruined books because it does no good to loan them out: they are unreadable.

The Conciliar doctrine on the Church of Christ which subsists in the churches shows the road toward true ecumenism and indicates several practical steps noted in *Unitatis redintegratio*, 5-12. Let us examine them and compare them with what is brought out in the Messages transmitted by Mrs. Vassula Rydén.

## II. THE ROAD TOWARD CHURCH UNITY

The Council and the True Life in God messages show us a unity which can be brought about by conversion, love, and a humility that respects the dignity and the equality of the other. It is a unity created by all the good which comes from Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is based on truth that is respected and never rejected.

### UNITY BY SINCERE CONVERSION

"There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion," declares *Unitatis redintegratio*, 7. Indeed, unity must be authentic; it cannot be reduced to a signature on an agreement--to

a declaration which touches neither the heart nor the spirit.

Unity must, therefore, originate first of all in the hearts of men turned with love and esteem toward each brother and sister in Christ. For this reason, the Council speaks firstly of spiritual ecumenism which comes about through a change of mentality by conversion, holiness of life and by prayer. "This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement and merits the name, 'spiritual ecumenism.' (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 8). This spiritual ecumenism is thus produced in the heart. It manifests itself in love, respect for the other person and in profound and sincere conversion.

The message of Jesus given through Vassula also speaks to us of a 'spiritual' ecumenism which begins in the heart of man. Here are some examples:

*"the Kingdom of God is love, peace, unity and faith in the heart: it is the Lord's Church united in One inside your heart; ... I implore My children to unite in heart and voice and rebuild My Son's primitive Church in their heart; I am saying My Son's primitive Church, since that Church was constructed on Love, Simplicity, Humility and Faith; I do not mean you to reconstruct a new edifice, I mean you to reconstruct an edifice inside your heart, I mean you to knock down the old bricks inside your heart, bricks of disunion, intolerance, unfaithfulness, unforgiveness, lack of love, and reconstruct My Son's Church by reconciling; you need intense poverty of the spirit and an overflow of wealth of generosity,"* (TLIG Messages, September 23, 1991)

*"the real Christian is the one who is inwardly a Christian, and the real Unity is and will be in the heart; Unity will not be of the letter but of the spirit;"* (TLIG Messages, October 13, 1991)

*"unity will be in the heart;"* (TLIG Messages, October 14, 1992)

### LOVE AND HUMILITY CREATE UNITY

Lack of love, pride and rigidity cause division. In contrast, complete love, gentleness and humility lead the Church and humanity toward perfect unity. Vatican Council II reminds us of this by emphasizing the importance of humility. "We should therefore pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self-denying, humble, gentle in the service of others and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity toward them." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 7)

The singular importance of humility for the unity of the Church is enhanced also in the messages of True Life in God which could be considered the perfect commentary on the conciliar decrees.

*"Love and Humility will be the other Key for UNITY; take those Keys and use Them, use Them, My beloved, and be one, be One Holy People;"* (TLIG Messages, August 9, 1989)

Humility rejects pride and rigidity born of excessive ambition. It bends man to become the servant of those around him. It is through this means that unity must be built:

*"not until you understand that you will have to bend, will you be able to unite;"* (TLIG Messages, September 23, 1991)

*"blessed are those who do not differentiate themselves under My Holy Name, but show their unity through their humility and love; they shall be called Pillars and Foundation of God's Sanctuary;"* (TLIG Messages, April 14, 1991; cf. August 4, 1991)

*"so long as you do not reconcile in humility with each other and love one another as I love you, your separation will remain;"* (TLIG Messages, March 27, 1992)

*"I am One, yet each one of them made a Christ of their own; I am The Head of My Body, yet all I see are their heads, not Mine; tell them to lower their heads and they will see Mine; tell them to lower themselves so that I may be able to lift them to Me;"* (TLIG Messages, October 7, 1991)

## **RECOGNIZE THE EQUALITY AND DIGNITY OF ALL**

Although born into different religions, all men belong to God who created the soul of each one consciously, directly and with love. "All men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image; they have the same nature and origin. Being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all men and it must be given ever greater recognition." (*Gaudium et spes*, 29.1)

Unless one recognizes this equality, it is impossible to construct an authentic unity of the Church. Thus therefore, in each Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic it is necessary first of all to see their human dignity: of the creature who comes from God and who belongs to Him. This fundamental truth one finds in the messages of Christ written by Mrs. Vassula Rydén:

*"orthodox! catholics! protestants! you all belong to Me! you*

*are all One in My Eyes! I do not make any distinction,"* (TLIG Messages, October 27, 1987)

*"tell Me, are you not all alike, made by My Own Hands? ... who has not been made according to the likeness of My Image? ... many of them talk of unity and brotherhood, but their words are fallacious, void;"* (TLIG Messages, November 25, 1991)

We are 'one' in the eyes of God who loves people of all religions equally. This is why we must respect others if we are to have a unified church.

There is yet another reason why equality of all Christians is emphasized by the Council; that is baptism. "Baptism, therefore, constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are reborn." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 22)

Thanks to Baptism, communities (Catholic as well as non-Catholic) constitute the real mystical body of Christ: that is to say, the Church of Christ. For this reason, in the Messages given through Vassula, Jesus declares the following about the subject of Christian communities: *"all are the same in My Eyes;"* (TLIG Messages, October 27, 1987)

From the expression 'the same' one could understand that all Christian communities are the same mystical body of Christ which is torn and divided by people, and is still often deprived of the necessary means given by Christ for its development.

The context of the writings of Vassula indicates that certain communities or denominations are 'the same' and 'alike' in that they are part of the mystical body of Christ. However, they have been splintered throughout history, often thereby becoming impoverished by rejecting part of the truth and certain means of salvation given by Christ to His Church. They are like the libraries which, while still remaining libraries, allow a part of their books to be destroyed.

## **APPRECIATE AND SHARE THE GIFTS OF GOD**

The Council recalls "moreover, some, even very many of the most significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and to give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church..." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 3) Since the elements of the truth, the endowments coming from Christ and the Holy Spirit, build up and give life to the Church, they must be shared. The dogmatic constitution (*Lumen Gentium*, 15) mentions certain values present in non-Catholic churches: the veneration of Holy Scripture, religious zeal, faith and love for Almighty God the Father and for Christ, the

Son of God, our Savior; the grace of Baptism, prayer, the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and witnessing to the point of shedding one's blood. Paragraph 15 of *Unitatis redintegratio* enumerates values which can be found in the Eastern Churches: the true sacraments--above all the Eucharist, the veneration of Mary-Ever Virgin and of the saints, the riches of spiritual traditions which are expressed above all by the monastic life, the liturgical patrimony, etc.

The Council not only points to the workings of the Holy Spirit which operates in the sister Churches, but furthermore counsels Catholics to draw profit from them. "Therefore, it is earnestly recommended that Catholics avail themselves more often of the spiritual riches of the Eastern Fathers which lift up the whole man to the contemplation of divine mysteries." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 15)

Thus, according to Vatican II, it is very useful for the unity of the Church to recognize and to share all that comes from Christ and the Holy Spirit from within or from outside the Catholic Church. However, it is necessary to share only the works that come from of God. The works of God which have been deformed by man are no longer capable of personal enrichment.

Through mutual spiritual enrichment and the sharing of this grace, one finds, and in turn shares the same path with others towards unity. In the following True Life in God message, Jesus says: "*unity, My Child, is to give to each other your riches;*" (TLIG Messages, April 13, 1991)

By His messages, Jesus reveals to Vassula, an Orthodox, the riches found in the Catholic Church. He counsels her to accept these riches and to profit from them.

Indeed, Jesus asks her to practice that which is not to be found in her Orthodox Church: for example, the Way of the Cross, (see TLIG Messages, May 29, 1987), the Rosary, (see TLIG Messages, December 28, 1987), as well as the veneration of His Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of His Mother (see TLIG Messages, January 25, 1988).

Jesus desires that through Vassula's example all Christians will profit from the spiritual benefits found in the Catholic Church; for instance, meditating on the Way of the Cross as a source of grace for everyone:

*"you are to transmit and show how to do the Stations of My Cross the way it pleases your Lord, to all those who bear witness for me," "all Christians Lord?"*

*"yes, to all those who love Me, I, the Lord, do not want any divisions in My Church,"* (TLIG Messages, March 19, 1988).

In the same way, the Rosary can spiritually enrich every Christian. That is why Jesus says to Vassula: *"for My sake, Vassula, for My sake, will you learn the Rosary? hail My Mother at all times, will you do this for Me Vassula?"*

*"Lord I have never been taught."*

*"do I not know this Vassula, this is why I come to teach you and all those who never heard the Rosary;"*

*"Yes Lord, I am willing to learn Lord, help me learn."*

*"this is what I desire to hear from all of you who do not know, the same words: "yes Lord, I am willing to learn Lord, help me learn,"* (TLIG Messages, December 28, 1987)

In teaching Vassula the devotion to His Sacred Heart, Jesus wants to fill her, and also all who will follow her example, with graces, with joy and with peace: *"come and abide in My Sacred Heart where in its depths you will find Peace and will feel My ardent love I have for all of you, you will be able to tell them of My Love for them,"* (TLIG Messages, January 24, 1987)

Jesus is anxious that pastors, in the communities for which they are responsible, not reject any means which could help to better comprehend His incomprehensible love; and since that is not always the case, He gives notice that: *"My Church I will clean, I will sweep away all those that obstruct The Way to Divine Love and ... My Sacred Heart,"* (TLIG Messages, December 21, 1987)

*"it is Love speaking to a hostile world; it is Love knocking on every locked door; it is Love calling from the other side of the Wall separating us, built up by My enemies; it is Love pleading as a beggar for: a return of Love ... a smile ... a regret ... a sigh ... it is I: the Sacred Heart; I come once more to revive this dying flame in your heart into a Consuming Fire of Tenderness and Love; I descend to outpour lavishly all the Treasures of My Heart on you, humanity ... and give light to those who live in darkness and the shadow of death; ... ah, creation! what will I not do for you ..."* (TLIG Messages, September 12, 1990)

The messages received by Vassula bring out not only the forms of prayer and devotions known in the Catholic Church, but above all the truths of the faith forgotten or else rejected by non-Catholics and, unfortunately, by many Catholics of our day.

Among the truths rejected are those of the primacy and infallibility of the Pope. This is why in the message of March 18, 1991, the Blessed Virgin Mary reminds all Catholics and non-Catholics that it is necessary to be in union with and cooperate with the Bishop of Rome: "Every priest has been given the grace by God to act and represent My Son, and so I pray for those who are not yet submitting humbly to the Vicar of the Church to submit and be willing; Jesus is Faithful and True;" (TLIG Messages, March 18, 1991)

The messages of True Life in God recall at several junctures the necessity to unify the Church around the Pope. This is one of the major themes of the writings. (see TLIG Messages, December 12, 1987; May 7, 1988; May 16, 1988; June 3, 1988; June 4, 1988; June 21, 1988; November 8, 1988; December 3, 1988; February 9, 1989; March 17, 1993)

The messages given to Vassula recall not only the role of the Bishop of Rome but also other truths and traditions forgotten not only by non-Catholic churches but also by many Catholics today. These lost values are above all:

- faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist (see TLIG Messages, June 1, 1989; April 13, 1991);

- faith in the Perpetual Eucharistic Sacrifice of Christ (see TLIG Messages, January 30, 1989; October 22, 1990; May 2, 1991; June 2, 1991; June 6, 1991; July 16, 1991; November 25, 1991; April 19, 1992; May 27, 1993; June 1, 1993; December 13, 1993; December 20, 1993; December 22, 1993; August 23, 1994; October 14, 1994; October 24, 1994);

- the value of frequent sacramental confession (see TLIG Messages, February 15, 1987; November 3, 1990; March 20, 1991);

- veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary (see TLIG Messages, December 12, 1987; December 22, 1987) and of the saints (see TLIG Messages, September 27, 1987);

- the efficacy of using images and statues representing God and the saints (see TLIG Messages, October 26, 1987; August 6, 1988).

Thus, the messages received by Vassula encourage her to accept not only some precious prayers and devotions but again, all the doctrine entrusted to the Catholic Church, including the primacy of the Pope.

However, Jesus does not oblige Vassula to break with uniquely Orthodox liturgy and prayers. On

the contrary, He asks her to make known to other Christians that which is most precious in her Orthodox Church. As an example, Jesus asks Vassula to teach the non-Orthodox the Orthodox Rosary called the "Prayer of Jesus": *"ask Me every day: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner; daughter, teach your brothers this prayer,"* (TLIG Messages, January 18, 1990)

Thus, the unity proclaimed by True Life in God is to appreciate all the existing inspirations of the Holy Spirit in the churches and to share these values for mutual enrichment.

This concept of unity is identical to that of Vatican II. The conciliar decree on ecumenism, (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 16) says that unity of the Church does not require renouncing the diversity of liturgies, prayers, customs and dress. "To remove all shadow of doubt, then, this Holy Synod solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, while keeping in mind the necessary unity of the whole Church, have the power to govern themselves according to their own disciplines, since these are better suited to the character of their faithful and better adapted to foster the good of souls." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 16)

Furthermore, the Council emphasizes that a certain diversity created by the Holy Spirit constitutes a richness for the Church: "far from being an obstacle to the Church's unity, such diversity of customs and observances only adds to her beauty and contributes greatly to carrying out her mission." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 16)

Never reject any truth, but accept it completely. While calling for respect of all Christian churches and the works of the Holy Spirit found in them, the Council does not ignore the differences which divide these communities. It is above all a matter of different interpretations of the revealed truth. Indeed, in speaking of the Protestant churches, the document *Unitatis redintegratio* declares:

"We are indeed aware that there exist considerable differences from the doctrine of the Catholic Church even concerning Christ's Word of God made flesh and the work of redemption, and thus, concerning the mystery and ministry of the Church and the role of Mary in the work of salvation." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 20)

One cannot unite the Church by distancing it from the Truth of Christ, but on the contrary, by drawing closer to it. In the domain of truth no concession is

admissible: it must be loved and sought after as the Council reminds us:

"Furthermore, in ecumenical dialogue, Catholic theologians standing fast by the teaching of the Church yet searching together with separated brethren into the divine mysteries should do so with love for the truth, with charity, and with humility." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 11)

Thus, unity of the Church is built on the acceptance of the entire truth given by God. This is a thesis of the Council and, at the same time, of the message of True Life in God, which can be considered as an urgent appeal to the faithful to follow the truth--a call that is addressed as much to non-Catholics as to present-day Catholics: "*always defend to death The Truth;*" says Jesus, not only to Vassula, but to each of His disciples. (TLIG Messages, September 23, 1991)

In these messages there is nothing of the false ecumenism which would seek to unite Christians by rejecting a part of the truth because it displeases one church; for example, the unique role of Mary in the work of redemption, or that of the Pope in the Church. One could compare a false ecumenism to an absurd situation in which libraries wanting to become completely alike would destroy their most precious books of which the other libraries had been deprived or else it would send copies of the books which have been totally destroyed and charred by the fire in order to "enrich" the other libraries. Hence, false ecumenism proposes unity by the exchange of that which is least good and precious in the Church, for example, a lack of respect for the Blessed Virgin. It is ready to sacrifice truth and even the commandments of God in order to overcome differences between the churches. This is inadmissible: one cannot transmit to others errors and distortions that arose during centuries of human meanness.

There is not a trace of this false ecumenism in the writings of Vassula which call for an acceptance of the whole truth without rejecting any part of it. As an example of this attitude, one could cite a stern dialogue of Jesus with Vassula on the subject of Protestants who reject the royal dignity of the Blessed Virgin and the ministry of the Pope.

"My God, the Protestants will be shocked!" says Vassula.

Jesus answers: "*Vassula, I have been waiting years for them to change, now leave Me free to write down My desires; ... listen, can one hear Me only when it is convenient for him, then shut his ears when what I say does not suit him? ... I*

*have come to unite you all; ... would any disciple of Mine deny My appeal?*"

"No, not if they are sincere Lord."

*"by this statement you gave Me hangs all that there is to say; 'if they are sincere' then they will listen; I come to shine on you all and enlighten you to be able to unite you, but ... to My great sorrow there will be those who would prefer darkness to the Light because their deeds are evil, they would refuse to come under My Light for fear of exposing their deeds, but My devoted ones and those that sincerely acknowledge My Works and follow Me will come under My Light exposing without fear their deeds, because they will show that what they do is done in Me their God; I have said that if you make My Word your home, you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the Truth and the Truth will make you free,"* (TLIG Messages, December 23, 1987)

This dialogue makes clear that unity of the Church will not be realized by rejection of the truth nor by "diplomacy" which avoids speaking of differences, but rather by a sincere openness to all the truth of the Gospel. The whole truth must be accepted for perfect unity of the Church, not only that of the Holy Trinity of Christ Our Savior, but also that of His Real Presence in the Eucharist, His Perpetual Sacrifice; of the special role confided to the Blessed Virgin Mary by God; of the primacy and infallibility of the Pope; of frequent personal confession, etc.

Thus, unity of the Church requires acceptance of the whole truth by all: if a Catholic or a non-Catholic rejects it, it is a betrayal. Errors, rationalism and moral relativism must be rejected to the same degree by all believers in Christ.

## ACCEPT THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST

The Council teaches that ecumenical efforts must culminate in full Eucharistic communion. "The results will be that, little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only church..." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 4)

Unfortunately, there are certain obstacles at present impeding the way toward a perfect community of all Christians around one Eucharistic table. Among these obstacles is the false doctrine which denies the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and

which rejects His Perpetual Sacrifice. These obstacles must be overcome by prayer and ecumenical dialogue.

The message transmitted by Vassula also shows the importance of the Eucharist. It is paramount for unity to recognize the Real Presence in the Eucharist of He who wishes us to unite around Him.

*"My Sacred Heart is calling you all to come to Me in holiness, lean on Me and I shall guide you to My Tabernacle where I am waiting for you day and night, I offer you Myself every day, come, come and receive Me in holiness and in purity; do not offend Me, be pure and holy when you receive Me, recollect yourselves and recognize My Living Presence in the little white Host, let Me feel your holiness and purity;"* (TLIG Messages, June 1, 1989; cf. April 13, 1991; October 14, 1991)

## BELIEVE IN THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

Another truth which must be accepted by all Christians is that during the Eucharistic celebration Christ's unique sacrifice on Calvary is brought into the present. Unfortunately, this truth--heretofore always taught by the Catholic Church--is denied not only by some non-Catholic churches, but also by certain Catholic theologians.

For this reason, Jesus reminds us in the message of November 25, 1991: *"the greatness of My Church exceeded everything and every living creature, because the Eucharist made the life of My Church; if My Church today lacks brightness it is because many of My churches have abolished My Perpetual Sacrifice;"* (TLIG Messages, November 25, 1991)

Full unity of the Church will be realized the day when all peoples gather around Jesus really present in the Eucharist and around His unique salvific sacrifice: *"the nations shall then speak one language and all of them shall worship Me around One Single Tabernacle; this One of the Sacrificial Lamb, this One of the Perpetual Sacrifice that My enemies are trying to abolish and replace by their disastrous abomination,"* (TLIG Messages, May 2, 1991) (Daniel 11:31)

The disastrous abomination is at once the work of Satan and of men who allow themselves to be led by him. This abomination is among other things the lack of faith in Christ really present in the Eucharist and in His Perpetual Sacrifice which saves generations of every epoch. The disastrous abomination is again the absence of the spiritual sacrifice in the temple of our hearts. There the filial attitude of obedience to the will of God--which constitutes the essential element of every spiritual offering--is more and more replaced

by rebellion, disobedience and unbelief. Thus it is nothing less than a disastrous abomination when the Eucharist is put off to the side in our lives and the sacrificial attitude dies in the temples of the hearts of men.

*"the disastrous abomination is the spirit of Rebellion that claims to be My equal; it is the spirit of Evil that enthroned itself in My sanctuary taking the place of My Perpetual Sacrifice, turning your generation Godless; it is the spirit of Rationalism and of Naturalism that led most of you into atheism; this is the spirit that makes you believe you are self-sufficient and that you can achieve everything by your own efforts and by your own strength; this disastrous abomination turned you into a waterless country of drought, a desert; My Perpetual Sacrifice you have abolished from within you because you have lost your faith, generation;"* (TLIG Messages, June 6, 1991)

## RECOGNIZE THE SPECIAL ROLE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE WORK OF SALVATION

Fidelity to the truth--so important for the perfect unity of the church--requires recognition of the singular role confided to the Blessed Virgin by God himself in salvation history.

The decree *Unitatis redintegratio* of Vatican II declares with joy that in the Eastern Churches the Blessed Virgin is venerated; that she is "paid high tribute, in beautiful hymns of praise." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 15) In speaking of Protestants, the Council declares the divergence between them and the Catholic Church regarding the role of the Holy Virgin in the work of salvation. (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 20)

Certainly, perfect unity in love and in truth demands the recognition of all the salvific duties confided by God in His love to Mary and all the special graces that She has received. All believers must also unite in veneration of the Blessed Virgin.

This necessity is very strongly emphasized in the messages given to Vassula. Indeed Jesus insists: *"My Mother's Immaculate Heart is united to Mine, I desire from each one of you the devotion Her Immaculate Heart deserves, you see daughter how Our Divine Hearts are covered by thorns from men who only show Us ingratitude, sacrilege, lack of love, it is the whole of their sins; Vassula, I who am the Word love and respect Her, I desire you to approach My Mother and honour Her as I honour Her; I desire that every knee bends, honouring Her, I desire you to pray the Rosary and Hail your Holy Mother, I want you to repair your sins, asking Her to teach you;"* (TLIG Messages, January 25, 1988)

Jesus who loves and respects his mother Himself gives the example to all believers--not only to Catholics--of how to love and respect her. In the name of truth one cannot diminish the grandeur of the one chosen by the Heavenly Father Himself who entrusted to Her without the slightest hesitation His well-beloved Son. He knew She would not disappoint Him. And indeed it was so.

## REMAIN IN UNITY WITH THE POPE

True Life in God reminds us that perfect unity of the Church can only be realized around the Pope. This truth is repeated courageously at many points throughout the writings of Vassula. With courage because the primacy and the infallibility of the Bishop of Rome is among those truths which have very little popularity, not only among Orthodox and Protestants, but lately also among many Catholics, even theologians, who dispute it.

Jesus therefore says in some of His messages: "*purify yourselves, repent, obey the Vicar of My Church, John Paul II, who never fails you, but that you push aside and ignore; all you who are still scoffing at him are weighing ever so heavily in My Sacred Heart ...*" (TLIG Messages, June 1, 1989)

*"I come to unite My Church, I come to remind you to whom I the Lord have given the Authority and the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven,"* (TLIG Messages, March 23, 1988; cf. March 19, 1988; February 9, 1989)

## PURIFY YOURSELF OFTEN IN THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

The Council reminds us that divisions in the Church were often due to the errors of men on both sides. (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 3) Again today, lack of love and pride divide the Church, or at least slow down the process of unity. For this reason, all Christians must be always conscious of their sins and not those of others. This is why the Council reminds us: "The testimony of St. John the Evangelist can also be applied to sins against unity: 'if we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us' (1 John 1:10). Thus, in humble prayer we beg pardon of God and of our separated brethren, just as we forgive them that offend us." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 7)

Consequently, if one wishes to unite the Church, purification by sincere repentance and sacramental confession is necessary. Unfortunately, the sacrament of penance is not accepted, not only by Protestants, but in our day by many Catholics. Less and less advantage is taken of this sacrament by which Jesus frees us from

our sins, purifies and unites us with the Father and the Church. It is only through this sacrament that unity of the Church is to be realized.

The messages transmitted by Vassula remind us of this sacrament so forgotten and neglected and of the necessity for frequent individual confession. Jesus says: '*I have given you confessors, when My beloved ones, you are confessing to him you are only confessing to Me, it is to Me you are confessing;*' (TLIG Messages, September 29, 1988)

*"be constant in your confessions, little children, to be able to come and receive Me in the Holy Eucharist as often as you can; fast on bread and water two days a week, to make reparations and sacrifice;"* (TLIG Messages, August 2, 1991)

*"when you come to Me, make sure before, how you will receive Me, examine yourselves, recollect yourselves, honour Me fully by repenting and often confessing;"* (TLIG Messages, September 29, 1988)

*"alas for him who offends Me by refusing confession and absolution and comes to receive My Son, guilty! repent! repent for your sins!"* (TLIG Messages, March 20, 1991)

## A SINCERE DIALOGUE

Thus--according to Vatican Council II and True Life in God--unity of the Church can be realized through a profound change of heart by men who begin to love sincerely. Another requirement of authentic unity is absolute fidelity to the truth, even to that which is no longer popular. One can achieve unity in following the path of love of God, of men, and of truth.

This love is indispensable when one engages in the ecumenical dialogue which according to Vatican II is very important for unity. Besides conversion, love, humility, mutual respect and communal prayer, this dialogue can be considered the most important means toward unity. Its goal is better mutual awareness and rediscovery of what Christ is really transmitting to His Church. (cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 4)

This dialogue leads toward unity but on condition that it is sincere, profound and with an increasingly ardent and authentic desire for unity. Otherwise, it will degenerate into endless discussions, polemics, quarrels or polite conversation without meaningful results. The messages through Vassula warn against such a fruitless dialogue. Jesus says:

*"I am weary of hearing their noble language, perhaps it is suitable and eloquent for them but to Me it sounds like*

*a stroke on a gong, because it is empty with emptiness; I have come to talk to them, first out of concern, then out of pity, but no one yet to this day has lowered his voice to hear My Voice; alas for you, who say you are at My service yet prevent My Kingdom from finding unity and stability!"* (TLIG Messages, December 21, 1992)

*"Go from country to country and tell those who speak of unity, yet never cease to think the contrary and continue to live the contrary that their division has separated My Heart from theirs;"* (TLIG Messages, October 7, 1991)

## A COMMON DATE OF EASTER

For different reasons it is still not possible for all Christians to celebrate the Eucharist together. This is why the Council advises us to unify at every level where it is possible: in action and above all, in common prayer. For all Christians to celebrate on the same day the Mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ would be an important sign of unity. Unfortunately, until now, Catholics and Orthodox have not established a common date for Easter.

The Council strongly desires unity in the celebration of the Paschal Mystery. The Conciliar decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* expresses this desire: "Until all Christians agree, as is hoped, on one day for the celebration of Easter by all, in the meantime as a means of fostering unity among Christians who live in the same area or country, it is left to the patriarchs or to the supreme ecclesiastical authorities of the place to consult all parties involved and so come to unanimous agreement to celebrate the feast of Easter on the same Sunday." (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 20)

In the True Life in God messages an accord between Orthodox and Catholics on a common date of Easter appears to be a very important thing. Indeed, Jesus complains: *"- will I, brother, one more season go through the pain I have been going through year after year? or will you give Me rest this time? am I going to drink one more season the Cup of your division? or will you rest My Body and unify, for My sake the Feast of Easter? in unifying the date of Easter, you will alleviate My pain, brother, and you will rejoice in Me and I in you; and I will have the sight of many restored;"* (TLIG Messages, October 14, 1991)

Unifying the date of Easter would express good will and a sincere desire for unity because there are no doctrinal reasons which impede celebrating at the same time the death and the resurrection of our Lord. On the contrary, from a theological point of view, it is the simplest thing but, alas, up to the present has not succeeded! It is probably for this reason that the plea

of Jesus is so dramatic: *"Am I, Father to drink one more season of the Cup of their division? or will they at least unify the Feast of Easter alleviating part of My pain and sorrow?"* (TLIG Messages, October 25, 1991)

*"when will they all pass a decree by unanimous vote to celebrate the Feast of Easter all in one date?"* (TLIG Messages, December 21, 1992)

*"pray for the unification of the dates of Easter;"* (TLIG Messages, April 8, 1993)

## UNITY WILL SURVIVE

The Council, fully cognizant of the difficulties attached to ecumenism, fully believes in the future unity of the Church which will, however, be the work of the Holy Trinity. "It therefore places its hope entirely in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 24) One finds this same hope also in the writings of Mrs. Rydén; we must journey toward imminent unity by our conversion, love, humility and prayer, but it will be achieved by Christ and the Holy Spirit.

*"My beloved ones, the Day is near when every vision will come true, every vision will soon be fulfilled and in your own lifetime too, so open your hearts and try to understand why My Spirit of Grace is poured on this generation so generously; the Day is drawing near, when all generations shall be one, under one Shepherd around one Holy Tabernacle and I, the Lord, shall be Unique for them, so pray My beloved ones, pray for this Unity which I, the Lord, am in full preparation on it;"* (TLIG Messages, June 19, 1989)

*"let Me tell you once more, that My Body I will glorify and unite,"* (TLIG Messages, October 18, 1987)

The vision of the three bars also shows that unity will be accomplished by the power from on high. Thus, Jesus says to Vassula: *"draw three iron bars with a head on the top ... these represent the Roman Catholics, the Orthodox and the Protestants, I want them to bend and unite, but these iron bars are still very stiff and cannot bend on their own, so I shall have to come to them with My Fire and with the power of My Flame upon them they shall turn soft to bend and mould into one solid iron bar, and My Glory will fill the whole earth;"* (TLIG Messages, October 26, 1989)

*"this is how My Spirit will unite every single one of you in the end and every one will believe it was the Father who sent Me, every one will recognize Me as the Sacrificial Lamb;"* (TLIG Messages, May 30, 1993)

### III. CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of Vatican II documents and of the writings of Vassula Rydén imposes the following conclusion: there is a perfect concordance between the two in their teaching on unity. However, the difference in style and in the ideas used exclude any hypothesis that Vassula took advantage of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. This concordance can only be explained, therefore, by its coming from the same Person who influenced the Fathers of the Council and Vassula Rydén. One could say that we see the same principal Author of the Conciliar documents and of the writings of Vassula.

The teaching on the unity of the Church which emerges from the writings of Mrs. Rydén is identical to that of Vatican II. Hence, those who impute to her a "pan-Christian" unity thereby prove that they are not at all familiar with her writings.

There is also a moral aspect to the accusations against the teachings of Mrs. Rydén. Anyone who accuses her of a doctrine on unity that is contrary to the teachings of the Church is telling a lie and spreading calumny. Consequently, if one wishes to be faithful to Christ--he must do justice and rectify the wrong done not only to her, but also to the work of unity so much

desired by Jesus and by Vatican II.

"This Sacred Council firmly hopes that the initiatives of the sons of the Catholic Church, joined with those of the separated brethren, will go forward, without obstructing the ways of divine providence, and without pre-judging the future inspirations of the Holy Spirit." (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 24) This desire of the Council at the same time sounds a warning to those who through their thoughtlessness and imprudent zeal cause harm to the progress toward unity. (cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 24)

*The author of this article, Father Doctor Michael Kaszowski, received his doctorate from the Catholic University of Louvain and has taught dogmatic theology at the Archdiocesan Seminary of Katowice, Poland for the past 20 years. He has written several books of a pastoral nature, including works on deepening the faith among children and youth. As the editor of the Polish edition of True Life in God, he knows the messages in depth. He is a firmly orthodox theologian of stature, who has consistently affirmed that there is no trace of error found in the writings of Vassula. He has expressed this conclusion in two prefaces and in a defense of Vassula which appears in the Polish edition. An article he wrote on private revelations is reprinted in volume 8 of the original handwriting edition of True Life in God.*