

Toward a Framework for Independent Sacramental–Roman Catholic Relations
A Proposed Theological and Pastoral Resource for Dialogue, Gratitude, Discernment,
and Common Witness

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Preamble

The Independent Sacramental Movement is not a single church, denomination, communion, or jurisdiction. It contains many communities, lineages, liturgical traditions, theological emphases, pastoral charisms, and ecclesial self-understandings. No single statement can speak authoritatively for the whole movement, nor should any document pretend to bind communities that have not received it, discussed it, or formally adopted it.

Nevertheless, many communities within the Independent Sacramental Movement share a deep and complicated relationship with Roman Catholicism. Many of our clergy, laity, theologians, and communities were formed in the Roman Catholic Church. Many first encountered the Scriptures, the sacraments, the saints, the liturgical year, the works of mercy, the discipline of prayer, and the mystery of the Church through Roman Catholic life. For this, we give thanks.

This document is offered as a possible framework for respectful and serious theological engagement between Independent Sacramental communities and Roman Catholics. It does not seek to erase differences, exaggerate agreement, or create a false unity. Nor does it seek to condemn Roman Catholicism or define the Independent Sacramental Movement primarily by opposition to Rome. Rather, it seeks to encourage a more mature, charitable, and credible form of dialogue.

The purpose of this framework is fourfold:

First, to express gratitude for the goodness, truth, beauty, sacramental richness, theological depth, spiritual wisdom, and evangelical witness found within Roman Catholicism.

Second, to identify areas of real theological and pastoral concern, especially regarding papal jurisdiction, infallibility, centralized authority, ecclesial exclusivity, and the relationship between the visible structures of the Church and the wider action of God's grace.

Third, to invite Independent Sacramental communities to engage Roman Catholics in a way that is honest, humble, historically informed, theologically serious, and pastorally responsible.

Fourth, to encourage common witness wherever possible in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, serving the poor, defending human dignity, cultivating holiness, and bearing witness to the sacramental presence of Christ in the world.

This document is offered in the spirit of dialogue rather than accusation, gratitude rather than resentment, and discernment rather than triumphalism.

I. A Word of Gratitude to Roman Catholicism

Many within the Independent Sacramental Movement owe a profound debt of gratitude to the Roman Catholic Church. This gratitude is not superficial. It is theological, spiritual, sacramental, and personal.

Through Roman Catholicism, many of us received the Gospel. We learned to confess Jesus Christ as Lord, true God and true human being, crucified and risen for the life of the world. We were taught the Scriptures, the Creed, the commandments, the beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, the sacraments, and the call to holiness. We learned that Christian faith is not merely private belief but a life of worship, mercy, conversion, justice, and communion.

Roman Catholicism has preserved and transmitted a vast intellectual and spiritual inheritance. Its theological tradition includes the writings of the Fathers, the scholastics, the mystics, the monastic tradition, the great spiritual doctors, the liturgical movement, Catholic social teaching, biblical scholarship, sacramental theology, and countless pastoral and missionary witnesses. Its intellectual life has wrestled deeply with philosophy, science, culture, ethics, beauty, human dignity, and the mystery of God.

We also acknowledge with gratitude the Roman Catholic sacramental imagination. Many of us first learned through Roman Catholicism that grace is not opposed to matter, that creation can become transparent to divine presence, that water, oil, bread, wine, hands, words, bodies, and communities can become signs and instruments of Christ's saving work. We learned that the Eucharist is not merely a symbol of religious memory but a profound participation in the living mystery of Christ's self-giving love.

We give thanks for the Roman Catholic witness in education, hospitals, care for the poor, prison ministry, advocacy for migrants, defense of human dignity, works of mercy, religious life, global missions, and countless hidden acts of charity. We recognize that the Roman Catholic Church has formed saints, martyrs, scholars, pastors, missionaries, contemplatives, and servants whose witness belongs not only to one institution but to the whole people of God.

For these reasons, Independent Sacramental communities should not speak of Roman Catholicism with contempt. We should resist caricature, bitterness, and reactionary

identity. Whatever concerns we raise must be raised with reverence for the gifts we have received and with awareness of our own weaknesses, failures, and need for conversion.

II. The Independent Sacramental Movement and Its Relationship to Rome

The Independent Sacramental Movement includes communities that identify in various ways: Old Catholic, Independent Catholic, Independent Orthodox, Liberal Catholic, sacramental, apostolic, ecumenical, Celtic, Anglican-adjacent, Eastern, Oriental, esoteric, or simply Christian communities gathered around sacramental life. Some communities understand themselves as continuing Catholic tradition outside Roman jurisdiction. Others emphasize pastoral inclusion, specialized ministry, ecumenical openness, or small-community sacramental life.

Because of this diversity, no single ecclesiology describes the entire movement. Yet many communities share certain broad convictions. They affirm the centrality of Jesus Christ, the Gospel, baptism, Eucharist, the sacramental life, apostolic faith, liturgical worship, pastoral care, and the call to holiness. Many also affirm some form of apostolic succession, not as magic or institutional possession, but as a sign of continuity in sacramental ministry, ecclesial memory, and the Church's mission.

The relationship between Independent Sacramental communities and Roman Catholicism is often shaped by both inheritance and distance. Many communities have inherited Roman liturgical forms, theological vocabulary, devotional practices, clerical structures, sacramental disciplines, and pastoral instincts. At the same time, many have emerged because of serious disagreements with Roman Catholic governance, discipline, inclusion, authority, or ecclesial claims.

This relationship should be approached neither as simple continuity nor simple rupture. It is better understood as a relationship of complex reception. Independent Sacramental communities have received much from Roman Catholicism, but often receive it critically, pastorally, and in conversation with other Christian traditions, including Anglicanism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Oriental Orthodoxy, Old Catholicism, Protestantism, and local pastoral experience.

A mature framework for dialogue must therefore avoid two extremes. On one hand, Independent Sacramental communities should not pretend that they are simply Roman Catholicism without Rome. Such a claim fails to take seriously the theological, canonical, and ecclesial differences that exist. On the other hand, we should not present ourselves as if Roman Catholicism has nothing to teach us or as if departure from Roman jurisdiction automatically produces ecclesial health, holiness, accountability, or truth.

The Independent Sacramental Movement must speak from a place of humility. Our communities often possess real pastoral gifts, sacramental devotion, theological creativity, and missionary flexibility. But we also face real dangers: fragmentation, personality-driven ministry, weak formation, lack of accountability, unstable governance, exaggerated claims, unclear ecclesial identity, and insufficient theological discipline. Any dialogue with Roman Catholicism must include a willingness to examine ourselves as well as Rome.

III. The Purpose of Dialogue

Dialogue between Independent Sacramental communities and Roman Catholics should not be understood merely as institutional negotiation. In many cases, formal ecclesial dialogue may not be possible, especially where Independent Sacramental communities lack recognized standing in Roman Catholic canonical structures. Yet theological and pastoral dialogue remains possible and necessary.

Such dialogue may occur through personal relationships, academic conversation, pastoral cooperation, shared works of mercy, local ecumenical engagement, study groups, publications, conferences, and respectful correspondence among clergy and theologians.

The purpose of dialogue is not to force agreement or to seek validation. Nor should it be primarily defensive, as if the only goal were to prove the legitimacy of Independent Sacramental communities. Dialogue should seek truth, conversion, mutual understanding, and common witness.

We should approach Roman Catholics not as enemies but as brothers and sisters in Christ. We should speak honestly about wounds, disagreements, and concerns, but we should do so in a way that remains evangelical. The Gospel must govern the tone, content, and purpose of our engagement.

Dialogue should seek to answer questions such as these:

How do we understand the Church in relation to the Kingdom of God?

How do visible ecclesial structures serve the Gospel, and when can they obscure it?

How should authority be exercised in the Church?

How do primacy, collegiality, synodality, and local ecclesial life relate to one another?

How should apostolic succession be understood?

How do sacraments relate to ecclesial communion?

How do we honor tradition while allowing legitimate development, reform, and pastoral adaptation?

How do we speak truthfully about sin, abuse, exclusion, clericalism, and institutional failure without losing sight of grace, holiness, and gratitude?

How can Roman Catholics and Independent Sacramental Christians cooperate in works of mercy, prayer, theological study, and witness to Christ?

These questions require patience. They cannot be answered well through slogans or polemics. They require historical study, doctrinal seriousness, pastoral honesty, and spiritual humility.

IV. Shared Foundations

Despite real differences, many Independent Sacramental communities and Roman Catholics share significant theological foundations. These shared foundations should be acknowledged clearly, not in order to minimize disagreement, but to establish a truthful basis for dialogue.

Many Independent Sacramental communities affirm the central mysteries of the Christian faith: the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the Word, the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life of the world to come.

Many affirm the ancient creeds, especially the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Many receive the Scriptures as authoritative witness to God's saving work. Many honor the Fathers of the Church, the early councils, the sacramental life, the liturgical year, the ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and the vocation of the whole people of God.

Many Independent Sacramental communities also share with Roman Catholics a sacramental understanding of Christian life. Baptism is not merely a symbol of belonging but incorporation into Christ. Eucharist is not merely a memorial meal but participation in the mystery of Christ's self-offering and risen presence. Reconciliation, anointing, ordination, marriage, confirmation or chrismation, and the rites of Christian initiation are understood as real encounters with grace, though communities differ in discipline, theology, and practice.

We also share a concern for holiness. The Christian life is not reducible to ecclesial status or sacramental access. It is a life of conversion, prayer, justice, mercy, humility, forgiveness, and love. The sacraments are ordered toward transformation in Christ.

These shared foundations allow dialogue to begin not from suspicion alone, but from recognition. We can say truthfully: we have received much of the same faith, worship the

same Lord, read the same Scriptures, honor many of the same saints, and seek to serve the same Gospel.

V. Areas of Concern and Difference

Gratitude does not require silence. Love does not require denial. Dialogue becomes credible only when it can name real differences honestly.

Many within the Independent Sacramental Movement have serious concerns regarding certain Roman Catholic teachings and structures, especially as they have developed in relation to papal authority, ecclesial identity, and institutional power.

1. Universal Papal Jurisdiction

A central concern is the Roman Catholic claim that the Bishop of Rome possesses supreme, full, immediate, and universal ordinary power in the Church. Many Independent Sacramental communities, like Old Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Anglicans, and others, question whether such universal jurisdiction is faithful to the ecclesiology of the early Church.

We recognize that the Church of Rome held a place of great honor in early Christianity. We recognize that the Bishop of Rome often played an important role in preserving unity, defending orthodoxy, and serving as a point of appeal. We do not deny the historical significance of Roman primacy.

However, many of us distinguish primacy from universal jurisdiction. A primacy of honor, service, witness, coordination, and appeal is not the same as an immediate jurisdiction over all local churches, bishops, clergy, and faithful. The first may be compatible with a synodal and collegial ecclesiology; the second raises serious theological questions.

We are concerned that universal jurisdiction can diminish the integrity of local churches, weaken episcopal collegiality, and concentrate ecclesial authority in a manner that risks severing power from mutual accountability. We believe that authority in the Church should be exercised as service to communion, not as domination over the body of Christ.

2. Papal Infallibility

Many Independent Sacramental communities also have concerns regarding the doctrine of papal infallibility as defined by the First Vatican Council. These concerns do not arise from a rejection of truth, doctrine, or the Church's teaching office. Rather, they arise from questions about how the Church discerns truth and how authority is exercised within the whole body of Christ.

The Christian tradition has long affirmed that the Holy Spirit guides the Church. Yet many of us believe that this guidance is most faithfully discerned through the prayer, worship, reception, witness, and discernment of the whole Church, especially through councils, synods, episcopal collegiality, theological reflection, and the faithful reception of doctrine by the people of God.

The claim that one bishop, under certain conditions, may define doctrine irreformably apart from the explicit consent of an ecumenical council raises serious ecclesiological questions. It risks making the Church's teaching authority appear overly centralized and insufficiently accountable to the conciliar, liturgical, and receptive life of the whole Church.

This concern should not be misrepresented as indifference to doctrine. The question is not whether the Church can teach truthfully. The question is how the Church discerns, receives, guards, and proclaims the truth entrusted to it.

3. The Relationship Between Church and Kingdom

Another concern involves the relationship between the visible Church and the Kingdom of God. Roman Catholic theology at its best recognizes that the Kingdom of God transcends visible ecclesial structures and that the Holy Spirit acts beyond the institutional boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church. Nevertheless, in practice, Catholic language can sometimes identify the visible Roman Catholic institution too closely with the fullness of God's saving action.

Independent Sacramental communities should affirm that the Church is a real sacramental sign and servant of the Kingdom. The Church is not merely a human association. It is called to be the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the people of God. Yet the Church is not identical with the Kingdom in a simplistic or possessive sense.

The Kingdom of God is God's reign of mercy, justice, peace, reconciliation, holiness, and new creation. The Church serves the Kingdom; it does not own it. The Church witnesses to the Kingdom; it does not control it. The Church sacramentally manifests the Kingdom; it does not exhaust it.

Whenever ecclesial structures imply that God's grace is limited to visible institutional boundaries, the Gospel is obscured. Whenever sacramental or canonical systems are presented as though they can contain or manage the freedom of the Holy Spirit, the Church risks confusing stewardship with possession.

4. Authority Severed from the Gospel

Many of us are concerned by any exercise of church authority that becomes detached from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Authority in the Church must be cruciform. It must be shaped by Christ who washed feet, welcomed sinners, touched the sick, defended the vulnerable, challenged hypocrisy, and gave himself for the life of the world.

When authority becomes primarily juridical, bureaucratic, defensive, or self-protective, it risks betraying its evangelical purpose. When institutional preservation is valued above truth, repentance, transparency, or care for the wounded, authority loses credibility.

This concern is not directed only toward Roman Catholicism. Independent Sacramental communities must examine themselves here as well. Clericalism, abuse of power, secrecy, manipulation, spiritual coercion, and self-importance can appear in small communities as well as large institutions. Indeed, smaller communities may be especially vulnerable when accountability structures are weak.

Therefore, our critique of Roman Catholic authority must be accompanied by our own repentance and reform. We cannot credibly critique centralized authority while tolerating unaccountable authority in our own communities.

5. The Boundaries of Grace

Roman Catholicism has developed nuanced teachings regarding salvation outside visible Catholic communion, baptism of desire, elements of sanctification and truth outside Roman Catholic structures, and the mysterious action of grace. These developments are important and should be acknowledged.

At the same time, many Roman Catholic pastoral practices and popular assumptions still communicate that sacramental grace, ecclesial legitimacy, and Christian fullness are nearly identical with visible communion under Roman authority. This can create deep pastoral wounds, especially for those who have left Roman Catholicism for reasons of conscience, vocation, inclusion, abuse, marriage, sexuality, remarriage, gender, ministry, or theological conviction.

Independent Sacramental communities often arise precisely in these wounded places. We seek to proclaim that God's mercy is not exhausted by canonical status, that Christ continues to meet people at the margins, and that the Spirit cannot be contained by institutional permission.

This does not mean that ecclesial structures are irrelevant. Nor does it mean that sacraments, doctrine, and communion can be treated casually. But it does mean that the Church must speak of grace with humility. God is free. The Holy Spirit blows where the Spirit wills.

VI. Principles for Independent Sacramental Engagement with Roman Catholicism

If Independent Sacramental communities wish to engage Roman Catholics credibly, several principles should guide our approach.

1. Speak with Gratitude Before Critique

Our critique should arise from love for the Gospel, not resentment. Many of us were formed by Roman Catholicism. We should say so honestly. Gratitude gives moral and theological credibility to critique. It prevents us from becoming reactionary.

2. Avoid Caricature

Roman Catholic theology is vast, nuanced, and internally diverse. It is not enough to critique simplified versions of Catholic teaching. Serious engagement requires reading Roman Catholic sources carefully, understanding official teachings accurately, and recognizing development, debate, and diversity within the Roman Catholic tradition.

3. Distinguish Doctrine, Discipline, Culture, and Abuse

Not everything troubling in Roman Catholic life is doctrine. Some concerns involve discipline. Others involve institutional culture. Others involve failures of leadership, clericalism, pastoral negligence, or abuse. Credible dialogue requires careful distinctions.

4. Admit the Weaknesses of the Independent Sacramental Movement

Independent Sacramental communities must avoid triumphalism. We cannot speak as though leaving Roman jurisdiction automatically solves ecclesial problems. Our movement has its own failures, including fragmentation, poor formation, unstable governance, excessive clerical titles, lack of transparency, and insufficient accountability. Honest dialogue requires self-critique.

5. Ground Dialogue in the Gospel

The central question is not institutional advantage but fidelity to Jesus Christ. All ecclesiology, sacramental theology, ministry, canon law, and authority must be judged by their service to the Gospel.

6. Honor the Local Church

Many Independent Sacramental communities emphasize the importance of the local eucharistic community. Dialogue with Roman Catholicism should include serious reflection on the relationship between local churches, bishops, synods, primacy, and communion.

7. Recover Synodality and Collegiality

Authority in the Church should be discerned and exercised in communion. Bishops should not act as isolated monarchs. Clergy should not act as independent contractors. Communities should not exist without mutual accountability. Synodality and collegiality are necessary for both Roman Catholic renewal and Independent Sacramental maturity.

8. Practice Theological Humility

The mysteries of the Church, sacraments, grace, and authority cannot be reduced to slogans or soundbites. We should speak clearly, but also modestly. We should resist exaggerated claims about ourselves and simplistic condemnations of others.

9. Seek Cooperation Where Possible

Even where full ecclesial communion is not possible, cooperation may be possible in works of mercy, education, prayer for Christian unity, advocacy for the vulnerable, theological study, and shared moral witness.

10. Let Holiness Be the Test of Credibility

The credibility of any ecclesial community ultimately depends not only on its claims but on its fruits. Does it form people in Christ? Does it serve the poor? Does it protect the vulnerable? Does it proclaim the Gospel? Does it cultivate humility, prayer, mercy, justice, and love?

VII. Possible Topics for Theological Dialogue

Independent Sacramental communities seeking serious dialogue with Roman Catholics may wish to focus on specific theological topics rather than general grievance. The following areas may provide fruitful starting points.

1. Primacy and Synodality

What kind of primacy serves communion without domination? Can the Bishop of Rome be understood as a servant of unity without universal ordinary jurisdiction over all churches? How might the first millennium inform contemporary ecclesiology? How might Roman Catholic synodality develop in ways that address concerns raised by Old Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Anglicans, and Independent Sacramental communities?

2. Apostolic Succession

How should apostolic succession be understood? Is it merely a chain of episcopal ordinations, or does it also require continuity in apostolic teaching, sacramental life,

ecclesial communion, mission, and holiness? How should communities avoid both magical and purely institutional understandings of succession?

3. Sacramental Recognition

How do Roman Catholics understand sacramental validity outside Roman communion? How do Independent Sacramental communities understand their own sacramental life? What role do intention, form, matter, ministry, ecclesial context, and reception play? How should pastoral care be offered to people whose sacramental lives cross ecclesial boundaries?

4. Authority and Conscience

How should conscience be formed, respected, and discerned? What happens when individuals or communities believe that fidelity to the Gospel requires dissent from particular ecclesial structures or teachings? How can conscience be distinguished from individualism?

5. The Church and the Kingdom of God

How does the Church serve, signify, and anticipate the Kingdom? What are the dangers of identifying the Kingdom too closely with visible ecclesial structures? What are the dangers of separating the Kingdom from the Church entirely?

6. Inclusion, Discipline, and Pastoral Care

How should the Church welcome those who have been wounded, excluded, or marginalized? How do sacramental discipline and pastoral mercy relate? How can communities avoid both rigorism and superficial permissiveness?

7. Clericalism and Accountability

How do large and small churches alike confront clericalism? What structures protect the vulnerable? How are bishops, clergy, and lay leaders held accountable? How can authority be exercised transparently and pastorally?

8. Tradition and Development

How does doctrine develop faithfully? How do communities distinguish authentic development from distortion? What role do Scripture, liturgy, councils, theology, reception, and pastoral experience play?

9. Common Mission

How can Roman Catholics and Independent Sacramental Christians cooperate in serving the poor, visiting the sick and imprisoned, defending human dignity, accompanying the lonely, proclaiming Christ, and responding to secularization?

10. Healing Memory

Many who enter Independent Sacramental communities carry wounds from Roman Catholic experiences. Some wounds are personal; others are theological, vocational, or institutional. Dialogue should include space for healing memory: telling the truth, acknowledging harm, giving thanks for what was good, and seeking reconciliation where possible.

VIII. A Pastoral Word to Those Who Come from Roman Catholicism

Many people in Independent Sacramental communities come from Roman Catholic backgrounds. Some leave Rome with peace. Others leave with grief, anger, confusion, or guilt. Some continue to love the Roman Catholic Church deeply. Others need distance in order to heal. Some remain culturally Catholic, devotionally Catholic, or sacramentally Catholic, even while no longer able to live under Roman authority.

Independent Sacramental communities should receive such people with care. They should not exploit wounds or encourage bitterness. They should not build identity upon anti-Roman sentiment. They should help people grieve honestly, discern carefully, and rediscover the Gospel.

People coming from Roman Catholicism should be encouraged to honor what was good in their formation. They should not be pressured to renounce their past as though grace was absent from it. Baptism, Eucharist, prayer, saints, teachers, pastors, family traditions, and holy memories remain gifts.

At the same time, people should be free to name harm. They should be free to ask difficult questions. They should be free to seek sacramental life in communities where they can worship, serve, and grow with integrity.

A healthy Independent Sacramental community does not require people to hate Rome. It helps them follow Christ.

IX. A Word to Roman Catholic Dialogue Partners

To Roman Catholic readers, we offer this word with respect.

Many within the Independent Sacramental Movement continue to love much within Roman Catholicism. We are grateful for the faith we received, the sacraments we celebrated, the

saints who formed us, the liturgies that shaped us, the teachers who instructed us, and the communities that nurtured us.

Our concerns should not be dismissed as mere rebellion, individualism, relativism, or resentment. While such motives can exist in any human heart, many Independent Sacramental Christians have made difficult decisions through prayer, conscience, study, pastoral experience, and deep love for the Gospel.

We ask Roman Catholics to hear the questions raised by our existence. Why do people formed by Roman Catholicism sometimes seek sacramental life outside Roman jurisdiction? What wounds have gone unhealed? What gifts have gone unrecognized? What forms of authority have become burdensome? What pastoral needs remain unmet? What might the Spirit be saying through those who remain sacramentally Catholic in imagination but cannot remain under Roman governance?

We do not ask Roman Catholics to ignore their own doctrine or canonical commitments. We do ask for serious conversation, careful listening, and a willingness to recognize that the Holy Spirit may be at work in unexpected places.

X. A Word to Independent Sacramental Communities

To Independent Sacramental communities, this document also offers a challenge.

If we desire serious engagement with Roman Catholicism, we must become communities capable of serious engagement. This requires formation, theological discipline, accountable ministry, transparent governance, pastoral maturity, and humility.

We should not make claims we cannot sustain. We should not exaggerate our size, authority, history, or recognition. We should not use apostolic succession as a substitute for holiness, competence, or communion. We should not confuse independence with isolation. We should not imitate the worst forms of clericalism while criticizing them elsewhere.

Our credibility will depend not only on our arguments but on our life. If we proclaim a more pastoral, humble, inclusive, synodal, and Gospel-centered sacramental Christianity, then our communities must embody those qualities.

We must become worthy conversation partners, not by seeking status, but by deepening faithfulness.

XI. Possible Forms of Engagement

This framework may be used in several practical ways.

Independent Sacramental communities may use it for clergy formation, theological discussion, ecumenical preparation, pastoral training, or community study. It may serve as a starting point for conversations with Roman Catholic theologians, clergy, religious, or lay leaders. It may also help communities articulate their relationship to Roman Catholicism on websites, in formation manuals, or in public statements.

Possible forms of engagement include:

Study groups on Roman Catholic and Independent Sacramental ecclesiology.

Public conversations on primacy, synodality, and local church life.

Shared works of mercy with Roman Catholic individuals or organizations where appropriate.

Academic dialogue on apostolic succession, sacramental theology, and ecclesial authority.

Pastoral conversations for those wounded by church structures.

Prayer for Christian unity that includes honest lament as well as hope.

Development of formation materials that treat Roman Catholicism respectfully and accurately.

Careful statements of identity that neither falsely claim Roman Catholic status nor reject the Catholic tradition received through Roman Catholic formation.

In all such efforts, clarity is essential. Independent Sacramental communities should be transparent that they are not Roman Catholic and are not under Roman jurisdiction. At the same time, where appropriate, they may honestly state that they receive, preserve, adapt, or continue aspects of the Catholic sacramental tradition.

XII. Theological Commitments for Dialogue

Independent Sacramental communities that adopt or adapt this framework may wish to affirm the following commitments:

We affirm Jesus Christ as the center of the Church, the Gospel, the sacraments, and all authentic ministry.

We affirm that the Church exists to serve the Kingdom of God, not to possess or replace it.

We affirm that the Holy Spirit acts within and beyond visible ecclesial structures.

We affirm the goodness, truth, beauty, and sacramental richness preserved within Roman Catholicism.

We affirm that Roman Catholicism has formed countless Christians in faith, holiness, service, and love.

We affirm the need for visible communion, ecclesial accountability, sacramental integrity, and theological seriousness.

We question claims of universal papal jurisdiction and papal infallibility as presently defined within Roman Catholic doctrine.

We seek forms of primacy that serve communion without domination.

We seek forms of authority shaped by the Gospel, the cross, synodality, accountability, and service.

We reject anti-Catholicism, bitterness, caricature, and reactionary identity.

We confess the weaknesses and failures present within the Independent Sacramental Movement.

We commit ourselves to deeper formation, greater accountability, and more credible common witness.

We seek dialogue, cooperation, and reconciliation with our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers.

XIII. Conclusion: Grateful, Honest, and Hopeful

The relationship between the Independent Sacramental Movement and Roman Catholicism is not simple. It is marked by gratitude and grief, inheritance and critique, continuity and discontinuity, affection and distance. Many of us carry Rome within us: in our prayers, our liturgical instincts, our theological vocabulary, our sacramental imagination, our love for the saints, our sense of mystery, and our longing for visible communion.

We need not deny this. Indeed, we should give thanks for it.

At the same time, fidelity to the Gospel requires honest speech. Questions about papal authority, universal jurisdiction, infallibility, ecclesial exclusivity, clerical power, sacramental discipline, and the boundaries of grace must be raised with seriousness. These questions are not merely institutional. They touch the heart of how the Church understands itself as servant of Christ and sign of the Kingdom.

The Independent Sacramental Movement will engage Roman Catholicism most faithfully when it does so without bitterness, inferiority, arrogance, and illusion. We are not called to define ourselves against Rome. We are called to follow Jesus Christ.

Where Roman Catholicism has taught us Christ, we give thanks.

Where Roman Catholicism has preserved beauty, truth, holiness, and sacramental life, we honor it.

Where Roman Catholicism has wounded, excluded, centralized, or obscured the Gospel through power detached from service, we speak honestly.

Where Independent Sacramental communities have failed in formation, accountability, humility, or charity, we repent.

And where the Holy Spirit opens doors for conversation, healing, cooperation, and common witness, we should walk through them with courage.

The goal is not victory over one another. The goal is deeper fidelity to the Good News of Jesus Christ, who is Lord of the Church, shepherd of the wounded, giver of the sacraments, servant of the poor, and hope of the world.

May our dialogue be truthful.

May our gratitude be sincere.

May our critique be evangelical.

May our communities become more accountable, humble, and holy.

And may all who seek Christ find in us a credible witness to God's mercy, peace, and love.