

Minutes

Winnipeg Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, Meeting No. 3

Held on 31 January 2001, 3 to 9 p.m.
At Canadian Mennonite University

Helmut Harder, co-chair, welcomed participants, and invited them to visit the new campus of the Canadian Mennonite University.

Personal Updates:

Richard Lebrun reported an offshoot of this M-C Dialogue. On the previous Friday evening, Richard and his wife Marge, and Helmut Harder and his wife Irma, had had dinner with Ray Temmerman, a Catholic from Morden, MB, who had learned about our dialogue and is eager to begin a similar dialogue between Catholics and Mennonites in the Morden area. He has since reported that he and a Mennonite counterpart have now scheduled a dinner meeting for six couples in Morden.

Ardith Frey cited an article from *Envision*, a journal published by World Vision, on the theme "Together 2000," which stressed the ideas of "faithful belief and faithful practice" in ecumenical activities. She also reported visiting elderly parents and relatives and being surprised at how open they were to her activities in this M-C dialogue.

Mike Radcliffe, who often represents Hutterite colonies in his law practice, reported an interesting interaction with the Crystal Springs colony. He also reported his involvement with the RCIA program at St. Ignatius parish, and his expectations for adult baptisms by immersion at Easter.

Henry Loewen reported his experience in sharing our dialogue with his church community, where he found that his sharing seemed to "give people a freedom to talk" about their own concerns that they might not otherwise have spoken about.

Adolf Ens reported that this semester he is teaching a course on "Mennonite beginnings." He was surprised to find that one of his students with a Catholic background had a better understanding and appreciation of Anabaptist theology than his Mennonite students.

Michele Sala Pastora reported a training session in Montreal on the sponsorship of refugees. There were about 500 participants, and she was pleased to note many faith-related workshops.

Sr. Elaine Baete was thrilled to observe that the St. Boniface Research Centre presented its 2000 International Award to the Mennonite Central Committee for its outstanding contribution.

Elaine Pinto observed that many people appear more open than they once did to more structured liturgical experiences within the church. She suggested that perhaps they are

tired of charismatic services.

Harold Jantz reported that through his involvement with a program called New Directions in Life Ministries he has been working with the people who sponsor the House of Hased, a shelter for men suffering from AIDS. This ministry, which is sponsored in part by the Vineyard Fellowship, is finding that the people being ministered to are “finding God” as they respond to the love that is shown to them.

Helmut Harder noted a resource book for leaders in Ignatian spirituality entitled *From Individuation to Discipleship*, prepared by George Schemel, sj, and Judy Roemer.

Luis Melo reported that he had been appointed to the Manitoba Interfaith Council and had attended his first meeting. He finds that it is a “political” group that lobbies for things like proper chaplain’s care in residential facilities, prisons, and perhaps coordination of chaplain work in institutions of higher education.

Opening prayers

Sr. Elaine Baete led the opening prayers, which featured a candle (symbolizing the presence of Christ), a Weston Priory hymn, and dialogue prayer.

Reports on Ecumenical Encounters

Helmut Harder spoke to his previously distributed report on the Mennonite Catholic Dialogue III held in Thomashof, Germany, 24-30 November 2000. Mons. John Radano (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity) said that he had spent half his time the previous two months “putting out brush fires” around the *Dominus Iesus* statement, but that he had been much moved by his participation in the Day of Reconciliation with the Lutherans last fall in Germany. Radano proposes that Reconciliation Day replace Reformation Day. Helmut reported that the Catholic participants in the dialogue appeared more upset by DI than the Mennonite participants.

Helmut also reported a quite fruitful discussion of the Constantine era, with Mennonites acknowledging that they had perhaps stereotyped Constantine and Catholics stressing that the Catholic Church (especially since Vatican II) has largely corrected the “Constantinian shift” and moved to a position of holding that it is not the state that should serve the church, but rather than the church must serve the world and all its peoples. Consideration of the position of Latin American Evangelicals suggests that in that area there has been a reversal of roles, with Evangelicals obtaining support from the state, particularly in Guatemala, and Catholics taking up a prophetic role against the state.

The other major theme of Dialogue III was what it might mean to be a “peace church.” A paper by a Mennonite participant, Andrea Lange, presented a Mennonite theological perspective on the issue and explained the traditional Mennonite “pacifist” stance. A companion paper by a Catholic participant, Drew Christianson, portrayed the Catholic Church as a “peacemaking” church, and traced a 50-year evolution from a theology of “just war” and “reality politics” that is taking the Catholic Church towards a “peace church” stance. In short, **Helmut** thought there was convergence on this issue.

Helmut also reviewed the draft common statements that Dialogue III produced on “Taking Leave of Constantine” and “The Church’s Commitment to Peace,” and reviewed the drafts of two common statements formulated at Venice at Dialogue II, the one on “Toward a Healing of Memories” and the other on “Ecclesiology.” He touched as well on two additional matters, a letter from the Paraguay Inter-Mennonite Peace Committee, which thought the Dialogue was being too easy on the Catholics (particularly on the issues of acculturation and syncretism), and a meeting with local German church leaders. The next Dialogue, scheduled for Assisi in November 2001, will focus on the medieval heritage of the two churches and on the sacraments.

Luis Melo began with a brief report on a statement made by Pope John Paul II during the recent Week for Christian Unity, in which the pope said that there was no “ecclesiastical void” outside the Roman Catholic Church, which statement Luis interpreted as Vaticanese backpedalling from DI. Luis also noted that the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada were moving to “full communion” of altar and pulpit fellowship in the summer of 2001. (Luis indicated that he had the text of this statement, and could provide it on request.) This development means that Catholics now have to be involved in a three-way dialogue, which is already being done locally with the LARC discussions, and that the Anglican-Lutheran agreement bears on agreements between Anglican and Catholics, especially the 1999 ARCIC statement on the “gift of authority” (which went a long way towards agreement on episcopacy, priesthood, and ordination to the diaconate). He noted that the Anglicans had reached agreement with the Lutheran churches of the Scandinavian countries, (which had retained an historical episcopacy), and he indicated he expected something similar will happen in the U.S., where some Lutherans are now pushing for “ordination” of bishops.

Luis reported as well on his attendance at a three-day meeting of Anglican and Catholic bishops in Toronto last autumn where there was extensive discussion of DI. There was agreement that the document was poorly written (e.g., “unicity” is not English), that it appears to have been issued from the wrong office (i.e., Ratzinger’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith rather than the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue), and that it tended to confuse the two issues of ecumenical relations and interreligious relations. As for the title of “church,” while Vatican II had referred to the Orthodox as “sister churches” it had referred to the entities coming out of the Reformation as “ecclesial communities.” Vatican II discussions, as reported in the “Relatio,” used the term “church” to refer to the Old Catholic Church. The principle that DI ignores is respect for group self-definition. Luis also pointed out that DI as a document is less authoritative than an encyclical.

Luis also observed that there is no official dialogue at the national level in Canada between the Catholic Church and any Lutheran body, while in the U.S., there have been nine rounds of such dialogue, and that discussion there is not yet finished. He noted that both Lutherans and Anglicans ordain women to ministry, but that in Canada no women have been named as bishops by the Lutherans.

In responding to a question from **Harold Jantz**, **Luis** noted that there are, in general, three positions that tend to be taken with respect to relations between the Christianity and

other religions: 1) An “exclusivist” stance that holds that there is no salvation outside the church, 2) an “inclusivist” stance drawn from a theology of creation that holds that God is in all religions as a preparation for Christ (Rahner’s view that there are “seeds of truth” in other religions), and 3) a “pluralist” stance that views the major religions as simply “parallel” paths to salvation. In his view, DI was aimed at the third stance.

Supper Break

The Lord’s Supper: A Mennonite Perspective

Ardith Frey began this part of the dialogue by offering her “personal experience” of “The Lord’s Supper” or Communion (See attachment 1 to these minutes). **Ardith** supplemented this presentation by explaining several “orders of service” that she distributed to dialogue participants. She emphasized that there was great flexibility in the orders of service. For example, sometimes there is a homily, and sometimes not.

Adolf Ens then spoke of the “confessional tradition” behind contemporary Mennonite understandings of the Lord’s Supper. (See notes on “Origins” distributed with these minutes) He began the story with John Wycliffe and the Lollards in fourteenth-century England and John Huss and his followers in fifteenth-century Bohemia. Both groups had proposed radical reform of the church and had attacked Catholic practice as giving too much wealth and power to the clergy. When Martin Luther challenged Catholic sacramental teaching in his 1520 *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, he reduced the number of sacraments to two (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as the only two having Scriptural warrant), but he was not prepared to go as far as the younger radical, Andreas Karlstadt. Luther’s later teachings, while translating the service into German and offering the cup to all, retained the idea of the Real Presence of the Lord in the elements of bread and wine.

The immediate antecedents to the Anabaptist movement were in Zurich where Huldrych Zwingli, a Swiss priest as much influenced by Renaissance humanism as by Luther, began a reformation under the auspices of the municipal government. By 1523 he had denied the sacrificial character of the mass, and had reached an interpretation that interpreted the service as a “memorial” only. However others, including Conrad Grebel, in contact with Karlstadt in Muenster, were more still more radical, and breaking with Zwingli over his subservience to the municipal government, denied the validity of infant baptism and opted for a “believer’s church” independent of government. By 1527, their “Schleitheim Confession” on the “breaking of the bread” called for a service “in remembrance,” and put great emphasis on forgiveness within the community in preparation of its celebration. The service was to be conducted without vestments and in the vernacular.

Helmut Harder then spoke of “the confessional tradition” as exemplified in statements about the Lord’s Supper in a series of Confessions of Faith of Anabaptist-Mennonite Churches, a document in draft form which he is preparing for Dialogue IV in Assisi in November 2001. Helmut began by pointing out that unlike the “progressive” nature of papal doctrinal statements, the Mennonite tradition has produced statements that have the

character of “restatements” of understandings of the Scriptures - in other words, that follow Scripture rather than Tradition.

In summarizing the contents of these various confessions of faith, Helmut noted that with respect to the Why of celebrating the Lord’s Supper, the major themes that appear are: because the Lord commanded this, as an aid to remembrance of what Christ has done for us, as a confirmation and seal of eternal salvation, as a sign of full membership in the church, as a means of encouragement to the Christian life, as an admonition to love, as an occasion for self- examination, as an anticipation of the heavenly banquet, and as a way for the Holy Spirit to teach us its hidden meaning. With respect to Who might partake, the confessions stress that it is for the baptized, for those who are members of the church, for those who desire it, for those who are not under the discipline of the church, and for those who are living in peace and unity. In the confessions, the Lord’s supper is depicted as a memorial, as a demonstration, as a re-assurance of faith, as a seal of salvation, as a sign of communion and love for one another, as a symbol of Christ’s death, as a meal of thanksgiving, as exhortation, and a representation of Christ. With respect to how the elements of bread and wine are treated in these confessions, Helmut noted that was no one usage: symbol appears most often, but terms like sign, seal, and representation appear as well. The term “sacrament” is used sparingly. The rite is also described as a “meal of proclamation.”

In the discussion that followed **Adolf Ens** noted that the Mennonite tradition puts great emphasis on fellowship, and that “communion” could suggest “community of goods.” Just as the grains of wheat are kneaded together to form one bread, so the members of the church should lose their personal identity to be made part of the Body of Christ, the “body” celebrated in the Lord’s Supper. The true “miracle” or sacrament was transformation into the church.!

A number of the Mennonite participants in the dialogue observed that were differences between the various Mennonite churches in the way the elements were distributed, the words that were spoken, and in the use of grape juice or wine. It was noted that in some Mennonite churches, celebration of the Lord’s Supper may include a “footwashing” service.

The Eucharist: A Catholic Perspective

Luis Melo began his presentation on the Order of Service in the Catholic Mass by some comments on key concepts. He noted that “Mass” was not a Scriptural term, but that it was the one that became most commonly used in the West, and that came from the dismissal at the end of the service, the Latin “Ita missa est,” which signified, the service is ended, go in peace. From a dismissal, the term came to be extended to the whole service. As well, the “missa” has been interpreted in a missionary sense, with the idea that those who have taken part in the service are now “sent” into the world to live what they have experienced.

Luis observed that his remarks about “Order of Service” pertained primarily to the Roman Rite, and that there were some 22 rites recognized in the Catholic Church. He

then made a distinction between core elements that remain unchanged (the material element - bread and wine, a minister, a ritual action, and a form of words - calling upon the Holy Spirit), and peripheral elements that were culturally based and that may change. He noted that the “Sign of Peace” has been placed at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the service. Luis also pointed out the triple referent of the service: the past (memorial of Christ’s passion), the present (calling upon the Holy Spirit to obtain Christ’s presence now), and the future (the Eucharist as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet).

Luis then distributed a handout on the Jewish Berakah (blessing), which is pronounced over bread and wine and other foods to be consumed, and explained how the structure of the Mass incorporates its elements. He then spoke to a diagram (also distributed) that illustrated how the Mass is structured. This was followed by a video depicting the high points of the service. With respect to the frequency of the service, Luis explained that originally the emphasis was on the Easter service, then on Sundays, on anniversaries of martyrs (which might be at their graves), and then on more frequent services. In the later Roman Empire there was an obligation of daily Mass during Lent. In time, the service was typically held in the mornings.

With respect to the role of the minister, Vatican II tends to speak of the priest as acting in the “person of Christ.” With respect to the sacrificial aspect of the service, the concept is one of praying the passion of Christ (his death and resurrection), of appropriating His death and “reliving” it.

In response to a question about providing the cup to the laity, **Luis** explained that its use exemplifies the fullness of the symbolism of the Lord’s supper, and noted that various means can be used to implement this aspect of the Eucharist - e.g., in India by intinction (dipping the host in the cup of wine), in the Byzantine rite by the use of spoon to put a particle of bread soaked in wine on the tongue of the recipient, etc.!

St. Elaine Baete then spoke of her personal experience of the Eucharist. Stressing the point that her appreciation of the Eucharist is something personal and intimate and something that always remains an unfathomable mystery to her, she nevertheless shared some of the highlights of her evolving experience, beginning with childhood memories of First Communion (remembered by the somewhat Jansenistic instruction that stressed the recipient’s unworthiness and incomprehension of the Latin liturgy). She described her growing love of daily Mass and Communion during the years that started working and training at St. Boniface, and the growing realization that Eucharist had become for her the pearl of great price in her life, a great gift and grace.

Elaine likened the Eucharist to the mutual giving celebrated by the wedding of Cana, a new relationship that God establishes with humanity. In reception of the Eucharist, a “wedding commitment” is renewed, and this implies carrying the presence of the Eucharist, the presence of Jesus, to all those one meets wherever one goes. It provides a grace that enables the person to give the self to ministry within the Church, to work at changing the water of people’s lives into wine.! Elaine also related how the Eucharist has become the ultimate source of nourishment and strength in her life. In particular, she

explained what this means in her life as a member of a religious community, where members seek to live out the challenge of putting all things in common, to being faithful in the breaking of the bread and common prayer, of living in a spirit of charity, and of serving the needy.

In her conclusion, **Elaine** said that for her Eucharistic existence means living a life “for,” being open to a reality and a task that is beyond herself, and involves among other things: grace, celebration (gratitude), consecration, communion, imitation of Jesus, mission and witness to the Gospel, and constant experience of the Creator’s presence.

John Long then offered a brief review of the Major Themes concerning the Eucharist to be found in the Catholic Catechism. (See Raymond Maloney’ commentary of “The Doctrine of the Eucharist” distributed with these minutes – Attachment 2.. Participants are also referred to Sections 1322 through 1419 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.) **John** touched on the names that have been used, the relationship of the Eucharist to other sacraments, the Jewish origins of the ritual, the “what” of what is celebrated, the organization of the Catechism’s treatment and the desirability of supplementing the text with a commentary, the unity the various parts of the service (memorial of Christ’s death and resurrection and communion), and the effects of the Eucharist.

In the discussion that followed these presentations, a number of points were noted. It was pointed out that the Lord’s Supper has not been at the centre of Mennonite worship, which has been focussed on the Word preached and community singing, although recently there has been some push towards more frequent celebration. It was noted that some of the old Mennonite Confessions of Faith stated that the Lord’s Supper should be celebrated often. **Luis Melo** observed that since 1983 (and the World Council of Church’s BEM document), Anglicans have come to celebrate the service more frequently (now weekly) and that it has become the centre of Anglican worship. **Ardith Frey** noted that frequency of celebration can be decided by the congregation. **Elaine Pinto** was of the view that “communion” had the most potential for true mystical experience, and that in this respect she envied Catholic practice. **Helmut Harder** thought that in his life the Scriptures had the central place that Sr. Elaine Beate described the Eucharist has having in hers. **John Long** spoke of his wonder at serving as a Eucharistic Minister, speaking to and looking into the eyes of each recipient as they came forward and received the sacrament.

Adolf Ens raised the issue of “open” versus “closed” table - i.e., reception by those of other denominations.

Luis Melo acknowledged that Roman Catholics have had to struggle with this issue. Is the Eucharist a “sacrament of unity” (i.e., only for those already members) or a “sacrament that creates unity” (which implies a more open table). He also noted that the issue inevitably raises questions of jurisdiction. Current Catholic rules for inviting “outsiders” to participate in the Eucharist are as follows: 1) the person must ask of his/her own free will; 2) the person must believe what Catholics believe (i.e., in the “real

presence” of Christ in the Eucharist, but without any specifics with respect to the “how” of His presence); 3) the person does not have ready access to a minister of his/her own denomination; and 4) Grave necessity. Obviously, there is room for flexibility in the interpretation of these guidelines. It was noted that it would be highly unusual for a priest or minister of the Eucharist to refuse anyone who came forward to receive. He noted that Catholics were allowed to receive the Eucharist in an Orthodox service (though they may not be allowed to do so by the Orthodox!), but that they were not supposed to receive at Protestant services.

Helmut Harder added a footnote on the concept of grace in the Radical Reformation, pointing out that the Anabaptists generally retained an “ontological” view (which implies that through Baptism the believer takes on a new nature and becomes capable of performing acts pleasing to God), as opposed to the “forensic” view of grace adopted by Luther. Helmut was pleased to note this convergence between Mennonite and Catholic understandings, and also noted that both traditions spoke of the Lord’s Supper as a “memorial” of the Lord’s passion.

Future Planning

Following various suggestions and discussion there was agreement that the next meeting might focus on Ministry and/or the issue of how the Church and Christians should relate to the World. It was left to our co-chairs, Helmut and Luis, to work out the details. The next meeting of the dialogue is scheduled for 4 to 9 p.m. on 13 June 2001. **Michele Sala Pastora** offered to host the meeting at the St. Boniface Pastoral Centre, 622 Taché.

Concluding prayers

The concluding prayers were led by **Elaine Pinto**.

Notes by Richard Lebrun

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Ardith Frey, “My Personal Experience of ‘The Lord’s Supper’” Notes

Attachment 2: Notes on the Origins of the Mennonite Understandings of the Lord’s Supper

Attachment 3: Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church / Eucharist

Attachments to the Minutes of the meeting of 31 January 2001

Attachment 1

My Personal Experience of “*The Lord’s Supper*” or Communion

By Ardith Frey

Two stories capture key aspects of my personal experience of communion. I’d like to share them in some detail, then reflect on what those stories say about my experience. Lastly, I will share some information about current practice in the observance of communion in our congregation, including some examples of orders of service.

Childhood Story My sisters and I are seated on the stairs leading to the upstairs of our farmhouse. I must be about 8 years old. We are playing church with our dolls. We are mothers, and the dolls are our children. We pass bread cut into tiny squares and each help ourselves to a piece, and then we pass a glass of water from which we each take a sip. We are acting out what we, that morning had experienced in church, only then we, as children were by passed by the bread and juice which circulated through the pews, served by our minister and deacon. When we asked our parents after the service why we could not have the bread or juice, they told us that it was reserved for people who were old enough to understand, had made a personal decision to follow Jesus, and were baptized. And so now we were playing communion and experimenting with what it was like to be adults and participate.

Interestingly, I don’t remember there being a minister present. Perhaps because we couldn’t convince my brother to play. But then, when we played wedding or funeral (in the cemetery adjoining our farm) we took turns playing the role of minister. My brother was excluded from the role of Minister when we played wedding, because he was too much in demand as the only one who qualified to be a groom. Part of the reason for our curiosity with these rituals was that we had a Mennonite Church Minister’s Manual in our home (why we did I really don’t know.) When we played at being minister for these rituals, we always read the applicable words from the Minister’s Manual. Even though I took my turn at playing Minister and reading out of the Minister’s manual, it would have been unconceivable to me at that stage that I might ever become one. I hadn’t yet seen it modeled by a woman.

But I digress. Back to communion. My other childhood memory of communion in church was that it was a very solemn occasion, often much like a funeral. In fact, we called it a service of remembrance. On Good Friday the women in the church wore black or navy blue. Communion was always accompanied by foot washing and was observed infrequently, perhaps twice a year. But it was an extremely important time in the life of the church. It was always prepared for with a great deal of soul-searching and was emphasized as a time to make things right - with God and with one’s brothers and sisters. In the more conservative church in which my husband grew up, the Ministers held an open meeting several Sundays before for corporate confession of concerns

about perceived harmful trends within the community/church. These confessions often had to do with infractions of dress code or some other unacceptable behavior for a church that had clearly defined ways of keeping itself separate from “the world”. It was difficult to separate corporate examination from individual examination in a church community which had a very clear sense of corporate identity. Withholding participation in communion was sometimes used as a form of church discipline for unrepentant members. Missing a communion service on your own initiative also required an explanation. Participating in communion was an important symbol of being in good standing with the church.

After I was baptized (at age 12) and began to participate in communion services, I remember that I usually experienced a sense of guilt for Christ having had to die because of my sins. Unfortunately I did not receive release from that guilt by participation in the communion service. Perhaps the aspect of forgiveness was not emphasized enough. Or perhaps my keen and sensitive conscience which was always aware of things never being completely right, contributed to a sense of unworthiness in approaching communion. Although communion was a very serious time of self-examination in our church and prompted these negative feelings without adequate assurance of pardon, this experience did not characterize my whole relationship with the church. I knew that I belonged, was accepted, and that these were “my people”.

Ecumenical Story

It is the mid-70's, and my husband and I are participating in a communion service in the Methodist Church that we attended regularly in Swaziland during the first three years of service with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). This church provided my first experience of worshipping outside of the Mennonite Church. It was a diverse congregation made up of people from many different denominations (mostly non-Swazi nationals), being one of the few English services in the city. As Christians we were all welcomed to participate in communion, regardless of our denominational background. Several other M.C.C. workers are present, and I remember the awkwardness whenever an MCC worker approached the communion rail, because of observing a different protocol when being served. Everyone else approached the communion rail individually, was served, and then left individually. But whenever a Mennonite approached the rail, they by instinct rather than deliberate action, waited until everyone else at the rail was served, and then ate. The awkwardness of different protocols was gradually overcome when everyone began to follow this practice. This is one mass conversion experience I can report from this term of service!

Observations

In retrospect, I realize that both of these stories emphasize the attention that Mennonites give to communion as representing one's relationship to Christ, and to the body of Christ—the vertical and horizontal dimensions of our relationships as Christians. I still value this emphasis, but in retrospect I feel that the overly heavy emphasis which was placed on one's horizontal relationships and the attention given to ethical standards of behavior in qualifying one to participate in the Lord's supper, was regrettable. In my experience it

created a barrier from experiencing the grace inherent in the celebration of communion. I think there was too heavy an emphasis on our own preparation to approach the Lord's supper, and too little on the grace which we accept there - despite our own unworthiness. How can one ever be "worthy" of communion? Isn't the point that we are not worthy, but are accepted in our weakness when we accept with thanksgiving what Christ has done for us?

And then live in a way which demonstrates that gratitude - a love of God and neighbour? Of course it is a matter of balance, and it is possible that we too easily err on one side or the other.

But in recent years, especially since becoming a minister and accepting the responsibility of leading others in the celebration of communion, it is the aspect of forgiveness and grace inherent in the observance of communion which has become increasingly important to me. Communion with God and my fellow church members has become real and visible as I watch congregational members approach the communion table to be served, and especially when I am aware of struggle in some of their lives and I watch them come to renew their relationship with Jesus and with others. In other words, in the communion service I have rediscovered the vertical relationship as the source of grace and acceptance of my own imperfection, which enables me to live out the horizontal relationships, also with grace and acceptance. This emphasis is present in a poem of invitation from the United Church of Christ "Book of Worship:" which I would like to read.

This table is open to all who confess Jesus as the Christ
And seek to follow Christ's way. Come to this sacred table
Not because you must.
But because you may.
Come not because you are fulfilled,
But because in your emptiness
You stand in need of God's mercy and assurance.
Come not to express an opinion,
But to seek a presence
And to pray for a Spirit.
Come to this table, then, Sisters and Brothers, as you are.
Partake and share.
It is spread for you and me
That we might again know
That God has come to us,
Shared our common lot,
And invited us to join the people of God's new age.

Current Practice and Order of Service

In our congregation we observe Communion 4 times a year:

- on worldwide Communion Sunday in a public service in which children are present
- in an evening service on 1st Advent combined with foot-washing. This involves

a smaller group of people who intentionally seek it out; those who are committed followers of Christ. Since footwashing is not everyone's tradition in the church, we make it possible for persons to observe if they choose. Children are not present at this service

- on Maundy Thursday in a communion meal/re-enactment of the last supper. Everyone, including children is present. We observe hand-washing as part of the meal
- at church camp in a retreat setting which involving informal personal sharing, as the culmination of a weekend of worship, input and activities. Children have their own activity during this part of the service.

We do not require the “boundary-marker” of baptism for participation in communion, but do state in the bulletin in written form, and in the verbal invitation that persons who are in a relationship with Christ are welcome to participate. The matter of participation of children, who often consider themselves to be “earnest seekers after Jesus” is left up to families to decide. The pastor usually presides (but others may), often together with elders/deacons who serve the communion elements. There is flexibility in the overall order of service; sometimes there is a sermon but not always. The following aspects are usually included in the Lord's supper itself; invitation, prayer of preparation, words of institution, prayer of thanksgiving, distribution. The Minister's Manual gives several alternative readings for invitation, prayers of thanksgiving, etc.), and for use in alternative settings besides the normal public service of worship.

Following are several orders of service, and an example of the acts of observance of The Lord's Supper.

Attachment 2

Notes on the Origins of Mennonite Understandings of the Lord's Supper

By Adolf Ens

John Wycliffe (England) d. 1384.

- Intense patriotism produced opposition to encroachments of the Avignon papacy.
- Feudal view of ecclesiastical office: God as overlord gave positions as fiefs to be held on condition of faithfulness.
- Increasing conviction that Scriptures are the only law of the church and that all elect are priests, led to rejection of priestly power of exclusive human agency in the miracle of transubstantiation.
- From 1379 attacked doctrine of transubstantiation; his view essentially what later came to be known as consubstantiation.

John Hus (Bohemia) d. 1415. Promoter of Wycliffite teaching; while he was in prison in 1415, his followers in Prague began administering the cup to the laity.

Two 16th century issues in regard to the Eucharist were thus identified by the early 15th century. Lollard and *Unitas Fratrum* movements were still significant forces a century later.

Martin Luther, Wittenberg, (1520) reduced the value of sacrament to its witness to the divine promise. According to his assessment by Scriptural standard only baptism and Eucharist qualified as sacraments. On the latter he criticized the denial of the cup to the laity and doubted the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Andreas Karlstadt, Luther's Wittenberg colleague, at Christmas 1521 celebrated the Lord's Supper without priestly garb, sacrificial offering, elevation of the host, and with the cup offered to the laity. Luther came out of hiding in the Wartburg to oppose this rapid pace of change.

Huldrych Zwingli, Zurich, came to a reformatory posture through humanist studies. The Renaissance emphasis on the importance of going to "the sources" moved him to an increasing conviction that only the Bible is binding on Christians. In 1523 he began debating issues of theology and ecclesiastical practice before the adjudicating authority of City Council. Having cut himself off earlier from his Church superior (Bishop of Constance) he saw this lay body of civic officials as the best replacement for an ecumenical council of bishops.

The Zurich debate on the Eucharist in October 1523 denied the sacrificial

character of the mass but made no immediate changes in its practice or liturgy. While Luther took Jesus' words: "This is my body" as literally true (and hence held to some version of "real presence" like consubstantiation). Zwingli agreed with the Dutch lawyer, Cornelius Hoen, that the proper interpretation is "This signifies my body." Hence, he denied any physical presence of Christ in the Supper and emphasized its memorial character.

Some of the more radical theologians in Zwingli's group, growing impatient at the lag between Zwingli's changing his theology and implementing commensurate changes in practice, wrote letters to Karlstadt and Thomas Muntzer in 1524. The position on the Eucharist which layman Conrad Grebel and friends describe, represents a radical desacralization. To guard against implying to communicants anything magical, they emphasized the use of vernacular in the celebration, confining the words of "institution" to those of the Gospel, using ordinary vessels and ordinary bread, and not having a priest officiate. They also emphasize the "Rule of Christ" (Mt. 18:15-20). (*Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, 76-77)

The earliest "confession" of the Swiss-South German Anabaptists, the 7 Schleithem Articles of 1527, is largely the work of Michael Sattler, an ex-monk. The first three define how the church is constituted and maintained.

1. Baptism is given only to those who repent, believe, amend their ways, and request it. Recipients must first affirm that they are prepared to give and receive admonition according to the "Rule of Christ" as found in Mt. 18:15-20.
2. Self-examination and mutual examination is the prerequisite to partaking of the Lord's Supper, although the obligation to mutual admonition applies at all times. Again, the "Rule of Christ" is explicitly mentioned.
3. Those who are eligible to participate in the breaking of the bread "must beforehand be united in the one body of Christ ... by baptism." Emphasis is on "the calling of one God to one faith, to one baptism, to one body together with all children of God." (*Classics of the Radical Reformation* 1:37) This order closely follows the Roman Catholic sequence of baptism-confirmation, penance, Eucharist.

Balthasar Hubmaier d. 1528, was the most educated of early Anabaptist leaders (Dr. Theol. at Ingolstadt with the Dominican John Eck). He straddles the Swiss and Moravian Anabaptist groups. In "A form for Christ's Supper," (CRR 5: 393-408) he emphasizes proclamation of the Lord's death prior to the self-examination (following 1 Cor. 11) but the invitation itself is to eat and drink "in memory of the suffering and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins." (405)

Peter Riedemann's 1565 *Confession of Faith* has become the primary theological document for the Moravian Anabaptists, who survived as the Hutterian Brethren. The section on "The Lord's Supper" could appropriately have been identified as "Holy Communion," for his emphasis is on community. He writes: "In taking the bread and giving it to his disciples, Christ wanted to demonstrate the fellowship of his body and to show his disciples that they had become one body, one living organism and one nature with him." He quotes 1 Cor. 10:17: "We who are many, all partaking of the same bread, are one loaf and one body." Then he cites the analogy: "As the bread is made into a loaf by bringing together many grains, so we, many human beings who were scattered and divided and of differing opinions and purposes, are led by faith to be united." (CRR 9:116)

He also cites John 15: "I am the vine, you are the branches" and elaborates: "Here he shows once more, distinctly and clearly, that his disciples are one plant, one organism, one substance, and one body with him." (117) Riedemann thus identifies the central understanding of the Eucharist for Hutterites. "This meal, this sharing in the bread and wine of the Lord is therefore a sign of the fellowship of Christ's body. (1 Cor. 10:16) All the members, in taking part declare themselves with all the others to be of one mind, one heart, and one spirit with Christ." (117f")

The immediately following section in the *Confession* is "Community of Goods," in which he spells out the practical consequences of the unity affirmed in the Lord's Supper.

Dirk Philips is taken as representative of the Dutch wing of Anabaptists. Dirk was a former Franciscan, reasonably well educated. His 1564 *Enchiridion* (Handbook) devotes a lengthy section to the Eucharist. ("The Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ," CRR 6: 112-133.) It emphasizes the Supper "primarily as a memorial of Christ's death ... as an admonition, promotion, and establishment of Christian love and unity." (112) As with Hubmaier, in the service itself "the death of the Lord shall be proclaimed by a servant of the Word and be taken thoroughly to heart by ever Christian" prior to the celebration of the Eucharist. After this "the bread shall be broken and received and eaten by every Christian, and the wine shall be drunk with a true faith and the memory that Christ Jesus gave his body for us and poured out his blood for us." (12) Like Sattler and Hubmaier, Philips stresses Paul's admonition that everyone "must first test himself before he eats the bread of the Supper and drinks from the cup." (129)

Attachment 3

**COMMENTARY ON THE
CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Edited by MICHAEL J. WALSH

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The Doctrine on the Eucharist

(Paragraphs 1322-1419)

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After baptism and confirmation, the *Catechism* turns to the Eucharist as the completion of the process of Christian initiation. This third of the three sacraments of initiation celebrates and deepens the day-to-day life of the initiated believer within the Christian community. As the *Catechism* itself points out (1324), all the other sacraments are directed to this one, and so it is not surprising that the *Catechism* devotes such a generous portion of its text to this ‘source and summit of the Church’s life’ (SC 47).

The treatment of this sacrament is divided into seven sections, the headings of which are some guide to the content. A person using the *Catechism* as a basis for instruction should notice the selection of topics which the authors have considered significant and the order in which they are presented. In general they correspond to the standard topics of a theological treatise on the subject. Indeed most of them may be found in Aquinas’s articles in the third part of the *Summa Theologiae* (III, 73-79). The main topics in each section may be listed as follows, designating them according to headings more usual in doctrinal theology:

- I The importance of the Eucharist (1324-1327).
- II The names of the sacrament(1328--1332).
- III The matter of the sacrament (1333-1336).
- IV The institution of the sacrament (1337-1344).
- V The liturgical structure of the Mass (1345-1355).

VI Eucharistic sacrifice: Thanksgiving and memorial (1356-1372).

Eucharistic presence (1373-1377).

Tabernacle devotion (1378-1381).

VI The meaning of holy communion (1382-1388).

Communion in both kinds (1390).

The effects of the sacrament (1391-1397).

Intercommunion (1398--1401).

VII The eschatological aspect (1402-1405).

From this plan it appears that the approach is a gradual one, beginning with the more experiential aspects of the sacrament and then moving on towards the inner meaning of the rite, which is presented mainly in the fifth section. On first reading, one will need some patience with the earlier parts, since the main questions in the minds of most people are dealt with only in the fifth section. However, the overview of the plan presented above shows the logic of the method and its usefulness for purposes of teaching and study. This commentary will now follow the same plan, going through the article, section by section.

I. The Eucharist -- source and summit of the Church's life

The *Catechism* leads off in this section with a strong affirmation of the central role of the Eucharist in the whole life of the Church. The content of the section is well summed up in the phrase in the heading, an expression taken from Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium* 11), but the thought behind it comes from Aquinas, who sees the Eucharist as the consummation and goal of all the sacraments (STh III, 73, 3).

II. What the sacrament is called

The name we apply to the Eucharist has a certain importance. It tells us something about how we understand the sacrament, and often it helps to locate our understanding in particular historical circumstances. In this section the *Catechism* lists no fewer than sixteen different names for the rite, but of these the most important is that constantly used by the *Catechism* itself, 'the Eucharist'. According to the dictionary, this is the Greek word for thanksgiving, but the role of thanksgiving in the Mass is scarcely sufficient to explain how this word came to be the name of the Christian act of worship. Since understanding this aspect throws considerable light not only on the name of the sacrament but also on the kind of ritual it is, and since it also prepares for the next section on the institution of the sacrament, the point deserves to be explained in more detail.

Jewish origin of the Eucharist

When our Lord came to give his community a form of worship, he did not start from zero. He adopted a form of prayer which was familiar to every Jew, the rite of grace before and after meals. From earliest times Jews have loved the prayer of blessing, praise and thanksgiving. 'Blessing' here means primarily that believers praise God for his goodness in himself and thank him for his benefits to the world. While this prayer could be carried out at any time of the day, it was associated in a special way with the family meal. There the father of the house led his family in prayer. Grace before meals was a ritual of blessing God over bread and then sharing the bread among those present. Grace after meals was a similar ritual, but with wine.

Today many scholars consider that, in instituting the Eucharist at the Last Supper, our Lord did so by celebrating these table rituals in a new way, relating his act of worship at the supper to his act of worship on the cross, and so giving the familiar rituals a totally new meaning. It is quite likely that at first the Eucharist was celebrated before and after a community meal. At this stage the whole complex would have been referred to as 'the breaking of bread', naming the whole from the introductory rite (cf. the texts in 1342). Then as the Church became more conscious of the unique meaning of the Lord's new rituals, the meal began to drop out and the two rituals over bread and cup were fused into one and offered to God in one great prayer of blessing and thanksgiving modelled on the one previously said over the cup. This is the origin of our great prayer of offering, the Eucharistic Prayer (cf. 1352-1354), and the whole ritual was named *eucharistia*. At first it was a name for the whole ritual action, but then, quite early on, it was extended to the sacramental gifts themselves (see the quotation in 1355). Both of these usages are preserved down to our own day. *Eucharistia* therefore does not refer simply to the prayers of thanksgiving in the Mass. It is really a Christian transposition of the ancient ritual of *blessing as* this was carried out in the table liturgy of the Jews.

III. The Eucharist in the economy of salvation

In this third section the *Catechism* deals with the institution of the Eucharist on the occasion of the Last Supper, but it begins with the significance of the bread and wine which are the focal point of every Eucharist. Here one has to keep before one's mind the account of the origin of the sacrament which was given in the previous section of this commentary. In instituting the sacrament our Lord did not start by taking two objects to change them into something else, as though he were simply some kind of wonder-worker, or even magician. He began as a man of prayer. He took an action of prayer, the Jewish ritual of grace before and after meals, of which bread and wine were part. In taking this ritual he transformed it, giving it a new and sublime meaning, and by that very fact he transformed the bread and wine. Bread and wine actually have certain associations from salvation-history, which the *Catechism* explains, but these associations are secondary to the fundamental reason just described as to how bread and wine came to be the matter of the Christian sacrament.

In locating the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, the *Catechism* adopts the viewpoint of the Synoptics that this supper was a celebration of the Passover. This assumption is attractive, since it facilitates the presentation of the Eucharist as a kind of Christian Passover, but unfortunately the historical assumption on which it is based is far

from certain. In the Fourth Gospel the Passover occurs on the evening of our Lord's death, not on the day assigned in the Synoptics. This problem has exercised the minds of scholars down through history, some following the Synoptics, some following John. Even if one opts for the latter position, one can always say, with Raymond Brown, that the supper on the Thursday evening would inevitably have Passover characteristics, since that whole week in Jerusalem was filled with the atmosphere of the feast.

On the other hand, one cannot press too literally the notion of the Eucharist as a Christian Passover. There is a certain analogy between the two celebrations, since, as we will see below, both are forms of a Jewish ritual memorial, but it is clear that the Eucharist was not instituted on the elements proper to the Passover. For instance, unleavened bread was never used in the early centuries, and from the beginning it has not been simply an annual celebration. Even if the Last Supper were a Passover, the Eucharist was established on elements common to any Jewish festive meal, whether Passover or not.

The key truth in this whole section is the fact of divine institution itself. The Eucharist was instituted by the Son of God as God's chosen way for offering worship pleasing to him. This truth is fundamental not only to the divine efficacy of the sacrament, but also to the obligation which Christians have always felt to celebrate it, an obligation familiar to us in the custom of Sunday worship.

IV. The liturgical celebration of the Eucharist

One reason why Christians go to Mass on Sundays is to follow Christ in doing things which he did. As the *Catechism* notes in 1346, the Mass comprises two main actions, the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. Each of these actions has a separate origin in customs with which our Lord was familiar. The liturgy of the word comes out of the synagogue service in which our Lord participated every sabbath (Lk. 4:16). The liturgy of the Eucharist, as has been explained above, comes out of the table rituals with which every Jew was familiar from childhood on.

The basic structure of the liturgy of the word is in three parts: readings, preaching, prayers. These were found in the synagogue of our Lord's time, as they are to this day. The liturgy of the Eucharist is more complicated. At the Last Supper there were seven main gestures of our Lord to be noted: (1) he took bread; (2) he blessed his Father over it; (3) he broke the bread; (4) he gave it to the disciples. After the meal, (5) he took the cup, (6) again he prayed a prayer of blessing to his Father; (7) he then shared the cup with them. Sometime in the first decades of Christianity, the meal, which had separated the ritual over the bread from that over the cup, dropped out. At that stage the seven original gestures of the Lord fused into the four basic actions of our ritual: he took bread and wine (the *Preparation of the Gifts*); he blessed his Father (*the Eucharistic Prayer*); he broke the bread (*the Breaking of Bread*); he distributed host and cup (*Holy Communion*).

Such is the origin of what the *Catechism* calls 'the fundamental structure' of our worship. At some point in the first century of the Church, the Christian versions of these rituals of word and Eucharist were brought together and fused into that one single act of worship which we call the Mass. The earliest witness to this development is the striking text of St

Justin given in 1345. If the Eucharist celebrates especially the Lord's paschal mystery, and the liturgy of the word brings before us the other events of his life on earth, then the entire Mass can be seen to encapsulate for us the whole sweep of our Lord's mystery, in his life, death and resurrection, as one great Christ-event, which is the source of salvation for the world.

V. The sacramental sacrifice

In this fifth section of the article, the *Catechism* reaches the most important and controversial part of its task. In describing the liturgy of the Eucharist in the preceding section, the focus was on *how* we celebrate it. Now that we come to explain the nature of the Eucharist, the focus is on *what* we celebrate. Two topics in particular are covered, the meaning of Eucharistic sacrifice and the meaning of Eucharistic presence. The first of these is treated in two sub-sections (1359-1361; 1362-1372), beginning with the Eucharist as thanksgiving.

Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (1359-1361)

The *Catechism* opens its account with a reflection on the Eucharist as sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Following the principle of basing one's explanation on the texts of the Mass itself, this is one of the aspects of the Eucharist which it is easiest to point to in the Mass and to explain. There are not only prayers like the Gloria and the Alleluia in the liturgy of the word, but there is above all the way the great prayer of offering, the Eucharistic Prayer, opens with this theme in the preface and closes with it in the doxology. The preface is that part of the Mass which expresses most clearly the identity between the offering of the Church on earth and the worship of God carried out by the angels and saints in heaven. That praise and thanksgiving should be the dominant theme of the prayer of the saints in heaven was something that was realised already by the Jews. The Talmud declares that the day will come when all prayer will be silent on human lips, save the prayer of thanksgiving and of praise. But it is not at all obvious that this theme should give its name (cf. 1328) to the worship of those still faced with the struggles of this life. That it should do so is not due to some flight from reality, but it is a tribute to the transformation of life and to the anticipation of heaven which the paschal mystery makes possible.

If we read the whole of Psalm 21(22), we will see how Christ's prayer of desolation on the cross was transformed into one of thanksgiving. If through the Eucharist we are to share in the praise and thanksgiving of Christ's victory, it is only by first entering into his self-oblation. The thanksgiving that defines the Eucharist is the fruit of union with his sacrifice in both his death and resurrection. This twofold mystery has its counterpart in our worship when our praise rises out of our oblation. The Eucharist is thanksgiving, not just because of particular prayers on this theme in its liturgy, but because it is the climax of a sacrificial offering in the proper sense of the term.

The sacrificial memorial (1362-1372)

In 1362 the *Catechism* takes up a more theological presentation of the Eucharistic

sacrifice. This question has been the subject of much reflection in the past, where scholars have developed many ingenious theories to attempt to throw some light on the mystery. The *Catechism's* approach is predominantly that of avoiding such theories and of taking its cue from the Second Vatican Council. Here one should notice in particular the quotation given without comment at the outset of the whole article in 1323. This paragraph is the principal statement on Eucharistic sacrifice in the contemporary magisterium, and so this passage, rather than that from the Council of Trent cited in 1366, deserves to be taken as basic in any catechesis on the Eucharist today.

Of this paragraph, and of the whole approach to the Eucharist in Vatican II, Edward Schillebeeckx wrote as follows: "The Council relinquished the old sacrificial concept common to various religions and reached out directly to the biblical and ecclesial sacrificial concept with the paschal mystery at its centre."¹ The old concept, to which Schillebeeckx refers, was primarily a cultic one. It emphasised the mediatorial role of the priest carrying out some sacrificial protocol, often focused on sacrificial immolation. Such a notion stands in the background of many of the older theological theories, bringing their attention to bear with particular emphasis on the death of Christ.

The newer concept is primarily historical rather than cultic. It is what the ancient writers meant by the expression 'spiritual sacrifice' and the scholastics by the term 'sacramental sacrifice'. As we shall see below, this notion stresses the role of the whole assembly in the offering of our worship. The meaning lies in our union through ritual with the historical events of the paschal mystery, and so it clearly embraces not only the death but also the resurrection of Christ. This perspective culminates in the heavenly sacrifice of Christ, which is the view of the Eucharist which predominates in the *Catechism's* presentation from the first mention of it in 1326 to the quotation in 1372.

This is the notion of sacrifice to which the *Catechism* is turning when in 1362 it takes up the question of the meaning of memorial in the context of the Eucharist. At the time of the Reformation the divisions among Christians over the Eucharist could be summed up in the way they understood the little word 'memory' in the phrase 'Do this in memory of me'. Both sides took the word in what today we would call a purely subjective sense: 'memory' meant simply calling to mind an event of the past; it was something that simply happened in the mind. Against the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Protestants commonly described the Eucharist as simply a memorial of Christ's 'once for all' sacrifice on the cross. The Catholics insisted that, as well as being a 'memorial' of the cross, the Eucharist was a 'sacrifice'. In this way the two terms, memory and sacrifice, came to be set in a certain opposition.

One of the features of Scripture scholarship in this century has been the study of the Jewish background of the New Testament. It was this line of approach that led to the discovery that memory in the context of worship had a very special meaning for a Jew. A specific characteristic of biblical faith is the belief that God is the Lord of history. Not only does he intervene in history, but when he does so, all of history is equally present to him. As a result we find statements in the Old Testament which indicate that the great redemptive events are carried out not just for the people of a particular time, but for all the succeeding generations as well. When the contemporaries of Moses were liberated

from Egypt in the Exodus, this event contained within it a grace of liberation for every Jew. This grace of liberation is then believed to become present to believers when they pray, for instance in the Psalms, but especially when these events are commemorated in the liturgy.

One very clear example is the annual festival of the Passover. In the Passover the Jew commemorates the Exodus under Moses, but, as many of the Passover texts show, when the people today commemorate these events of so long ago, they are not simply calling them to mind. By the power of the Lord of history, those events are in a sense made present in the liturgy, so that the worshippers are living them again in their own lives. A Jewish ritual memorial, therefore, is no mere thinking of the past; it is a memorial filled with the reality of that which it commemorates.

This, then, is the context for understanding the word 'memory' when our Lord says 'Do this in memory of me'. Just as Moses focused the minds of Jews on the events of the Exodus by the institution of the Passover (Ex 12), so does Christ by his Eucharist focus our minds on the salvific events of the new law, namely on his own death and resurrection. It is worth noting that in one place in the New Testament (Lk. 9:31 in the Greek) these two events are actually referred to as Christ's 'exodus'. Consequently the phrase 'Do this in memory of me' points to the fact that, just as the Jewish Passover contained the events of the Exodus under Moses, so Christ's Eucharist contains his 'exodus', namely his death and resurrection.

The ecumenical importance of this discovery is obviously far-reaching. We know from elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., the Letter to the Hebrews) that Christ's death and resurrection constitute the great sacrifice of our redemption. As a result, this notion of Jewish ritual memorial has opened up for us a whole new avenue of approach to the vexed question of Eucharistic sacrifice -- and that grounded in the very phrase of the New Testament which was once interpreted to exclude it. All this has the added advantage that the exegetical exploration of this discovery was shared by Catholic and Protestant scholars alike. These scholars do not necessarily agree in all details concerning the implications of their findings, but the notion of Jewish ritual memorial has certainly placed the whole discussion of the Eucharist on a new plane, and divisions which once seemed unbridgeable are beginning to fall away. By this one stroke we have at once established that in some sense the Eucharist is a sacrifice and that it is so by being one with the sacrifice of the cross. As the *Catechism* puts it (1365), the Eucharist is a sacrifice *because* it is the memorial of Christ's Passover.

Having established the principle of Eucharistic memorial as the basis of a new notion of sacrifice, the *Catechism* goes on to develop its approach by showing how comprehensive a notion it is. It encompasses in one sweep all subsequent celebrations of the Eucharist, which in turn bring into one great act of worship the Head, the members, the living, the clergy, the saints, the dead. The unity between the Eucharist and the cross is the basic reason for seeing the Mass as the sacrifice of Christ the Head. From this the *Catechism* goes on to reflect on how the Mass is also the sacrifice of the members of Christ in his Church. This represents the view of the Eucharist which is reflected significantly in the main Eucharistic Prayers of the Church, not least the Roman Canon. Commemorating the

various members of the Church is a way of exercising our communion with them, so that we can regard this commemorating as another way of celebrating the Eucharist as communion.

A further key aspect of this truth is mentioned in 1368, but maybe not clearly enough. The Mass is not only something offered for the Church, but something offered *by* the Church. It is not only offered by the priest, but by all the faithful as well. This teaching, which was already clarified for our times by Pius XII in *Mediator Dei*, was repeated unambiguously in the Vatican Council: the faithful ‘offer the divine Victim to God, and themselves along with It’ (*Lumen Gentium* 11). The point is a central one for the role of the laity in the modern liturgy. It is also a key one for the theology of the Eucharist, since it specifies *who* is the celebrant of the Eucharist. It is the whole body of Christ, Head and members, which offers the body of Christ, Head and members, to the Father, but the different people act in different ways, with the priest alone acting in the person of Christ the Head, and he alone consecrating the gifts.

Returning to the question of the Eucharist as communion and to the commemoration of various people within the body of Christ, three categories of members can be picked out for special mention. Firstly, there are the ministers of Christ on earth, with the Pope at their head. Every Eucharist is an act of ecclesial communion. This is why the naming of the Pope and the bishop in the Eucharistic Prayer is more than just a prayer for them. It is an expression of our being members of the one body with them in the community of faith. Secondly, we commemorate the saints. Sometimes we mention the names of particular patrons. Sometimes, as with some of the saints in the Roman Canon, we scarcely know who they are. But it does not matter. The important thing is our communion with all those, named and unnamed, who are now gathered before the throne of God in heaven. As the preface of the Eucharistic Prayer clearly brings out, in every Eucharist we form one assembly with them in heaven, not only sharing in their worship, but drawing help from their intercession in the one communion of saints.

Thirdly, we commemorate the living and the dead, for whom we pray at Mass and for whom we offer the divine Victim to God. The offering of the Mass for the living and the dead was one of the main points of contention at the time of Trent and was what they principally had in mind when they described the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice. The issue was connected with the question of Mass stipends, which is often a problem for people, then as now. The Reformers particularly objected to the notion that the Eucharist should benefit people who are not present at the celebration. The Council went some way to meet their difficulties when it taught that only those already disposed by faith and repentance can benefit from the Mass (DS 1743). The Mass is not magic! At the same time, the Council rightly saw that the nub of the question was in fact that the Eucharist is a true sacrifice. Petition is one of the ends of sacrifice, and just as prayer can be offered for the living and the dead, so can the sacrifice of Christ and his Church.

The *Catechism* concludes its treatment of the Eucharistic sacrifice with a quotation from St Augustine (1372). This quotation makes an excellent summary of the view of the Eucharist presented by the *Catechism*. It clearly relates the Eucharist to the heavenly sacrifice. It underlines who offers the Eucharist and who is offered in it. The one who

offers is the one who is offered, namely the body of Christ, Head and members, now united in one great communion of worship. As a theological explanation of the nature of the Eucharist, the notion of the heavenly sacrifice only carries us a limited distance, but it has the great advantage of immediacy and of according well with the texts which the people hear being celebrated in the liturgy itself. Furthermore, it is a sufficient basis for conveying something of the majesty and seriousness of the rite, so that the Mass may be seen as considerably more than just a local assembly at prayer.

The mystery of presence (1373-1381)

When it comes to the question of Eucharistic presence, the *Catechism* takes as its starting-point the teaching of Vatican II on the plurality of ways in which Christ is really present in his Church. This approach is a significant one, which should be seen as setting an example for teachers and catechists generally. It is presented by the *Catechism* in a summary way in 1373, but it will be found more fully in the liturgy constitution (SC 7), and even more fully in Paul VI's *Mysterium Fidei* 35-38. There are two points in particular which need to be stressed about this teaching.

First of all, this approach places the mystery of the Eucharistic gifts within the context of liturgical presence generally and of the diversity of modes of Christ's presence in the Mass. In the past people tended to think in terms of only one mode of 'real presence'. The very expression, as the *Catechism* notes, citing Paul VI, seemed to imply that the other modes of presence were not real. The change of bread and wine into Christ's body and blood was understood to occur within a context of 'real absence'. The signal of his approach was the bell at the consecration.

Nowadays, the doctrine of the many modes of Christ's presence marks a return to an earlier perspective on the mystery of presence. The Church itself is the fundamental mystery through which the problem of distance between Christ and ourselves is overcome (cf. Mt 28:20). Christ's presence to his Church is the presupposition of any liturgical celebration, so that any particular mode of his presence within that context comes about not in order simply to establish a presence, but in order to deepen our response to a presence already there. Consequently, the change that takes place in the Eucharistic gifts does not come about as though the problem to be overcome were still one of spatial distance. The real problem is one of what we might call moral distance, namely one of our lack of response. He comes close to us under the species of bread and wine primarily in order to deepen our response to this and to the other modes of his presence by drawing us into an altogether special union with himself through holy communion. He then continues his presence among us in the tabernacle in order to keep that union alive in our hearts from Mass to Mass and from communion to communion.

There is a second important point about the real presence implicit in this teaching of Pope and Council, though one left by them to the theologians to develop. If there are several ways in which Christ is really present to his people, the teacher has to be able to give a reason for this plurality. Would not one mode of presence be enough? The answer lies in the fact that the presence we are concerned with is not just spatial but personal. The diversity of modes of presence is necessary if God is to become present to us in the

varying facets of our personal lives. Indeed, in its higher forms, presence is something mutual as well, where the response of one person to another is part of the very reality of the presence.

This helps us to understand why there is no rivalry between the various modes of presence. Each of them is different in kind, and each complements the other. At the centre of them all there is Christ's presence in host and cup which, as the sacrament of presence par *excellence*, helps to maintain all the others and keeps us sensitive to them. In particular there is no rivalry between Christ's presence in the tabernacle and his presence in our neighbour, for in each case the appropriate response is different. We respond to his presence in others by serving them. We respond to his presence in the tabernacle by prayer and adoration. The former gives our prayer greater realism. The latter gives our service greater depth. This treatment of presence has seemed necessary in this commentary since the *Catechism* itself does not face up to the problems created by the teaching of the contemporary magisterium with which it opens its own account. Even more clearly than in the case of Eucharistic sacrifice, the *Catechism* moves from Vatican II to the Council of Trent, and most of what it then says is focused on the central concerns of the earlier Council with its insistence on the reality of Christ's presence in the consecrated species (1374-1377). This teaching is of course a necessary part of any catechesis, even today, but it is regrettable that the *Catechism* did not address itself in addition to the concerns which surround the documents of Vatican II.

In particular one will notice the absence in the *Catechism* of any reference to the controversies concerning real presence which, though not discussed in the documents of Vatican II, were much spoken of at that time and were the occasion of Paul VI's encyclical *Mysterium Fidei*. These controversies centred on certain new approaches to this truth which received such names as transignification and transfinalisation. The absence of any reference to these approaches in the *Catechism* fits in with its tendency to avoid theological theories, but since these approaches have been widely discussed and can be the source of questions in people's minds, some mention of them seems necessary today.

This is not the place to go into these theories in detail. Suffice it to say that they arise in the context of a more personalist philosophy than that which was basic to Catholic theology in the past. In general they try to describe the mystery of change in the Eucharist in terms of a change of meaning in the bread and wine. It is important to realise that these new approaches are more a style of approach than one monolithic account. Theologians differ in the way they explain the matter, some clearly taking note of the points to which the Church is committed, some being not so careful. It was because of the confusion in this area that Pope Paul VI wrote his encyclical. In it he draws attention to the key points which remain binding for Catholic teaching on the subject. However, it is essential to realise that the Pope did not close the door on the new approaches. Indeed he himself in the encyclical uses some of the language of a 'change of meaning' in explaining the Eucharistic mystery. Consequently the whole question has been left to Catholic theologians to work out with loyalty and creativeness. It will be for the Church of the future to pass judgement on their conclusions.

In 1378--1381 the *Catechism* concentrates on devotion to the reserved sacrament. The context for this insistence is a certain change with regard to this devotion since the Vatican Council. Even if the tabernacle does not have the central place it once enjoyed, it is still important to appreciate that this devotion continues to be recommended to the faithful by the highest authorities in the Church. For this the *Catechism* cites Paul VI and John Paul II. It could also have cited the Vatican Council itself, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 5 and 18, as well as several documents of the Holy See dealing with the new liturgy. In this light, and recalling what was said above, we can see that the change in attitude to the tabernacle is not so much a decline as a change of emphasis, as this devotion is set in the wider context of presence envisaged by Vatican II. Shortly before his death Karl Rahner could write with confidence of the place of this devotion in the spirituality of the future: "This ancient custom contains a blessing for the future, a blessing we should not miss."²

VI. The paschal banquet

In this section the *Catechism* takes up the question of holy communion. It dwells on the dispositions with which the sacrament should be approached, the manner of its celebration and the effects of grace it bestows on the participants. In the opening paragraph (1382) it lays down the important principle that sacrifice and banquet belong together. Since taking part in the Mass without going to holy communion is such a familiar feature of Catholic life, the impression could easily be created that holy communion is simply an 'optional extra' for the worshipper. The *Catechism* makes the point that the whole meaning of Mass culminates in the Eucharistic banquet, and so it is the desirable climax of anyone's participation in the rite. Conversely, it can be said that holy communion is essentially a sacrificial act. It is not just a visit to 'my Jesus'. It is a way of entering more deeply into the whole movement of that sacrifice of Head and members spoken of by Augustine in 1372.

In 1384 the *Catechism* expresses the invitation to communion in the words of John 6:53. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries this verse was a controversial one. It was a favourite text of those who opposed the Catholic custom of communion in one kind only. By reaction, some began to doubt whether John 6 referred to the Eucharist at all. Today a Eucharistic interpretation of John 6:51-58 is widely admitted among exegetes, and the invitation to the use of the cup is in fact taken up by the *Catechism* in 1390.

Next the *Catechism* turns to our preparation for communion. While the best preparation for communion lies in offering the Mass with attentiveness to the liturgy and commitment to God and neighbour, the *Catechism* concentrates on the aspect of examining one's conscience, drawing on the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:22-29. This way of presenting the matter could easily be taken in a purely individualistic way, which is not only contrary to the sense of communion as a banquet, but also scarcely in keeping with the actual text of Paul. When the apostle wrote the quoted words from 1 Corinthians, he was concerned with cliques and divisiveness in the local congregation. Indeed some exegetes have proposed that 'discerning the body' refers to the ecclesial body directly. However, the view implied by the *Catechism*, that 'body' here refers to the body of the Lord in host and cup, is well supported by exegetes; but even in this approach the ecclesial sense should not be seen as absent. Holy communion summons us not only

before our responsibilities directly to God, but also before those owed to our fellow human beings in justice and love. All these aspects should have a place in our examination of conscience before communion.

The following paragraph (1388) brings two points to our attention. Firstly, it underlines, as already mentioned at the beginning of this section above, that reception of holy communion is integral to the Mass. The liturgical movement has encouraged the faithful in the many ways of active participation in the liturgy, singing, reading, offertory processions, and so on; but we must always remember that our active participation in the Mass is seriously incomplete if we do not go to communion as well. *The Catechism* then reminds us of a point stressed by the magisterium ever since Pius XII, but still too often neglected, that the Eucharistic gifts offered to us in holy communion should be consecrated at the same Mass. Though still a recommendation rather than a requirement, this simple arrangement is a very direct way of bringing out how our communion is integral to the Mass, for it is the divine confirmation and deepening of the offering we have just made.

The reception of communion under both kinds is raised by 1390. The custom of communion under one kind, which was usual for the communion of the sick in the early Church, became general in the Western Church only during the Middle Ages. It has never been the norm in the Eastern rites, and since the Second Vatican Council there has been a movement in the Western Church to return as far as practical to the more common Christian usage. The Western Church has always had to defend the legitimacy of communion under one kind. This was done most notably at the Council of Trent, where it taught that those who receive communion under one species alone are not thereby deprived 'of any grace necessary for salvation' (DS 1729).

This way of putting it may be contrasted with that used in the *Catechism* where it speaks of 'all the fruit of Eucharistic grace'. This latter phrase is misleading. It refers to the fact that under *either* species Christ is present, whole and entire, body, blood, soul and divinity. It could, however, give the impression that reception under both kinds is a purely ceremonial matter and does not affect the grace of the sacrament. Trent's mode of expression is more precise. It leaves room for the possibility that communion under both kinds can in fact be more fruitful of grace for the recipient. Symbols speak to the heart and dispose us to be more open to the ways of God. The dispositions of the worshipper condition the fruitfulness of all the sacraments. The cup of Christ's blood is such an intimate sign of his love that it is not impossible that it should open us up to depths of response which the host alone would not evoke.

The effects of holy communion (1391-1401)

The last topic to be taken up in this section deals with the effects of the sacrament in our lives. In doing so the authors have in mind in particular the effects of holy communion, but, if we are to be faithful to the *Catechism's* own principle of the basic unity of sacrifice and banquet (1382), then something of these effects must be said to flow into those who simply participate in the Mass without going to holy communion. They are not only effects of holy communion, but of the Eucharist as such -- though, of course, they

are found most clearly and most deeply in those who come with faith and love to the Eucharistic table.

The Catechism presents us with three main effects of the sacrament: (a) union with Christ; (b) forgiveness of sins; (c) union with others: the Church, the poor.

Union with the life of Christ is the most obvious effect of the eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood. The *Catechism* describes this as the principal effect, citing in its support some verses from the Eucharistic passage in John 6. As 1392 points out, this is the effect suggested by the very symbolism of the sacramental signs. Just as bread and wine nourish our natural lives, so do Christ's body and blood nourish the life we have from baptism.

Underlying this principle is the great mystery of that life of which John's Gospel speaks. Christ has come that we may have life and have it more abundantly (Jn. 10:10), but this is not simply the life we have already, the human life of natural creation, though it does include it. It has to be above all a new life, a 'born again' life, a new creation, and this is nothing less than the divine life, the life of God himself shared with us. Indeed, if we expand the notion of life spoken of in John 6 with the teaching about divine life in John 13 - 17, then the life which the Eucharist is to nourish is the life of the three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, shared with us already here below in the mystery of divine grace.

The second effect of the sacrament, according to the *Catechism*, is the remission of sins. This doctrine still comes as a surprise to many people, since we associate the forgiveness of sins rather with the sacrament of penance. However, as the texts cited by the *Catechism* in 1393 show, it is clear from the beginning that there is some link between the Eucharist and forgiveness. If the Eucharist helps to increase our love, by that very fact it withdraws us from that darkness of selfishness which is sin. Consequently, the Eucharist has some effect both with regard to venial sin and to mortal sin, as 1394 and 1395 indicate respectively. In the former case, we can speak of forgiveness; in the latter, of a strengthening against future falls. We could sum up this teaching in a paraphrase of St Ambrose: the Eucharist is our daily bread for our daily sins.

Inevitably, a Catholic will wonder where this doctrine leaves the sacrament of penance. First of all, it is far from implying that the latter sacrament is unnecessary. Not only is there the question of mortal sin, for which the sacrament of penance is the normal remedy, but there are all the grey areas in life, for which we will always need not only healing, but counselling. To deal with the darker aspects within us can never be the principal function of the Eucharist. Every so often, then, whether we like it or not, we will have to face up to these negative aspects of our lives, and for that the normal sacramental way will always be to go to confession. At the same time the above teaching on this effect of the Eucharist does make a difference with regard to the sacrament of penance. It implies that perhaps we go less often than before, and that when we do go, we do so more personally and profoundly.

The third effect of the Eucharist is our ever-deeper incorporation into the mystery of

Christ's body, the Church. This aspect of the Eucharist is very profoundly and beautifully developed in the writing of the Fathers of the Church. Henri de Lubac summed them up when he wrote, in a phrase that has become famous, 'The Eucharist makes the Church'. Indeed, we can say that the body of Christ makes the body of Christ: the sacramental body makes the ecclesial body.

With this teaching we are faced with some of the ambiguities which always attend the notion of 'community'. We could take it on two levels. There is the general level of the universal Church. Certainly the Eucharist helps the Church to grow on this level. Some people would see the development of the Church in the twentieth century, its theological growth at Vatican II, its expansion in the Third World, as fruits of the increased recourse to holy communion inaugurated by St. Pius X at the beginning of the century.

But there is also the local level. One of the dominant concerns of Vatican II with regard to the Eucharist was to heighten awareness among the faithful as to the social implications of the sacrament. Often we hear people lament the passing of aspects of the pre-conciliar liturgy, and in particular its sense of mystery. Though there must always be some sense of mystery in the liturgy, it is true that the conciliar reforms reduced it. This will always be seen as regrettable if we do not appreciate the increased sense of social commitment which more than compensates for the former, Christianity has to be about love of neighbour, and clearly this must come to expression at the common table of the Eucharist. This gives us one norm for measuring our liturgies: the more they succeed in involving the community, in expressing community, and so in celebrating and deepening the sense of community, the more Christian they will be and the more in keeping with the meaning of the sacrament.

VII. The pledge of future glory

This final section of the article deals with the eschatological aspect of the sacrament. In many manuals of theology this aspect has been presented as an additional effect of the sacrament. The presentation in the *Catechism* has the advantage of underlining that this aspect is really a dimension of all the effects of the Eucharist. Each of the three effects already listed will be found in this section in some form, for the truth of the matter is that the anticipation of the banquet of heaven is another way of describing the whole mystery of divine grace. The life mirrored in the image of the banquet is the life of God himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, shared with us. Eternal life will be our communion with them forever, but this communion is already a reality for us in the communion which we celebrate in every Mass.

Notes

¹ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Vatican II: The Real Achievement* (London, 1967), p. 28.

² Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 23 (London, 1992), p. 115