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THEOLOGICAL THEMES IN THE MARIAN EUCCHARISTIC MEDITATIONS OF FR. DANIEL A. LORD, S.J.

Fr. Edward Looney

Fr. Daniel A. Lord, SJ (1888–1955) was known to many as the Hollywood Priest. He drafted the Production Code for Hollywood, which was used for several decades. Fr. Lord was also a prominent writer, authoring over 90 books, 300 pamphlets, and countless articles. In 1952, he published a spiritual classic entitled Christ in Me — a book consisting of various thanksgivings a person could offer following reception of Holy Communion. Of the over 60 meditations, 10 are dedicated to the Blessed Mother, and these include thanksgivings with Mary, in union with Mary, and in imitation of Mary. This article provides a theological overview of these post-communion Marian thanksgivings of Fr. Lord.

Introduction

Fr. Daniel Lord, S.J., a popular Jesuit in the first half of the twentieth century, may offer some help in solving the problem of waning belief in the true presence of Jesus in the

Holy Eucharist. In two devotional works dedicated to Eucharistic thanksgiving, Fr. Lord engages his readers' imaginations to consider the Incarnation, conversion, reparation, and mediation of grace. In the process, he presents Mary as a model for making a Eucharistic thanksgiving and a model for renewing of Eucharistic belief and piety.

It's your typical Sunday. The community of a local area has gathered at the nearby Catholic Church. Those present sing the praises of God, hear the Sacred Scriptures, listen to a homily, profess their faith, pray for the Church and the world, and participate in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Individuals line up and process towards the priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. The choir leads the congregation in a communion chant or song. The faithful receive the Eucharist and return to their pew. They probably put their kneeler down and hopefully offer a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord Jesus for the opportunity to receive Him in Holy Communion.

The Church recommends such a pious practice, as evidenced in the 1980 document *Inestimabile Donum* of the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, which states: "The Faithful are to be recommended not to omit to make a proper thanksgiving after Communion. They may do this during the celebration with a period of silence, with a hymn, psalm or other song of praise, or also after the celebration, if possible by staying behind to pray for a suitable time."¹ Not only is a prayerful thanksgiving

¹ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Inestimabile Donum* (April 17, 1980), no.17, https://www.newadvent.org/library/docs_dw80id.htm.

recommended, but the Church even encourages congregants to spend an extend time in prayer.

The twentieth-century Jesuit priest Fr. Daniel A. Lord led many Eucharistic meditations following the celebration of Mass.² Fr. Lord emerged as one of the most popular and prolific writers of the century, writing over eight million words in his life, authoring ninety books, three hundred pamphlets, and countless articles. Despite these accomplishments, his confreres in the Society of Jesus regarded him as a “popularizer” and not an intellectual.³

Fr. Lord’s work in promoting Eucharistic meditation began as early as 1934, when he published a small pamphlet entitled “Thanksgiving After Holy Communion,” which was a souvenir of the fifth annual communion breakfast of St. Patrick’s Blessed Virgin’s Sodality.⁴ Later in his career, in 1952, he published a spiritual classic *Christ in Me*, a book consisting of thanksgiving meditations a person could offer following reception of Holy Communion. Lord’s 1952 text contains over sixty meditations, ten of which he specifically dedicates to Mary: making thanksgiving with Our Lady, in union with Our Lady, and in imitation of Mary.⁵ Pedagogically, the meditations in both of these works served

² To learn more about the life of Fr. Daniel Lord, see his autobiography: Daniel A. Lord, *Played by Ear* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1956). See also his biography: Thomas F. Gavin, *Champion of Youth: A Dynamic Story of a Dynamic Man* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1977).

³ David J. Endres, “Dan Lord, Hollywood Priest,” *America* (December 12, 2005), <http://americamagazine.org/issue/554/faith-focus/dan-lord-hollywood-priest>.

⁴ Daniel Lord, *Thanksgiving after Holy Communion* (St. Louis: The Queen’s Work, 1934).

⁵ Lord wrote a series of reflections—I, II, and III—for some of the mentioned titles. Two other meditations have a Marian focus based on the Scripture cited, and another one is a thanksgiving in honor of St. Joseph.

as a method of teaching people to make a postcommunion thanksgiving.

This essay will demonstrate the profundity of Lord's Marian Eucharistic meditations and the rich theological insight they provide. Lord proposed to devotees in the preface that, if something struck their hearts in their meditations, they should abandon his text and follow that prompting. In similar fashion, I wish to use his devotional text and the themes contained therein as a springboard to further others' theological reflection and research. This essay will examine theological themes, which include the following: the use of imagination regarding Mary's reception of Holy Communion; the incarnational aspect of Eucharistic theology in view of Mary; acts of reparation and prayer for conversion; and the petitionary prayers addressed to Mary. In the final section, with Fr. Lord as a helper, I will propose ways in which we can look to the example of Our Lady in making our own Eucharistic thanksgiving and then teaching others to do likewise. In the examination of these Marian Eucharistic meditations, I hope a recovery of Daniel Lord's text will renew a Eucharistic devotion and teach us how to make a prayerful thanksgiving after Communion and after Mass.

The Marian Eucharistic Meditations of Fr. Lord

Hand missals of long ago that accompanied—and still accompany—those who attended the Extraordinary Form contained many prayers for recitation before Mass, before Communion, after Communion, and after Mass. Some of these prayers were written by St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure. Other prayers directed people to reflect on Mary and Joseph, while others might pray the *Anima Christi*.

Clearly, these hand missals taught individuals the language of prayer and provided an opportunity for prayerful thanksgiving before, during, or after Mass.

Fr. Lord's approach differed greatly from the formulaic prayers common in his era and in these missals. Instead of that kind of prayer, he proposed different topics for personal meditation, as exemplified in his two works related to the subject. For example, his devotional prayer book *Christ in Me* comprises meditations that he led at convents following the celebration of Mass to offer the sisters a meditative Eucharistic thanksgiving.⁶ In both this work and the other one, Fr. Lord taught a method of Eucharistic thanksgiving that is helpful for us today in reclaiming Eucharistic devotion and thanksgiving.

Before examining in greater detail the reflections of Fr. Lord, we should consider why the practice of Eucharistic thanksgiving has declined. In an essay appearing in the pages of *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Edwin Gordon suggests a handful of reasons: activism, meaning "the feeling that, unless we are doing something, we are not doing anything,"⁷ a decline in the sense of the Sacred; and a lack of preparation for Mass.⁸ While these are all possibilities, Fr. Lord adds his own answer to the question in a 1934 devotional pamphlet: "[F]requent communion was given to the world by a loving Providence at the hands of a Pope who knew the needs of humanity. Beautiful and world-saving as frequent

⁶ Daniel Lord, *Christ in Me* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1952), xi.

⁷ Edwin Gordon, "Thanksgiving After Communion," *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review* CI (December 2001), 19.

⁸ Gordon emphasizes the forgotten prayers of Sts. Thomas Aquinas and Anselm found in the missals for the preconciliar liturgy.

communion has been, its very accustomedness is a peril. Becoming more frequent, it found at first less of solemnity and more of friendly companionship; then less of awe and more of gratitude. And finally, frequency brought its too usual effect.”⁹ To these lists proposed by Fr. Gordon and Fr. Lord, I would add three more possible reasons: a lack of belief in Jesus’ real presence in the Eucharist, a mentality that takes Eucharistic reception for granted, and our cultural mentality that wants to get something done and over with. The popular perception is that, once Mass is completed, there is nothing left to do.

With an understanding of the decline of Eucharistic devotion plaguing the Church in recent decades, we now turn to Fr. Lord’s meditations, which, while simple, are richly catechetical and pedagogical. In our theological reflection, we will discover our own imagination, Mary’s relationship to the Eucharist, the incarnational connection to the Eucharist, and how and for whom we should pray after communion. The meditations of Fr. Lord will open our minds and hearts into deeper communion and foster a deeper Eucharistic spirituality.

A. The Use of Imagination

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola instruct individuals to engage their imaginations while reflecting on certain Scriptures or potential scenes in the life of Jesus and Mary. Such scenes are often not from the Scriptures, but from pious belief. Fr. Lord authored two books on the Blessed Virgin, *Our Lady in the Modern World* and *The*

⁹ Lord, *Thanksgiving after Holy Communion*, 6.

Song of the Rosary. Pertinent to our Eucharistic meditation is *The Song of the Rosary*, wherein Lord speaks about the use of imagination in prayer: “The Church seems to dare the prayerful to go further, to think around and around the events, to retell what the Scriptures relate, to recall what tradition has garnered, and to fill in with pious fancy such obvious breaks as exist in the record.”¹⁰ I have noted in my reading of his works the use of his imagination, especially when it comes to the life of Mary. At times, Lord imagines Mary in view of his modern time, while at other times, he attempts to fill in the gap between the Scripture and reality. The same is true especially as it relates to Mary and the Eucharist. Fr. Lord engages three imaginative exercises, two within his Eucharistic meditations *Christ in Me* and another in *The Song of the Rosary*. These events include Mary’s first reception of the Eucharist, Mary’s reception of Holy Communion from the hand of John, and Mary’s Viaticum.

The evangelists and St. Paul recount the institution of the Eucharist on the night before Jesus died. None of the Gospel writers place Mary in the Upper Room. Yet, here is where Fr. Lord’s imagination picks up:

Lantern aloft, the Mother crossed the room,
Lingered a little where He last had sat,
Shepherd to flock of twelve
Already stirred by breath upon the wind
Of nearing wolves.
A chalice stood where He had laid it down,
Taken from John, The very first to drink,
The last to hold it for a second to his heart.

¹⁰ Daniel Lord, *Song of the Rosary* (St. Louis: Hilton Printing, 1953), 6.

One drop of wine that was no longer wine
Deep in its crystal throat
She carried to her lips,
Drinking it down
Who once had given blood to fill the veins
Of God within Her.
Then reverently she wrapped it in her veil,
Hiding it in a cabinet that stood
Waiting to be the first
Repository.¹¹

This meditation of Fr. Lord suggests several points for consideration. First, while he does not place Mary in the Upper Room, he places her in proximity to the Cenacle, demonstrating his belief that Mary follows Jesus, perhaps in His ministry, but at the very least as the passion of Jesus begins. Secondly, as Mary enters the Upper Room, we can ask, what knowledge does Mary possess about what has transpired? Since the apostles gathered to celebrate the Passover, did Mary know Jesus would take the chalice, turning wine into His blood? In his poetic voice, Fr. Lord mentions one drop of wine that is no longer wine. As the one seeing the event in his mind's eye, Fr. Lord meditates on what he already knows—that Jesus instituted the Eucharist. Does Mary know? Whether Mary knew what happened only moments before her entrance, Lord's meditation posits Mary as receiving the precious blood of her Son. Thirdly, by placing Mary in the Cenacle following the Last Supper, Fr. Lord gives Mary a role that is still present in many parishes today: Mary becomes the first sacristan. Elsewhere in his writings, Lord imagines the Eucharistic celebration of John

¹¹ Lord, *Song of the Rosary*, 148.

in the Upper Room, which Lord suggests has become the place where Mary lives. In that meditation, he meditates upon “the preparation which Mary, the world’s first sacristan, makes, using perhaps the very same table of the Last supper, perhaps even the same chalice and paten.”¹² As we ponder with Fr. Lord Mary’s role as sacristan, I believe we can find both the necessity of our personal preparation before Holy Mass, just as Mary may have prepared for the celebration of the Eucharist, and our need to remain behind after Mass has ended. Mary’s example provides us a model to emulate.

Another consideration of Lord’s Marian Eucharistic imagination is Mary’s reception of Holy Communion from the hand of John. This does not seem implausible given what the Scriptures tell us about the nascent Church in the Acts of the Apostles. Acts 2:42 tells us that the early Christians devoted themselves to the breaking of the bread. Given that Jesus mandated the apostles to celebrate the Eucharist in remembrance of Him, and given the recognition of Jesus Himself in the breaking of the bread on the road to Emmaus, we can be certain the apostles celebrated the Eucharist together. And since John took Mary into his home, it is no stretch that Mary received the Eucharist from his hand.

This extrabiblical scene of Mary receiving Holy Communion from John has been captured in several artistic renderings, some as paintings and others as stained-glass windows.¹³ Of note is the stained-glass triptych in the

¹² Lord, *Christ in Me*, 105.

¹³ The Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, Alabama, and the Poor Clare Colletine Monastery in Rockford, Illinois, both have stained-glass windows depicting this imagined event.

Dahlgren Chapel of Georgetown University.¹⁴ The three stained-glass windows depict a Johannine theology: John resting on the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper, John's presence at Calvary and the entrustment of Mary to his care, and John's administering Holy Communion to Mary.¹⁵ The triptych places Christ's sacrifice on Calvary at the center, flanked on both sides by the outpouring of Christ's love through the Holy Eucharist. With Calvary as the focal point, the two sides of the triptych could be seen through this lens. The Last Supper gives way to crucifixion and the ultimate offering of Christ's body and blood, while Mary's reception of Holy Communion is Calvary re-presented again. John's giving Mary Holy Communion shows continuity from the Last Supper to Calvary, and Mary's reception of Holy Communion from John hearkens back to their presence at the foot of the cross.

Fr. Lord makes use of his imagination a third time in his meditation entitled "Thanksgiving in Union with Our Lady's Last Communion."¹⁶ In this meditation, Fr. Lord reflects on Mary's final communion, that is to say, her Viaticum. Looking to Mary in this regard allows us to anticipate our Christian journey, experience it through and with her, and then ask her to pray for us that we may receive the grace of

¹⁴ I do not wish to suggest that Fr. Lord knew of the Dahlgren Windows, nor that such windows were inspired by his meditation. Instead, my intention here is to demonstrate the theological theme from Lord's meditation as a part of the tradition and devotional life of the Church.

¹⁵ I am grateful to Dr. Dawn Eden who led me to this discovery in our conversations and for her reflections about the triptych in her book *My Peace I Give You*. Dr. Eden chose to reflect on the windows in light of Christ's sacred heart. See Dawn Eden, *My Peace I Give You: Healing Sexual Wounds with the Help of the Saints* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2012), 26-33.

¹⁶ Lord, *Christ in Me*, 117-120.

final Viaticum and all other graces attached to it, including “confidence, love, and complete trust [in] the coming of my Lord.”¹⁷

Another source that gives consideration to Mary’s reception of Holy Communion during her life and at the time of her death is Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich’s *The Life of the Blessed Virgin*, which contains her alleged mystical visions and lends credence to Fr. Lord’s reflections on Mary’s reception of Holy Communion at death. Given the popularity of Emmerich’s writings, it is possible Fr. Lord had knowledge of them, but I do not wish to suggest that they were the basis for his meditation. Emmerich describes Mary’s death in this way:

The Blessed Virgin could not see the altar from her bed, but during the Holy Sacrifice she sat upright on her couch in deep devotion. Peter, after he and the other Apostles had received Communion, brought Our Lady the Blessed Sacrament and administered Extreme Unction. [...] Peter then gave her Holy Communion. [...] She received the Chalice from John. As she received the Blessed Sacrament I saw a radiance pass into Mary, who sank back as though in ecstasy, and spoke no more.¹⁸

Emmerich’s account demonstrates that the early Church celebrated the Eucharist, although probably not in the way Emmerich describes it, riddled as it is with her experience of the liturgy. Both reflections from Lord and Emmerich can deepen our meditation on the life of Mary and aid the faithful

¹⁷ *Christ in Me*, 120.

¹⁸ Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Life of the Blessed Virgin* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1970), 382.

in their eucharistic thanksgivings, especially when meditating on Our Lady's Last Holy Communion.

B. The Incarnation and the Eucharist

Fr. Lord begins five of his Eucharistic meditations by connecting Eucharistic belief to the Incarnation. Here is just one example: "Lord Jesus, Son of Mary, I believe that you are present with me as truly as you were with Mary after the Incarnation."¹⁹ Flowing from Mary's role in the Incarnation, Fr. Lord reflects at length on Mary as a tabernacle, not only in *Christ in Me*, but also in his other Marian-focused works: *Our Lady in the Modern World* and *The Song of the Rosary*. In the Incarnation, Mary became the "earthly tabernacle"²⁰ and in her reception of Holy Communion, she became a tabernacle again.²¹ In the spirit of Fr. Lord's recommendation, I have allowed his meditation on Mary as a tabernacle to lead me to further reflect on two points: preparation for Holy Communion and the parallels of the Incarnation to the celebration of Mass.

In his meditations directed to God, Fr. Lord reflects on Mary's identity, calling her, "the perfect woman prepared from the foundation of the world to be your tabernacle and your shrine."²² Mary's perfect preparation relies on the fact that God chose her for this role and granted her the privilege to be immaculately conceived. In Holy Communion, we, like Mary, become tabernacles or dwelling places of the Eucharistic Lord. The state of our own preparedness to

¹⁹ Lord, *Christ in Me*, 101.

²⁰ *Christ in Me*, 101.

²¹ *Christ in Me*, 109.

²² *Christ in Me*, 93.

welcome Christ, causes Fr. Lord to lament, “How badly I am prepared to welcome you! How unsatisfactory is my state compared to that of Mary!”²³ In a different meditation, Fr. Lord prayed that he might “offer a safe and secure tabernacle to your Son. No sin must touch Him because of me. I must keep my soul sinless.”²⁴ Mary’s perfect disposition to receive Jesus, first in the Incarnation and then through the Eucharist, invites Catholics to consider their own disposition. In view of Mary’s Immaculate Conception, of being without sin, we are encouraged to ask ourselves, “Am I conscience of grave sin?” The sacrament of penance becomes a way in which a communicant can more closely identify with the state of Mary when receiving Holy Communion, albeit in an imperfect way.

Because Mary became a tabernacle of Christ’s presence through the Incarnation, another word Fr. Lord associates with this theme is “welcome.” In the Incarnation, Mary welcomes Christ into her very being, protects Him, and makes a home for Him. There is a similarity between the events of the Annunciation and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.²⁵ Jesus’ conception occurs by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. Before the words of institution and consecration, the power of the Holy Spirit is invoked during the epiclesis, asking that the bread and wine may become the body and blood of Christ. The

²³ *Christ in Me*, 94.

²⁴ *Christ in Me*, 104.

²⁵ Michael Figura confirms this: “The ‘transformation’ that took place in the womb of the Virgin Mary, in which the eternal Logos became man by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, anticipates the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus.” Michael Figura, “The Eucharist as Sacramental Incarnation,” *Communio* 30 (Spring 2003), 48.

Holy Spirit was instrumental both in the Incarnation and in the Eucharistic celebration. Fr. Lord made this connection when he meditated: “I am the living tabernacle and temple of the Holy Ghost as Mary was.”²⁶ Another connection to Mary that can be discerned is that Mary said, “yes,” to the angel’s invitation to become the Mother of God. Similarly, when we approach and say, “Amen,” we say, “yes,” to Jesus and become tabernacles of His presence.

C. Reparation and Conversion

Another theme relevant to Eucharistic devotion contained within Fr. Lord’s meditations is that of reparation and conversion. During this year of grace in 2017, we commemorate the centennial anniversary of the Marian apparitions in Fatima. Lest we forget, these apparitions were preceded by the angelic apparitions of 1916, which highlighted Eucharistic devotion. In two prayers taught by the Angel of Portugal, the children were told to pray: “My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, I love thee, I beg pardon of those who do not believe, who do not adore, who do not hope, and who do not love thee.” In the third angelic apparition, the Fatima seers were taught another prayer:

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges, and indifference by which He is offended. And through the infinite merit of His Most Sacred

²⁶ Lord, *Christ in Me*, 101.

Heart, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of poor sinners.²⁷

The children also received the Eucharist from the hand of the Angel, who told them: “Take and drink the body and blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.”²⁸ In these two statements, the angel reminds us that Jesus is present in all the tabernacles of the world, a theological truism that, unfortunately, many have forgotten. The angel also speaks specifically of ingratitude, telling the children that Jesus is outraged by ungrateful men. The remedy to Jesus’s outrage is reclaiming Eucharistic thanksgiving and fostering a greater sense of gratitude among the Church’s communicants.

The Fatima apparition mentions reparation, which likewise appears in the Eucharistic meditations of Fr. Lord. Fr. Lord was familiar with the Fatima message, as evidenced by his authorship of a children’s book²⁹ and a small novena booklet.³⁰ Fr. Lord imagines Mary as an example of one who could have made reparation, praying:

She offered you her sinless heart to replace the hearts that had been offered up to idols and the sin-created gods. She gave you, Lord Jesus, full compensation for your flight from heaven to earth. She made you more than ever glad of the incarnation. Mary, my mother,

²⁷ This prayer and other Fatima prayers can be found on the website of the World Apostolate of Fatima/Blue Army: <https://www.bluearmy.com/prayers/>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Daniel Lord, *Our Lady of Fatima* (New York: William J. Hirten, 1951).

³⁰ Daniel Lord, *Our Lady of Fatima Novena* (New York, 1947).

let me compensate Jesus for the slights offered Him in Holy Communion.³¹

In this brief prayer, Fr. Lord demonstrates many aspects of Fatima's call for Eucharistic reparation. People have offered their hearts to idols and not to God. In the long prayer of the Angel, the children make reparation for outrages and sacrileges. In his own prayer, Fr. Lord asks us to compensate Jesus for such offenses. In this way, Fr. Lord invites devotees to make reparation for sins and offenses against the Eucharist as expressed by the Angel.

Fr. Lord's prayers also contain references to praying for conversion, which has also been a topic of many Marian apparitions. Throughout the meditations of Fr. Lord, the notion of conversion is addressed in multiple ways with a special focus on both our own need of conversion accomplished by praying for specific graces and then also for the conversion of others in the world. As I personally prayed and reflected on Fr. Lord's meditations, the idea of conversion immediately called to mind the 1859 Wisconsin apparition when Mary instructed the visionary Adele Brise to pray for the conversion of sinners and to have Brise offer her Holy Communion for that intention.³² In one of Lord's meditations, the devotee is invited to pray, "Mary, I too pray for sinners, sinners of the modern world. Give faith to the pagans and to those who have once been Christians and have lost the faith. Give repentance to old sinners and the grace of

³¹ Lord, *Christ in Me*, 96.

³² I do not wish to suggest that Fr. Lord had any knowledge of Mary's Wisconsin apparition, as I have no evidence to support such a claim. We might consider that he was an American Jesuit and spent time in Milwaukee, so there is a possibility of an awareness.

conversion to young sinners. Please ask your Son to soften the persecutor and to win the brilliant to His cause.”³³ Fr. Lord’s language corresponds to the language Mary spoke during the Wisconsin apparition: “I am the Queen of Heaven who prays for the conversion of sinners.” Lord recognizes Mary’s prayers from heaven and then invites each individual to join Mary in that prayer. In this way, the request of Our Lady reaches fulfillment by each devotee.³⁴ In the theological understanding of Eucharistic thanksgiving, we find another means of making thanksgiving, first by making reparation and second by praying for conversion. These cultivate respect for the Eucharist and fulfill requests in approved private revelations.

D. Invocations to Mary: Mary’s Mediation

All the reflections authored by Fr. Lord in *Christ in Me* take a similar format since all are divided into five different movements of meditations. Regardless of subject matter,

³³ Lord, *Christ in Me*, 116.

³⁴ To fulfill Our Lady’s request, I wrote a prayer used by pilgrims’ today at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help:

“Eternal Father, I kneel before you this day with a grateful heart because you have allowed me to receive the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus in Holy Communion. Thank you for sending the Queen of Heaven to earth with a message calling us to conversion and emphasizing the sacraments. For when she appeared to Adele Brise in 1859, she asked her to offer her Holy Communion for the conversion of sinners. Just as Adele did long ago, I wish to do likewise this day. I offer to you, Eternal Father, the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of your Son, for the conversion of sinners, including my own conversion, in reparation for sin, and the salvation of souls. Through Our Lady’s maternal solicitude may the hearts of hardened sinners return to the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, especially to Sunday Mass, and to daily prayer. As I go forward from this Holy Mass, help me to fear nothing knowing that you are with me and are always guiding me and that Our Lady constantly intercedes for me. Make me aware of your presence this day and always. Amen.”

each numerical paragraph contains some sort of petitionary prayer. Unique to his Marian meditations is that each request is directed to Mary, revealing how Fr. Lord perceives Mary's role and intimate relationship to himself, and by extension, all of her spiritual children. A review of the invocatory prayers produces three common words: *give*, *beg*, and *obtain*.

Fr. Lord consistently asks Our Lady to give him specific graces or to give him a share in some attribute of her life. A few examples of this request include:

- “Give me the truth that makes me know myself, my dependence upon God, the weakness of my soul, and the great condescension of the Saviour.”³⁵
- “Mary, virgin unsullied, give me the strength to bring to Jesus the purity He loved, the purity that is like yours.”³⁶
- “Mary, poorest and purest of maids, give me your love of heavenly things, your detachment from earth”³⁷
- “Mary, give me something of the intense love and devotion which was yours when St. John said Mass for you.”³⁸

Contained within these requests directed to Mary is the realization that there is something lacking in us, some sort of deficiency. However, in looking to Mary as an example, we find what we need. All four of the abovementioned requests

³⁵ Lord, *Christ in Me*, 99.

³⁶ *Christ in Me*, 100.

³⁷ *Christ in Me*, 100.

³⁸ *Christ in Me*, 105.

are meant to purify ourselves and intensify our devotion to Jesus. When petitioning Mary to give us a part of herself, we actually request that, “Mary give me ‘X’ so we might love and honor Jesus more.”

Fr. Lord also uses two other words, *beg* and *obtain*, which convey an understanding of Mary’s role to the communicant. Fr. Lord asks Mary to beg or obtain from Jesus specific graces. For example, he asks Mary to “obtain for me some of the grace that made you lovely in His sight,”³⁹ “obtain for me the grace to strengthen my faith,”⁴⁰ and to “beg for me the grace to receive your Son in Holy Communion at the end of my days. Obtain for me the great grace of final Viaticum.”⁴¹ When Fr. Lord begs Mary or asks her to obtain some grace, he demonstrates his confidence in Mary’s intercession before her Son, and by using the word *obtain*, he reveals Mary as a mediatrix of grace—just like at Cana, when she begged and obtained the wine. We now approach Mary as a child begging our mother, and she obtains and dispenses to us what is in accord with God’s providence.

Mary Teaches Us Eucharistic Thanksgiving

The over sixty meditations of Fr. Lord are profoundly rich and can teach us how to make a proper postcommunion meditation. His proposed guided meditations cover an array of topics, and I hope to have demonstrated in this essay some of the richness of his Marian Eucharistic meditations. In this

³⁹ *Christ in Me*, 94.

⁴⁰ *Christ in Me*, 98. Fr. Lord made several requests for an increase of faith. Another one can be found in *Christ in Me*, 106.

⁴¹ *Christ in Me*, 119.

final section, I would like to propose different methods of teaching Eucharistic devotion to the Catholic faithful. After outlining some general steps in making a Eucharistic thanksgiving, I will close with examples of how Fr. Lord proposes Mary to us as an example and teacher in our Eucharistic thanksgiving.

In a classic book on the Eucharist, first published in 1868, Redemptorist Father Michael Muller proposes a method of making a Eucharistic thanksgiving. He suggests a three-step process: The first step is to consider the union that exists between the soul and God and to use the time after Holy Communion or Mass as an opportunity “to repay Him for the trials and tears, the shame and sorrow, the contradiction and reproach which He underwent for the ransom of our souls.”⁴² This second step is to petition the Lord for special graces,⁴³ especially for the transformation of oneself.⁴⁴ The third and final step is to give praise to God,⁴⁵ thanking Him for the many blessings of our lives.

Fr. Muller’s method is only one approach to Eucharistic thanksgiving. Fr. Lord proposes several other models we can follow. One of his approaches is fivefold:

⁴² Michael Muller, *The Blessed Eucharist* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1994), 102.

⁴³ Muller, *Blessed Eucharist*, 104.

⁴⁴ Muller says, “Ask Him to destroy in you what is bad and to make you what you wish to be, to change your wavering purposes into a firm resolution to follow His example, your fear of self-discipline into an earnest desire to advance in virtue and holiness. Ask Him to change your dissipated heart into a recollected one, your unmortified heart into a mortified one, your ambitious heart into a humble one, your faint and timid heart into a brave and courageous one, your irritable and peevish heart into a mild and patient one, your sinful heart into a holy one.” Muller, *Blessed Eucharist*, 105.

⁴⁵ Muller, 106.

1. A realization of who is present in our hearts.
2. A realization of why the Savior instituted Holy Communion: His desire to “be with the children of men;” his longing for intimate union with souls.
3. An act of faith in the clearest words ever spoken: “This is my body; this is my blood. Do this in commemoration of me.”
4. An act of gratitude for this greatest of gifts.
5. An act of love in return for the overwhelming love of God for souls, a love that never showed itself more clearly than in the intimate union of Holy Communion.⁴⁶

Another fivefold approach offered by Fr. Lord follows a different formula: an act of faith, an act of thanksgiving, an act of petition, an act of offering, and an act of friendship.⁴⁷ These methods provide a snapshot of how a person could make a Eucharistic thanksgiving.

Besides these generic formulae, Fr. Lord provides in his Marian Eucharistic meditations other models of how a person could make a Eucharistic thanksgiving—models that imitate Mary. The first model of Marian Eucharistic thanksgiving comes from a meditation done “In Union with Our Lady.” In this meditation, Fr. Lord reflects on Mary’s prayer when her head was bowed in prayerful thanksgiving:

She adored you as her God.
She thanked you for your gifts.

⁴⁶ Lord, *Thanksgiving after Holy Communion*, 8.

⁴⁷ Lord, *Christ in Me*, 7-9.

She welcomed you as her Saviour and the Saviour of the world.
She gave you herself, pledging you the fullest service until the end
of her days.
She begged you to remain with her in time and for all eternity.⁴⁸

The example of Mary presented by Fr. Lord has roots in the Gospel and life of Mary. Mary had many opportunities to adore her God: after the Annunciation, in the crib, in the Holy Family's home, and on the cross. Mary welcomed Jesus into her life by her *fiat* and pledged herself to service when she declared herself God's handmaid. The privileges accorded to Mary were cause for thanksgiving. In Mary's reception of Holy Communion, she again adored and welcomed her God, thanked Him, pledged her service to Him, and begged to remain with Him forever. We should mirror these Marian actions and use them as the basis of any Eucharistic piety after receiving the Holy Eucharist.

In another meditation, focusing on "Thanksgiving in Imitation of Mary," Fr. Lord presents another way of meditating: praying for specific petitions. Mary's desire, according to Lord, was to see the advancement of Christ's kingdom and the salvation and conversion of souls. Before beginning the different petitions, Lord wrote, "I can well believe then that after she had silently told you of her love and renewed her faith and expressed her devoted service, she spoke with you of the things that had brought you to earth. She must have begged grace for all the world. She must have used your presence as new opportunity to plead for your brothers and sisters."⁴⁹ As Fr. Lord begins his reflection, he

⁴⁸ *Christ in Me*, 95.

⁴⁹ *Christ in Me*, 113.

first acknowledges Mary's silent reflection of faith and service before entering into a phase of petition. This is how Lord envisions Mary made her thanksgiving and offers us an example to imitate. What exactly did Mary pray for? Employing his imagination, Fr. Lord begins to answer by asking for the grace to overhear the petitions of Mary. These are the petitions Fr. Lord presents:

- “Mary must have prayed for the Church, that it would teach your truth eloquently, that it would save sinners and make saints.... Mary may I unite my prayers with yours, begging for the triumph of the Kingdom of Christ upon earth.”⁵⁰
- “When you were present with her, Lord Jesus, in her Holy Communion, surely she prayed for the Apostles.... for Peter, that as your Vicar and first Pope he would have courage and wisdom and the ability to lead, inspire, and guide: for the other Apostles, that they would use the gifts of Pentecost.... Mary, kneeling beside you, may I pray for those who rule the Church? I pray for our Holy Father, for the bishops, for the priests, all of whom carry Christ's transmitted responsibilities.”⁵¹
- “Mary must have prayed with deep eagerness for the conversion of the world.... Mary, I too pray for sinners, sinners of the modern world.”⁵²

⁵⁰ *Christ in Me*, 114.

⁵¹ *Christ in Me*, 114-115.

⁵² *Christ in Me*, 115-116.

- “Mary loved the saints. She prayed, I am sure for the Martyrs, that they might by their deaths proclaim your truth; for the Virgins, that their white innocence would show forth the beauty of your teaching; for the Confessors, that they would speak with conviction.... Mary, may I pray for saints and more saints in this modern world?”⁵³

In the imagination of Fr. Lord, we obtain a glimpse of Mary’s personal prayers. Fr. Lord provides support for each one within his meditation, and from an initial glance, all should agree Mary could have prayed for these intentions. Mary’s petitionary prayer as presented by Lord allows us to recall one of Fr. Muller’s guidelines for Eucharistic thanksgiving. Fr. Lord provides us a model of how Mary might have prayed and gives us an example of whom we could remember in our own prayer. As we receive Holy Communion, daily or weekly, we have an opportunity to commune with our God. These are some of the most powerful moments to make intercession and ask for specific graces for ourselves and others. Every time we receive Holy Communion, we should call to mind those for whom we should pray and offer them to God.

There are many teachers throughout our Church’s history who want to teach the Catholic faithful how to make a Eucharistic thanksgiving postcommunion and post-Mass. Fr. Lord has written many different meditations that can aid our prayerful meditation after communion. And, as we have seen, Fr. Lord, provides us an excellent example in Mary, whom we can imitate in our own prayer. After all, Fr. Lord

⁵³ *Christ in Me*, 116.

called Mary, “the perfect model of thanksgiving,”⁵⁴ thus making her an excellent teacher to renew this forgotten devotion in the third millennium.

Conclusion

The Catholic Church in the third millennium has experienced a crisis in Eucharistic belief. Sunday Mass attendance continues to decline. Many do not believe in the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. A handful leave Mass right after receiving Holy Communion, oftentimes failing to offer a prayer of gratitude. Fr. Lord commented on what happens when people leave Mass early: “Men received Holy Communion and rushed from the church thoughtlessly carrying with them a God unadored, a Savior unthanked, a Teacher unheeded, a Friend unwelcomed, a Source of strength unused.”⁵⁵ With the help of Fr. Lord, we have explored how Mary can teach us Eucharistic reverence and devotion. Mary is the model of the Church at prayer, and we look to her for an example and ask her to teach us how to make a true Eucharistic thanksgiving. When we follow Mary’s example, we offer our thanksgiving with her, in union with her, and in imitation of her. The meditations of Fr. Lord are a timeless treasure that can be used to restore the sacredness of our sanctuaries, strengthen our Eucharistic belief, and help the Catholic faithful commune with their God.

⁵⁴ *Christ in Me*, 95.

⁵⁵ Lord, *Thanksgiving after Holy Communion*, 7.

Biographical Note

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